

**BANGLADESH UPDATE**



**718**

New cases in 24hrs



**5,24,020**

Total cases



**7,819**

Deaths



**4,68,681**

Recoveries



**1,962,153**

Deaths



**91,673,811**

Total cases

## India starts delivering Covishield shots

FM expects exports to be determined in few weeks

AGENCIES

Indian airlines started delivering batches of Covid-19 vaccines nationwide yesterday, preparing for the launch of a campaign to offer shots to 1.3 billion people, in what officials call the world's biggest vaccination drive.

Vaccinations are set to begin on Saturday in an effort that authorities hope will see 300 million high-risk people inoculated over the next six to eight months.

First to get the vaccine will be 30 million health and other frontline workers, followed by about 270 million older than 50 or deemed high-risk.

The first batches of Covishield, the Serum Institute of India's coronavirus vaccine, left Pune early yesterday morning for Delhi and 12 other cities.

Amid tight security, three temperature-controlled trucks rolled out of the Serum Institute gates with their precious cargo shortly before 5:00 am. The trucks carried 478 boxes of the vaccines, each box weighing 32 kg, news agency PTI reported quoting an unnamed official.

"Ready get set go! Stand by India! The vaccine to kill the disease is being loaded into the aircraft for distribution all over the country now," Pune airport tweeted.

"Civil aviation sector launches yet another momentous mission," tweeted Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri as the first two flights operated by SpiceJet and GoAir took off with the vaccines to Delhi and Chennai.

"Today, Air India, SpiceJet and IndiGo Airlines will operate nine flights from Pune with 56.5 lakh doses to Delhi, Chennai, Kolkata, Guwahati, Shillong, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, Vijayawada, Bhubaneswar, Patna, Bengaluru, Lucknow and Chandigarh," he said in another tweet.

Officials in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's western home state of Gujarat said vaccine distribution was their top priority.

"These vaccines will be taken to the cold storage from the airport and swiftly delivered to vaccination booths," said Nitin Patel, the state's deputy chief minister.

Modi's government signed purchase pacts on Monday with vaccine maker Serum Institute of India (SII) more than a week after approving the vaccine developed by

Britain's AstraZeneca and Oxford University.

"We've given a special price of 200 rupees (\$2.73) for the first 100 million doses only to the government of India on their request," Adar Poonawalla, the firm's chief executive, told Reuters television's India partner ANI.

The price represented a gesture of support for the common man, those who are poor and vulnerable, and healthcare workers, he said, adding, "After that we'll be selling it at 1,000 Indian rupees in private markets."

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar said yesterday India will be able to decide on exports of coronavirus vaccines within the next few weeks, as governments abroad seek to shore up supplies.

Jaishankar told the Reuters Next conference that India understood the anxieties of foreign governments about getting the vaccines delivered to their populations.

"We will get clarity pretty soon on what our own consumption is going to be, (what) deployments are going to be. And we will keep our global role very much," he said.

Last week, Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro wrote a letter to Modi asking to expedite a shipment of AstraZeneca's vaccine, which is being made by Serum Institute of India.

Bangladesh this week said it expected to receive initial shipments of the vaccine from SII by January 25.

"The policy of course is we will start the rollout in India. We have our own challenges," Jaishankar said.

"A number of countries are in touch with us... and what we are telling them is, look, this is the first month," he added. "The production is now coming into stream. There is a certain amount of stock taking going on."

Health authorities in eastern and western Indian states said they would make use of experience gained from running regular child immunisation programmes for polio to ensure full coverage in what they called the world's biggest vaccination drive.

But creaking transport networks and a crumbling healthcare system add an enormous layer of complexity, they said.

India's tally of close to 10.5 million infections is the world's second highest after the United States, although the rate of increase has been slowing.



Amid dense fog a slow-moving tractor trundles along the Dinajpur-Rangpur road with its headlights turned off around 9:30am yesterday. This could have resulted in an accident as other motorists could have failed to see the vehicle. The photo was taken at Dinajpur's Parbatipur upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

## Ensure jail for river grabbers, polluters

FROM PAGE 1

there in the laws. If we only fine them, they will not stop their misdeeds as they have money and power," the NRCC chairman pointed out.

Administration of all districts needs to make databases of rivers with details of their original areas as per the cadastral land survey record in line with an HC order.

Joining the programme virtually as the chief guest, Planning Minister MA Mannan said the government is committed to saving the rivers and will take necessary steps to that end.

"It's true that the government made compromises and didn't do all the things needed to protect the rivers. But it is committed and continues its effort to save those."

The minister also said he would talk to the prime minister about further efforts to save the rivers.

Bac Chairman Hossain Zillur Rahman said government efforts are limited to making lists of grabbers and evicting them.

"Only eviction of grabbers is not enough, we need to nourish the rivers," he said.

Environmentalists have been talking about saving rivers for a long time.

Now it is time for economists to show the economic value of saving a river, rather than killing it in the name of development, Zillur noted.

Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, said that if the relevant laws are not implemented, the river grabbers and polluters will become more aggressive in carrying on their misdeeds.

The Landmass of Bangladesh was formed as the rivers brought sediment from the Himalayas, he noted. "If we cannot protect our rivers, our very existence will be threatened. If we only think about industrialisation without taking the rivers and the environment into consideration, one day we will have to hire foreign consultants to revive the rivers."

Dr Rashed Ahmed Titumir, chairman of the International Union for Conservation of Nature, said the government needs to involve people in the efforts to save the rivers.

Government agencies often take up development projects that lead to death of rivers. The government should conduct benefit-cost analysis before taking up a project and ensure conservation of the rivers and the environment.

Sharif Jamil, general secretary of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon, said the HC has issued so many directives to the government but those were not implemented because river grabbers are powerful and influential people in the society.

"I urge the government to evict the river grabbers and also make sure that no one can grab any river from now on."

The government should also ensure punishment of those public officials concerned who don't perform their duties and let grabbers encroach on rivers.

Manzil Murshid, a lawyer at the Supreme Court, said a law should be enacted with a provision making river grabbers and polluters ineligible to contest elections and also to get bank loans.

NRCC Member Sharmin Sonia Murshid, who conducted the programme, urged the government to help and empower the commission so that it can work effectively.

She also thanked The Daily Star for regularly covering river-related issues.

The programme was also attended by divisional commissioners as well as deputy commissioners from different districts.

## Physical work to begin in June

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Mass Rapid Transit Line-1 or MRT-1, is completed, it would be able to carry 8 lakh passengers daily. The rail line is expected to be done in 2026.

The 31.24km MRT Line-1 will have two parts -- around 19.87km from Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport to Kamalapur with 16.4km underground lines and around 11.36km elevated lines from Notun Bazar to Purbachal.

It would have 19 stations, of which 12 would be underground and seven elevated.

The MRT Line-1 will be second among the six lines to be built in the capital and its adjacent areas to ease traffic congestion and control environmental pollution.

The government has taken up a plan to build the 128.74km metro rail network -- 67.56km elevated and 61.17km underground -- with 104 stations within 2030.

Construction of the country's first ever metro rail line -- MRT-6 -- is now going on to connect Uttara Third Phase with Motijheel with 20.10km elevated rail

lines.

The project witnessed 55.19 percent progress till last month. The DMICL is now working to extend the line up to Kamalapur Railway Station from Motijheel.

**UNDERGROUND RAIL LINE**

The government signed a loan agreement with Japan International Cooperation Agency (Jica) in June 2017 for appointing a consultant firm for detail design and tender assistance.

The project feasibility was done in December 2018.

In October 2018, the DMICL appointed NKDOS consortium for preparing detail design and tender documents.

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council in October last year approved the project to be implemented within September 2019 and December 2026.

Of the Tk 52,561.43 crore costs, the government will provide Tk 13,111 crore and the Jica Tk 39,450 crore.

As per the plan, Airport-Kamalapur route has 12 underground stations -- at the airport, Terminal-3 of the airport,

Khilkhet, Jamuna Future Park, Notun Bazar, Uttara Badda, Badda, Hatirjheel East, Rampura, Malibagh, Rajarbagh and Kamalapur.

The Purbachal part will have stations at Notun Bazar, Bashundhara, Police Officers' Housing Society, Mastul, Purbachal West, Purbachal Centre and Purbachal East.

The depot would be established at Pitalganj in Narayangaj's Rugganj. The Notun Bazar station would serve as an interchange.

The DMICL authorities had a plan to start the physical work in December. But they had to change the plan due to the Covid-19 pandemic, MAN Siddique said.

He said they are now finalising the tender documents before sending it to Japan for approval within this month.

Meanwhile, the authorities have started land acquisition for building depot and depot's access road in Rugganj's Pitalganj and Brahmankhali moujas. A total of 93 acres of land would be acquired for the purpose, according to the project documents.

## Man shot dead as supporters

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Sources said the clash ensued around 8:30pm between supporters of Nazrul and another councillor hopeful Abdul Quader, also a local AL leader and former ward councillor.

Hit by bullets, Babul was rushed to the CMCH where doctors declared

him dead around 9:30pm, said the CMP commissioner.

He said police were conducting drives to arrest those involved in the clash.

The polls to Chattogram City Corporation are scheduled to be held on January 27.

## Healthcare staffers'

FROM PAGE 1

The first instalment of the Oxford-AstraZeneca's Covid-19 vaccine from Serum Institute of India (SII) would arrive by January 25. A total of 50 lakh doses will be administered in the first month among 25 lakh people, two doses per person.

As per the contract, Beximco Pharmaceuticals Ltd will deliver the three crore doses to the district level EPI storages from SII in six phases.

Meanwhile, the government was preparing the response to COVAX in a positive note that it would take the Pfizer vaccine that requires to store at minus 70 degrees Celsius.

The government decided primarily to take the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine from COVAX despite challenges of maintaining the cold chain and ensuring the supply of the particular syringes required.

The COVAX programme, led by

the World Health Organization and global alliance GAVI, has offered Bangladesh around four lakh doses of the vaccine developed by US drugmaker Pfizer and Germany's BioNTech.

COVAX has promised to deliver a total of 2 billion doses of vaccines to at least 172 countries by the end of this year.

"We have drafted the reply and hopeful to give it by January 18," said a top official of DGHS wishing not to be named.

Meanwhile, Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) in a press statement urged the government to ensure transparency at level in Covid-19 vaccine purchase and distribution in priority basis.

The corruption watchdog stressed to follow the rules and legal procedures in the vaccination programme to avert corruption.

## Homegrown nasal spray

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that the virus mainly travels through and stays primarily at nasopharynx and oropharynx and if the solution is sprayed every three hours, the virus load at those places will be reduced.

"The greater the virus load, the greater the risk of severity," she said.

The acting DG also claimed that the main benefit of the solution was that it helped contain community transmission.

She said they have already applied for a patent and will apply to Bangladesh Medical Research Council on Thursday for a formal trial.

The research team is comprised of 12 members, including Mostafa Kamal Arefin, Brig Gen AKM Nasir Uddin, Sheikh Nurul Fatah Rumi and Sultana Sahana Banu.

The estimated cost of the Bangasef

Oro-Nasal Spray would be around Tk 100 for a 25ml bottle.

The issue came to the fore when it was placed before the parliamentary standing committee on the science and technology ministry.

When contacted, Awami League MP and Chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on Ministry of Science and Technology, AFM Ruhul Haque told The Daily Star that BRICM has told the committee that they have prepared "Covodine Iodine Solution", which reduces the viral load of Covid-19.

The parliamentary standing committee has asked BRICM to investigate further on the solution and carry out clinical trials on more people.

Ruhul said as far as they know, use of such sprays did not take place in other countries.

## Police high-ups failing to act: HC

FROM PAGE 1

incident. And for that obvious reason, the respondent no 4 [IGP], who is the highest controlling authority of the police, cannot skirt around his responsibility on such a planned, deliberate and wrongful act committed on hapless innocent Md Arman."

The HC bench of Justice Md Mozibur Rahman Miah And Justice Mohi Uddin Shamim made the observation in the full text of its verdict delivered after a writ petition was filed challenging the wrongful arrest of Arman and keeping him in jail for around five years instead of the original accused named Shahabuddin in the drug case.

The 39-page full text verdict was released yesterday.

On December 31 last year, the HC bench following the writ petition filed by Law and Life Foundation, a rights organisation, declared the arrest and detention of Arman illegal and contradictory to his fundamental and human rights, and asked the authorities concerned of the government to immediately release him from Kashimpur Jail-2.

The HC also directed the IGP to give Tk 20 lakh in compensation to Arman in 30 days after receiving the copy of the verdict and ordered the DMP commissioner to withdraw five police officers responsible for the wrongful arrest.

The IGP and the DMP commissioner have been asked to submit separate reports to the HC by February 14.

The HC also ordered the Police Bureau of Investigation to conduct an enquiry into the incident and submit a probe report by April 11.

A special court in Dhaka sentenced Shahabuddin and two of his cohorts to 10 years in prison and fined them Tk 5,000 each in the drug case. But Pallabi police on January 30, 2016, arrested Arman.

In the full text of the verdict, the HC judges said, "It is thus high time to filter out those unscrupulous police officials from the disciplined force to renew confidence in the mind of general populace..."

"What happened to the fate of Md Arman just bears the testimony of a naked highhandedness of some derailed

police officials and certainly the entire police force cannot take responsibility of that misdemeanor and blame for such an irresponsible, immoral act of some rogue police officials. So it is about time the police has to come out from such stigma and its higher authority to take some distinct and drastic action against the wrongdoers such that none can dare to infract discipline in the force and make any harm to the innocent general public."

The HC judges also observed, "From the enquiry report, testimony of witnesses in particular, the statement of witness no. 7 SI [sub-inspector] Monirara and finally that of the provisional order, it has overwhelmingly found that, the detenu [Arman] has been detained in the jail custody unjustly by purposely showing him convict in a narcotic case in which one, Shahabuddin Behari and two other accused were convicted and sentenced. It unequivocally proves that, detenu Md Arman has been subjected to victim of a long-running conspiracy of some greedy and corrupt police officials that led him to serve such a long confinement."

"On top of that, from the foregoing discussion and observation, we very unambiguously find that, a formidable injustice has been perpetrated upon the hapless detenu by some immoral, corrupt, misguided and greedy police officials in a preplanned manner, and in the name of holding the delinquents accountable, a farce and unfounded disciplinary action had been initiated through which two petty police officials have also been subjected to injustice," the HC said.

The bench said, "It is found from the record that, the detenu [Arman] has still been languishing in the prison most illegally and certainly for such unlawful action his very fundamental right to life and personal liberty has grossly been curtailed when Article 32 of our Constitution guarantees protection of his such fundamental right.

"For the last 5 years, the detenu indubitably went through untold physical, mental distress not to say his financial predicament. It has been found from the record that when he had illegally been detained by the police, he left behind his widow mother and

pregnant wife and he himself is a patient of convulsion ...

"We perceive and deeply feel sorry that, the detenu will not get back the long five years he had been confined to the small cell in the prison nor we can return those golden time of his life he lost for none other than the madness of some immoral police officials nor the compensation we fix can recoup his travails and tribulation nor it can come any solace to the mental and physical agony he endured for the last five years in a jail nor the same can be any means in exchange for his five years illegal incarceration.

"... it is the respective organ of the state to be responsible for that misdeed and thus must provide reparation for the damage committed by its officers to the victim, detenu. And in this particular case, it is the highest authority of the police force who must pay compensation ... Therefore, the respondent no. 4 [IGP] is responsible for that," the HC judges said in the full text verdict.

The HC appreciated the media particularly for publishing reports on the incident involving Arman and the police officials concerned.

In another development, the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court yesterday stayed for eight weeks the part of the HC verdict that directed the IGP to give Tk 20 lakh in compensation to Arman.

Chamber judge of the Appellate Division Justice Md Nuruzzaman passed the stay order following a petition filed by the IGP challenging the HC order.

The IGP will file a leave-to-appeal petition with the apex court challenging the HC verdict after receiving the full text, Deputy Attorney General Amit Das Gupta told The Daily Star.

He said the IGP office had recently submitted the stay petition to the Appellate Division saying that the HC has ordered the IGP to give Tk 20 lakh to Arman without assessing the damage. Besides, departmental action has been taken against the police officers, who are responsible for wrongly arresting and keeping Arman in jail and therefore, the IGP is not liable for giving any compensation, DAG Amit Das Gupta said, citing the IGP's petition.

## I have told the truth, will continue to do so'

Quader Mirza says

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

Abdul Quader Mirza, mayor of Noakhali's Basurhat municipality, yesterday voiced resentment over alleged remarks about him by his elder brother Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader.

"In presence of one of his servants, he [Obaidul Quader] said I am a self-proclaimed mayoral candidate, and that I am not a party man.

"Now you people tell me whether I am a self-proclaimed candidate... This is an insult," the mayor said at a rally in Basurhat's Hospital Gate area.

Mirza, who is contesting the January 16 Basurhat municipality polls for the mayoral post on the Awami League ticket, has recently stirred up a debate in the country's political arena through some of his comments.

Yesterday, the mayor said, "He [Obaidul Quader] even said my speeches are harmful and shameful for the party... But I am telling the truth about irregularities and corruption. I'm not saying this as brother of Obaidul Quader.

"My elder brother is not with me. The party's central leaders and district unit leaders are also not with me. But are you with me? If you like me, please go to polling centres on January 16 morning and vote for me," he told the rally.

Mirza once again accused some AL leaders in Noakhali of hatching a conspiracy against him to incite violence centring the election.

He hoped the election commissioner concerned, scheduled to visit the electoral area tomorrow, would take necessary measures to hold the polls in a free and fair manner.

He also slammed both the deputy commissioner and the superintendent of police in the district, alleging that they were playing a "biased role".

"The DC and the SP did not take any action against the woman who hurled abusive words at me over phone," claimed Mirza.

"I have told the truth and will continue to do so... If I am re-elected, I will take stern action against those who are involved in crimes, corruption and irregularities."

Over the last few days, Mirza on several occasions said if elections were held in a free and fair manner, all AL lawmakers in Noakhali region, except those from three or four constituencies, "would not have found ways to escape".

While unveiling his election manifesto on December 31 last year, he alleged that some local lawmakers and AL leaders are involved in corruption, tender manipulation and recruitment scams.

His remarks put the AL top brass in an awkward situation.

RAPE AT MC COLLEGE

## Court accepts charge sheet

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A local court yesterday accepted the charge sheet in the case filed over the gang rape of a woman at Murari Chand College hostel over three months ago.

Judge Md Mohitul Haque of Sylhet Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal accepted the charge sheet, filed by police on December 3 last year, said advocate Rashida Syeda Khanom, public prosecutor of the tribunal.

The court, however, did not fix any date for framing charges against the eight accused, she added.

Earlier, the hearing on the charge sheet was deferred twice following pleas by the plaintiff's lawyers.

According to the charge sheet, the victim and her husband were forcefully taken into the hostel by the accused on September 25 last year when the couple went to visit the college area in the evening.

Later, the accused asked for Tk 50,000 as ransom. Being denied, they raped the victim after tying her husband, snatched her gold jewellery and mugged Tk 2,000.

On December 3, Sub-Inspector Indranil Bhattacharya, also the investigation officer of the case, submitted the charge sheet to Sylhet Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's court.

Six people were charged with rape of the woman while two others were accused of assisting them.

The rape accused are: Saifur Rahman, 28, Shah Mahbubur Rahman Rony, 25, Tarekul Islam, 28, Arjun Laskar, 26, Mohammad Ainuddin Ainul, 26, and Misbaul Islam Rajon, 27.

Rabiul Hasan, 25, and Mahfuzur Rahman Masum, 25, are the two other accused. All the eight are now behind bars.

All the accused were involved in the politics of Chhatra League, the pro-Awami League student front, said local BCL sources.