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Your Right to Know

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"We are not at all sure whether the ordinary people will get the [Covid] vaccine."
BNP SECRETARY GENERAL
MIRZA FAKHRUL ISLAM ALAMGIR



"You can't speak highly enough of India; it is as simple as that."
FORMER AUSTRALIA CAPTAIN RICKY PONTING AFTER INDIA'S HISTORIC SERIES-CLINCHING WIN IN BRISBANE. PAGE 11



"Settlement expansion... further erodes the possibility of ending the occupation and establishing a contiguous and viable sovereign Palestinian State."
UN CHIEF ANTONIO GUTERRES ON NEW SETTLEMENTS IN WEST BANK

EDUCATION DURING PANDEMIC

Digital divide wreaks damage

Access to distance learning abysmally low, finds Education Watch survey

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Distance learning programmes through television, radio and internet, adopted after the school closure due to Covid-19, remain by and large ineffective, finds a study.

The finding was mentioned in the interim Education Watch Report 2020-21 released virtually by Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) yesterday.

The researchers who carried out the study said the prolonged closure, since March last year, is resulting in growing monotony and boredom in millions of children who are confined to their home, away from their peers.

They interviewed 2,952 respondents, including 1,709 primary and secondary students, 578 teachers and 576 parents, picked from eight districts in eight divisions for the study. The interviews were taken over phone in the first and second weeks of last month.

According to the report, about 69.5 percent of the students did not participate in the distance learning and 57.9pc of them said they could not join the classes due to a lack of devices.

About 69 percent of the students in rural areas interviewed said they could not take

- Nearly 4cr students stay out of school
- 69.5% of surveyed students did not participate in distance learning
- 58% of them did not have devices
- 75% students want to be back in classroom soon
- 76% parents for re-opening of schools
- 62% teachers for shortening syllabus

part in the classes for not having devices, the report says.

On the other hand, 16.5pc of students interviewed said they did not find online classes "interesting" and that was why they skipped them.

"Distance learning programmes, by and large, remain ineffective. Students said they do not have TVs, laptops, computers and smartphones," Mostafizur Rahaman, one of the study team members, told The Daily Star after the report was launched yesterday.

Contacted for comments, Directorate of

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FIELDS OF GOLD...Sunflowers in bloom at a farm of Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC) in Faridpur's Domrakandi area. Sunflowers are grown at the farm to produce seeds and supply it to other BADC centres across the country. People from different districts also visit the farm every day to enjoy the beauty of the vast flower fields. The photo was taken on Monday.

PHOTO: SUZIT KUMAR DAS

US readies for inauguration of 46th president

With message of unity, Biden arrives in Washington

AFP, Washington

President Donald Trump spent his last full day in the White House yesterday mulling pardons and President-elect Joe Biden was set to arrive in Washington ahead of an inauguration that his predecessor, in a final break with tradition, will snub.

Trump has not appeared in public for a week and, suspended from Twitter in the wake of his encouraging supporters to march on Congress, has been uncharacteristically silent.

There have been no call-ins to his favorite Fox News hosts, interviews with the networks, or speeches celebrating his stormy one-term administration.

In another first, Trump has yet to publicly congratulate Biden on his win, wish him luck, or invite him for the customary cup of tea in the Oval Office.

In one of his last acts before he flies to Florida from Joint Base Andrews today

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Pilot vaccination likely next week

20 lakh jabs as gift from India to arrive tomorrow

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA and MOUJIB AHMED SUJAN

The government is likely to start piloting the Covid-19 vaccination from next week with the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccines obtained from the Indian government, doses of which are expected to arrive in Dhaka tomorrow.

The launch date of piloting the vaccination will be finalised upon the prime minister's consent, Health Minister Zahid Maleque told The Daily Star yesterday, adding that the PM will inaugurate the piloting through a virtual conference.

"The prime minister will inaugurate the piloting. She is likely to be virtually connected with the event in Kurmitola General Hospital (KGH)," said the health minister.

Twenty lakh doses of Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccines, a token gift of friendship from the Indian government, are scheduled to reach the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport tomorrow.

The piloting will take place in KGH and some other hospitals where around 500 people are likely



to participate voluntarily, said the minister.

He said the vaccine recipient would be under observation for seven days before the mass inoculation campaign.

"We will start the mass vaccination campaign once the purchased vaccines arrived. If it does not arrive on time, we will start mass inoculation with the [20 lakh] token vaccines," the minister added.

The decision was taken at a virtual meeting held at the Prime Minister's Office with the principal secretary of the PMO in chair.

Bangladesh purchased three crore doses of the Oxford vaccine, called Covishield, from the Serum Institute of India. The first consignment of 50 lakh Covishield doses is expected to arrive on January 25.

Volunteers from various professions including a doctor, a nurse, a technologist, a health assistant, an elderly person, a police official, a BGB personnel, a defence official, a journalist and some others may take part in the trial process at the Kurmitola

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WAZ MAHFIL Will look into provocative sermons

Says chief of DMP counter-terror unit

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police said they will keep an eye on waz mahfils to identify those delivering indecent speeches in the name of sermons.

Monirul Islam, chief of the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit, came up with the remarks yesterday. "We have noticed that recently some speakers in waz mahfils are giving political and indecent speeches about mothers and sisters rather than discussing the five pillars of Islam."

He was speaking as a keynote speaker at a seminar titled "The Role of Islamic Scholars in Preventing Violent

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HOUSEHOLD GAS SUPPLY Acute crisis hits many areas in city

ASIFUR RAHMAN

Residents of many areas in the capital have been facing an acute gas crisis for the last few weeks due to an inadequate supply of piped gas.

Officials attributed the dearth of supply to the reduced import of liquefied natural gas (LNG) in recent months following a hike in the price of the fossil fuel in the international spot market.

The country needs at least 525 mmcf of imported LNG a day to keep the gas supply at normal level.

Ali Iqbal Md Nurullah, managing director of Titas Gas, said they were getting less LNG supply by around 200 mmcf daily.

He said households in some city areas were experiencing supply shortage mainly due to the dearth of LNG supply to gas distribution companies.

Iqbal, however, said household users were not supposed to suffer from low gas pressure. Titas Gas is the distribution authority of household gas in Dhaka city.

Speaking to The Daily Star on condition of anonymity, a Titas Gas official said the supply of piped gas has been decreasing for the last few years.

"The gas lines in households are designed for supplying gas at 50 psi [pounds per square inch]. For the last few years, gas is available in households at around 10-12 psi," he said.

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Int'l cricket returns with first ODI against WI

SPORTS REPORTER

March 11, 2020 was when Bangladesh last played an international match -- the second and final match of the T20I series against Zimbabwe at home.

Soon afterwards, the coronavirus pandemic brought the world, and sport in general, to a standstill. With a global pandemic ravaging nations, health and safety came first and sport took a back seat.

Time went by and international cricket made its return in July 2020 when West Indies toured England, but for Bangladesh, the stage was not yet primed for international cricket's return.

Today, after over 10 months, Bangladesh will finally return to international cricket with the first of the three ODIs against the West Indies at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur. The day-night game is

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Bangladesh's star all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan and rookie batsman Saif Hassan are in a cheerful mood during the training session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. Bangladesh are set to return to international cricket after more than 10 months when they take on the West Indies in the first of three ODIs today.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

ROHINGYA REPATRIATION Dhaka expects it to start by June

Says foreign secy after trilateral meet between Bangladesh, Myanmar, China

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka is expecting that the repatriation of Rohingyas will begin in the second quarter of this year as Bangladesh, Myanmar and China held a tripartite meeting on the issue yesterday.

"We discussed starting Rohingya repatriation in the first quarter. But Myanmar said there are issues regarding logistics and physical arrangement and addressing those will take some time. We can expect that it will begin in the second quarter," Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen said.

"We failed in the last two attempts. We want to be successful this time. Personally, I am cautiously optimistic," Masud told reporters at the foreign ministry yesterday after the virtual meeting between Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Luo Zhaohui, Myanmar Deputy Minister Hau Do Suan and him.

A similar trilateral meeting was held on January 20 last year. Dhaka was frustrated after two repatriation efforts failed in November 2018 and August 2019 as Rohingyas refused to return to their homeland saying Myanmar did not ensure their safety, citizenship and basic rights despite facing a genocide case at the International Court of Justice.

Some 750,000 Rohingyas fled a brutal military campaign in Rakhine in 2017 and joined some 300,000 others who had fled earlier waves of persecution. Against this backdrop, Dhaka sees the tripartite meeting, initiated by China, as a ray of hope.

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