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Your Right to Know

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"The crisis of deep human suffering is in plain sight, and there's not time to waste."
JOE BIDEN ON \$1.9TN CORONAVIRUS STIMULUS PACKAGE



"Yeah, that's [against Bangladesh] where it started... There has always been a good fight and they are a mentally tough team."
WEST INDIES PACER KEMAR ROACH ON PLAYING BANGLADESH, THE TEAM AGAINST WHICH HE MADE HIS TEST DEBUT.



"Making peace with nature is the defining task of the 21st century. It must be the top priority."
UN CHIEF ANTONIO GUTERRES ON CATASTROPHIC TEMPERATURE RISE

EVIDENCE PRESERVATION AT POLICE STATIONS

It's a mess in Maalkhanas

With trials of around 37 lakh cases still pending with higher and lower courts and the number growing every passing day, evidence in police storerooms is also piling up.



SHARIFUL ISLAM and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

At first glance, it looked like piles of trash jumbled together.

Documents, firearms, bullets, mouldy clothes and shoes, human bones and drugs were strewn across the storeroom, widely known as a maalkhana, at Kushtia Model Police Station.

All these are important pieces of evidence collected in various cases filed with the police station. Insects were buzzing inside the room, which remains closed most of the time and smelled.

"We do not have proper facilities to preserve the evidence and there are

chances of those getting damaged," said Kamruzzaman Talukdar, officer-in-charge of the police station, adding that he contacted the higher authorities for special arrangements to preserve the evidence.

This is the picture of one police maalkhana -- a highly restricted facility -- where important evidence in cases over the years are being kept like piles of rubbish.

The problem is particularly acute in police stations housed in small old buildings or rented houses, where evidence is kept for as long as 20 years amid shabby and damp conditions.

Failing to accommodate all the things

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A face mask vendor pedals his bicycle on a road in the capital's Shahbagh area yesterday. The sale of face covers, hand sanitisers and other personal protective equipment has gone up in recent months amid the Covid-19 outbreak.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

EDN INSTITUTIONS

Closure extended till Jan 30

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ongoing closure of all educational institutions for coronavirus pandemic have been extended again till January 30.

Qawmi madrasas, however, will be exempted from this directive, read a press release of the Ministry of Education yesterday.

The country's educational institutions have been closed since March 17 due to Covid-19 outbreak. Earlier, the closure was extended till January 16.

The first cases of novel coronavirus were detected on March 8 in the country.

On March 17, the government closed all the schools, hampering academic activities of around four crore students.

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VACCINE ROLLOUT IN BANGLADESH

No antibody tests, even no dry run

Experts say this will cause wastage of vaccines; dry run needed to see if the vaccine has any adverse effect

MOHAMMAD AL MASUM MOLLA

The government plans to roll out Covid-19 vaccines next month without any dry run and antibody test, which, experts say, are two critical aspects of a vaccination programme.

A dry run or a practice run of a vaccine is a testing process where the effects of a possible failure are intentionally mitigated. It is the complete testing of the system involving all components of the process but is undertaken before delivery to the actual end-users.

Experts said the dry run reveals all possible issues and offers a chance to address them. The testing process reduces chances of wasting the vaccine doses, they said.

Dry run is also needed to find out whether the vaccine makes any adverse impact, they added.

On the other hand, the antibody test would reveal who has developed antibodies against Covid-19, thus allowing the authorities to pick who should receive the jabs first, said the experts.

Officials involved in the national vaccination

taskforce said they would go for a pilot testing at some centres before rolling out the vaccines.

The first batch of 50 lakh doses of Oxford-AstraZeneca coronavirus vaccine, branded as Covishield, is expected to arrive in the country later this month and the vaccination is scheduled to start early next month. The government placed an order of 3 crore Covishield shots from Serum Institute of India. Besides, it has also confirmed another 6.8 crore vaccine doses from COVEX, a global vaccine alliance.

Bangladesh has so far recorded more than 5.26 lakh Covid-19 cases since March 8 last year when the virus was first reported in the country.

As many as 7,862, people lost their lives to the disease till yesterday. The death rate currently stands at 1.49 percent.

Contacted, Dr Shamsul Haque, member secretary of the Covid-19 Vaccine Management Taskforce, said, "It would have been good if we could do the dry run. But we will do piloting.

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Infection rate now 5.57pc

762 Covid cases reported in a day, 13 more die

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh saw a daily infection rate of 5.57 percent with 762 new cases reported in 24 hours ending at 8:00am yesterday.

The country recorded the daily infection rate of 4.90 percent on January 14, 8.29 percent on January 10, 7.52 percent on January 4 and 8.18 percent on January 1.

Bangladesh has recorded 526,485 cases so far.

And the country's fatality number rose to 7,862 and death rate to 1.49 percent, with 13 Covid-19 deaths in the last 24 hours, since the first death was reported on March 18.

So far, 3,431,792 tests, including 13,678 new

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BHARAT BIOTECH'S CORONAVIRUS VACCINE

Concerns grow in India over safety

AGENCIES

A homegrown coronavirus vaccine will be rolled out in India from today even though clinical trials haven't been completed. But the government insists it will be safe and effective.

The All India Drug Action Network (AIDAN), an independent watchdog, led a chorus of concern from experts saying it was "shocked" and "baffled" by the emergency approval of Covaxin, developed by Bharat Biotech and the Indian Council of Medical Research.

India has been hit hard by the virus, logging the second-highest number of Covid-19 infections globally with more than 10.5 million cases, and over 150,000 deaths -- behind only the United States and Brazil.

In early January New Delhi greenlighted Covishield, a version of AstraZeneca and Oxford University's shot made by India's Serum Institute, the world's largest vaccine manufacturer.

But it also gave "emergency approval" to Covaxin even though phase 3 human trials were yet to be completed.

Authorities stated -- without releasing supporting data -- that Covaxin might work better against new Covid-19 strains than other vaccines that use different technologies.

According to Prabir Chatterjee, a community medicine specialist in West Bengal, the lack of data was causing "a lot of upset among doctors and very senior doctors and scientists."

"I would guess that the Bharat Biotech vaccine, after it has been evaluated, may be the best, the cheapest and the most practical for developing countries," he told AFP.

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WANTED BY INTERPOL

2 arrested over human trafficking

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two Bangladeshis wanted by Interpol on human trafficking charges were arrested by law enforcers in Bangladesh and Italy on Thursday, said investigators.

Jafor Ikbal, 38, of Kishoreganj, and Shahadat Hossain, 28, of Dhaka, stand accused in a human trafficking case filed in connection with the killings of 26 Bangladeshis in Libya last year.

Jafor was held in the Italian city of Cosenza, while police arrested Shahadat from the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka upon his arrival from abroad, investigators added.

The two were put in Interpol's "wanted-list" along with four other Bangladeshis accused in the human trafficking case filed with Paltan Police Station in June last year.

A red notice was issued by Interpol asking about

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An indigenous woman weaves a cloth on a handloom in front of her home in Sajek union of Rangamati's Bagaichari upazila. Her family members weave cloth in their spare time to meet their own demand. The use of handlooms, now being replaced by power looms, is a laborious and time-consuming process. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

60 municipalities go to polls amid violence worries

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Elections to 60 municipalities will take place today amid fears of further violence in many places.

Clashes in Jhenidah and Rajshahi have already made people wary of the elections.

The Election Commission (EC) is using Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) in 29 municipalities and traditional ballot papers in 31.

The EC has been holding the polls in four phases due to the pandemic. Today's will be the second.

The main contest would presumably be between the Awami League and BNP nominees. Other political parties, including the Jatiya Party and Islami Andolan Bangladesh, are also participating in the polls.

EC Senior Secretary Mohammad Alamgir said the EC had taken measures to prevent violence during and after the polls.

"We asked law enforcers to maintain law and order and to take strict actions against miscreants," he told The Daily Star.

He added that social distancing and mask wearing would be strictly maintained.

A total of 216 people are running for mayor at the 60 municipalities in 33 districts.

There are 2,232 councillor candidates and 724 women's reserve seat candidates.

No election for mayor will be held in four municipalities in Sirajganj, Pabna, Pirojpur and Narayanganj.

In Shaikupa municipality of Jhenidah, two ruling Awami League men belonging to rival groups were killed on Wednesday night and early Thursday.

One of them was councillor aspirant Alamgir Khan Babu.

The EC then postponed the polls for ward-8 of Shaikupa municipality, reports our correspondent in Jhenidah.

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