

**BANGLADESH UPDATE**



**656**

New cases in 24hrs



**5,29,687**

Total cases



**7,950**

Deaths



**4,74,472**

Recoveries



**2,072,000**

Deaths



**96,845,758**

Total cases

## Include those aged 50

FROM PAGE 1  
list, in which frontline health and social-care workers, along with different other professionals, have been included. The list also includes people aged 64 and above, and those under 65 with comorbidity.

Officials of Directorate General of Health Services said they prepared the priority list in line with guidelines from the World Health Organisation, a scientific advisory group of experts and taking the current context of the country into consideration.

But experts said people aged between 50 and 63, especially in the Covid-19 red zone districts, should also be vaccinated in the first phase, considering the current Covid-19 situation. They said it would save lives.

DGHS data show more than 80 percent of those who died after contracting the virus in the country were aged over 50, and more than half of the deceased lived in Dhaka, Chattogram, Narayanganj and Gazipur.

Among the 7,950 dead so far, more than 25 percent or 1,994 people were aged between 51 and 60. Of the total 529,687 Covid positive cases, 11 percent belonged to the 51-60 age group, shows the IEDCR website, which contains data of till January 18.

"The existing vaccination plan of the government is good. But maximizing the outcome should be the key. For doing so, the government should include those aged 50 and above in the priority list," Prof Sayedur Rahman Khasru, chairman of pharmacology at the BSMMU, told The Daily Star.

"If we can administer a single dose on those from the most vulnerable age groups in the risky zones, it will protect them, resulting in fewer deaths and infections," he said.

Dr Mushtuq Hussain, a consultant at the IEDCR, said the vaccination plan could be modified considering the availability of vaccines. "The WHO's scientific conference [on Friday] advised the authorities to vaccinate the people with higher risks and in the infection-intensive areas if the number of vaccine doses are limited."

He also said with fewer vaccine shots in hand, the government should be open to inoculating people who came in contact with any positive cases.

"This is called ring vaccination which was applied during the smallpox inoculation campaign," said Mushtuq.

Infectious disease expert Prof Ridwanur Rahman too opined that people aged 50 and above can be included in the priority list. "People

aged 50 and above can be included in the priority list, if there are necessary supplies. If supplies are limited, the people with comorbidity should get priority," he told The Daily Star on Tuesday.

Health Minister Zahid Maleque told reporters on Thursday that the government had decided to increase the minimum age limit for the vaccination to 50 in the priority list.

But a DGHS official, preferring not to be named, said the minister actually asked to include people from the 50-63 age group in vaccination campaign, subject to the availability of eight lakh Pfizer vaccines from the Covax.

Bangladesh is supposed to get 6.8 crore vaccine shots from Covax, a global vaccine alliance. But the authorities have said the country's existing cold chain system cannot support the ultra-sub-zero vaccines like Pfizer which are needed to be stored at temperatures below -70 degrees Celsius.

Dr Shamsul Haque Mridha, line director of Maternal Neonatal Child and Adolescent Health at the DGHS, said they were still not considering to include people aged between 50 and 63 in the priority list for the first phase.

"They are not included in the first list of 1.5 crore people," he said.

Shamsul, however, said everything would depend on the availability of the vaccines. "We cannot say right now how many doses we will get, apart from those from Serum."

He said a total of 50 lakh people -- drawn from 18 professional and age categories -- would get the first dose of Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine in the first month. The second dose would be given eight weeks after the first shot.

Prof Sayedur Rahman, however, recommended increasing the gap to 12 weeks or more from eight weeks. "We will get only 3 crore doses of vaccine in the next six months. If we go for the single-dose policy, we can protect more people. The UK has extended the interval between two doses to 12 weeks. It means they want to give protection to more people -- even if it is for a few months."

Financial Times newspaper of England has reported that extending the interval could give better immunity in case of Oxford vaccines.

Data from the Oxford/AstraZeneca trials also showed that antibody levels were nearly three times higher in participants who had waited 12 weeks between doses, compared with those where the gap had been under 6 weeks.



A woman counting the money she received as allowance for the elderly people in the capital's Tejgaon yesterday. She said she had to wait for four hours in the queue to receive the money.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## 20 lakh vaccine doses arrive today

FROM PAGE 1  
The secretary said refrigerated trucks of the Expanded Programme on Immunization would carry the vaccine to a storage facility in the capital's Tejgaon.

At first, between 400 and 500 people will be given the shots at Dhaka Medical College Hospital, Kurmitola General Hospital, Mugda Medical College Hospital and Kuwait Bangladesh Friendship Government Hospital.

"We will observe the recipients for seven days," Mannan said.

Before that, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will virtually inaugurate the vaccination campaign. The date has yet to be fixed, the secretary said.

Some 20-25 health workers or other frontline workers, freedom fighters, and civil society members will be inoculated during the inauguration.

Beximco will deliver the purchased

doses to the EPI storage facilities in districts across the country, the secretary said.

The shots will then be taken to certain upazila-level hospitals using EPI vehicles.

Countrywide inoculation will be launched after the inauguration and the seven-day observation.

"A total of 60 lakh people will be vaccinated in the first month and 50 lakh in the second month. In the third month, the 60 lakh people who received the first shot in the first month would get the second shot," the health secretary said.

**MINOR SIDE-EFFECTS**  
Each vaccine recipient will be kept under observation for 10-15 minutes and if they show any adverse effect, they will be treated at the hospital where they were inoculated.

Director General Prof ABM Khurshid Alam of the Directorate

General Health Services said the Oxford vaccine had only minor side-effects like rash, mild pain and fever.

"In case of any vaccination, there is a risk of anaphylactic shock [a serious allergic reaction]. But we have not heard about this effect in the case of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine," he said.

The health secretary said each vaccine recipient would be followed up via the telemedicine number: 16263.

N M Ziaul Alam, senior secretary at the ICT Division, demonstrated the registration process for the vaccination on a mobile app called "Shuroksha".

Asked whether it would be possible to report adverse effects using the app, Ziaul said the option would be included by the end of this month.

He didn't say when the app would be available to the public.

## Project directors hardly

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Thirteen projects have seen less than 25 percent progress while there was zero implementation progress in six.

One of the projects is the development of Rajapur-Patharghata highway undertaken by the Roads and Highways Department. The project was undertaken in July 2017 and is supposed to be completed by June this year.

The initial cost was estimated to be Tk 35 crore. Later, it was revised twice and the cost escalated to Tk 114.4 crore.

But only 53.09 percent of the work has been done.

Another project was undertaken to develop and widen highways in Barishal. The project was also revised twice and the cost had escalated to Tk 667.34 crore from Tk 75 crore. The project duration was between January 2018 and June 2021.

The IMED found that roads were widened without removing electricity

poles in some places.

On the other hand, roads were damaged at many places due to excavation of soil from the roadside.

To save Tojumuddin upazila of Bhola from erosion of the Meghna river, a project was undertaken in July 2016 by the Water Development Board. The initial cost was Tk 99 crore but it later increased to Tk 609.38 crore after two revisions.

So far, 91.81 percent work has been done.

The IMED found that low-quality yellow stone chips were used to build blocks to build the embankment.

It has advised that the quality of concrete blocks and geo bags be maintained.

"To make the project successful, it is necessary to ensure dumping of geo bags and blocks in the right quantities at the right places, according to the project plan. Otherwise, there will be no benefit," recommends IMED.

## Tigers return in style

FROM PAGE 1  
played the key role in the comfortable win.

The champion cricketer notched the best figures by a Bangladeshi bowler in ODIs against the West Indies, ending with four for eight from 7.2 overs to help bundle out the visitors for 122 runs in 32.2 overs.

For the West Indies, the bulk of the scoring was done by debutant Kyle Mayers, who struck 40, and Rovman Powell, who hit 28. None of the other batters were able to absorb the pressure exerted by the Bangladeshi bowlers.

After the hosts won the toss and chose to field, there was a 20-minute rain interruption in the fourth over. The sun did not shine the whole day, making conditions difficult for batting.

Apart from Shakib, young debutant right-arm seamer Hasan Mahmud was impressive, picking up three wickets while Mustafizur Rahman bagged two to rattle through the Windies batting lineup.

It was however not as smooth a chase for Bangladesh as they would have hoped. The home side lost four wickets before the experienced duo of Mushfiqur Rahim (19) and Mahmudullah Riyad (9) remained unbeaten to guide the side to the victory in 33.5 overs.

West Indies' debutant left-arm spinner Akeal Hosen removed Liton Das (14) and Nazmul Hossain (1), while skipper Tamim looked solid before he was stumped for 44 off 69 balls off the bowling of his Caribbean counterpart Jason Mohammed.

Hosen went on to scalp his third wicket, that of Shakib for 19, to end up with the his team's best bowling figures of three for 26 from 10 overs -- the best bowling figures by a West Indies left-arm bowler on debut.

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But Biden confronted head-on the rise of domestic extremism, as witnessed during Trump's presidency in the Capitol mob, deadly attacks on synagogues and immigrants and a violent march by neo-Nazis in Charlottesville, Virginia.

The United States faces "a rise of political extremism, white supremacy, domestic terrorism that we must confront, and we will defeat," Biden said.

"Our history has been a constant struggle between the American ideal that we are all created equal and the harsh ugly reality that racism, nativism, fear and demonization have long torn us apart."

At 78, Biden is the oldest president in US history and only the second Roman Catholic president.

Harris, the daughter of Indian and Jamaican immigrants, became the first Black person, first woman and first Asian-American to serve as the nation's number 2.

She and her husband Doug Emhoff -- America's first-ever "second gentleman" -- were escorted to the inauguration by Eugene Goodman, a Black police officer at the Capitol who lured the mostly white mob away from the Senate chambers in a video that went viral.

Central Washington took on the dystopian look of an armed camp, protected by some 25,000 National Guard troops tasked with preventing any repeat. The Supreme Court reported a bomb threat yesterday morning.

With the general public essentially barred from attending due to the pandemic, Biden's audience at the National Mall instead was 200,000 flags planted to represent the absent crowds.

Biden nonetheless brought in star power -- absent four years ago with Trump. Lady Gaga, in a poofy dress that was Valentine red, sang the national anthem and Tom Hanks prepared for a televised evening appearance with the new president.

Jennifer Lopez sang a pop rendition of "This Land is Your Land," often considered the unofficial US national anthem, ending it by exclaiming the words of the pledge of allegiance -- a nation that promises "liberty and justice for all" -- in Spanish.

**BIDEN TARGETS TRUMP'S LEGACY**  
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## Democracy has prevailed

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Kamala Harris is being sworn in as US Vice President.

PHOTO: REUTERS

environment, Covid-19 and the economy.

Biden, who has vowed a major escalation of vaccination against Covid, warned of a "dark winter" still ahead from the pandemic that has claimed more than 400,000 lives in the United States, more than in any other country.

"We're entering what may be the toughest and deadliest period of the virus," Biden said.

"We must set aside politics and finally face this pandemic as one nation," he said, striking a new tone after Trump's mockery of mask-wearing and business closings meant to halt the virus.

Biden will also end Trump's much-assailed ban on visitors from several majority-Muslim countries and halt construction of the wall that Trump ordered on the US-Mexico border to stem illegal immigration, the aides said.

Many overseas leaders breathed a sigh of relief at the end of Trump's hawkish, go-it-alone presidency, with Biden's team pledging greater cooperation with the rest of the world.

With so many domestic challenges, Biden delved little in his inaugural address into foreign policy, a longtime passion for the former senator, but said: "We will repair our alliances and engage with the world once again."

Although Biden has laid out a packed agenda for his first 100 days, the Senate, in which Democrats are set to take control, could be consumed by Trump's upcoming impeachment trial, which will move ahead even though he has left office.

The trial could serve as an early test of Biden's promise to foster a renewed sense of bipartisanship in Washington.

**TRUMP VOWS TO BE BACK**  
Trump left Washington before the inauguration, walking on a red carpet on the White House lawn with his wife Melania to the Marine One presidential helicopter, which flew near the inauguration-ready Capitol

## Kushtia SP

FROM PAGE 1  
judiciary who is performing the judicial functions as per the provisions of law under the guidance of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh amount to serious contempt of court.

"Such behaviour of the said superintendent of police, Kushtia, is a severe attack to the administration of justice and ultimately the entire judiciary."

The bench asked SP Arafath to place his explanation on the allegation of misbehavior done by his subordinates. It also issued a rule asking the SP to show causes as to why contempt of court proceedings should not be launched against him and why he should not be punished for misbehavior.

According to media reports, Judicial Magistrate Mohsin went to the polling centre at Bheramara Pilot Model High School after receiving complaints of voter fraud during the municipality election on January 16.

He was talking to the presiding officer when SP Arafath, ASP Mostafizur Rahman, and several other policemen went there and loudly called the presiding officer aside.

Mohsin then told the policemen that he was a judicial magistrate and requested them to let him speak to the presiding officer first, the reports said.

SP Arafath then called the magistrate impolite and asked him to leave the centre, according to the reports.

Mohsin recently filed a complaint with the Election Commission accusing the SP of misconduct, reports our correspondent in Kushtia.

Copies of the complaint were sent to the Registrar General's Office of the Supreme Court, law and home ministries, and the office of Inspector General of Police.

The complaint said that the SP has done serious misbehavior and uncourteous conduct which was a blatant violation of the Local Government Election Rules, 2010, according to the reports.

## BCL men to get

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RU VC, two pro-vice-chancellors and the proctor to the VC's residence on January 11.

They started demonstrations following spreading of news that one administrative official was appointed to the university, defying the government's order that postponed all kinds of appointments to RU until further notice.

On December 10, the government issued the order, after a University Grants Commission probe found that the vice-chancellor and other RU officials relaxed the recruitment rules to appoint the VC's daughter and son-in-law as teachers.

Confined VC Prof Sobhan came to talk to the protesting BCL leaders around 2:00am on January 12.

"You have done enough [protest]. I think people who need to understand got your message," Prof Sobhan said.

"I cannot make everything public, there is a problem if I say everything. But InshAllah I will give the highest priorities on your matter [jobs]. Wait and see," Prof Sobhan was saying during the conversation.

Pointing to BCL activists' opinions that the government cannot halt appointment as RU is autonomous in line with the Rajshahi University-1973 Act, Prof Sobhan said, "We all expect jobs. This is your main demand. You have brought the issue of university act tactfully."

At one point, some of the BCL men shouted asking how long they will have to wait for jobs.

In reply, Prof Sobhan said he had talked to the official concerned at the Prime Minister's Office about the withdrawal of the postponement.

"Wait for two or four days. You can wage a movement after that," he said, adding that "you will not miss jobs".

"This is not right. I have not assured anyone of giving jobs," Prof Sobhan said when this newspaper contacted with him over phone.

"I have asked them to leave the place and stop the movement and it is not possible to give appointment due to the government's postponement. We are working on to find out how this postponement can be withdrawn," he said.

When this correspondent said The Daily Star has an audio clip of his conversation, Prof Sobhan said, "They [BCL activists] were waging a movement. We say many things so that they call off their movement."

About the assurance of jobs, the RU VC said all the protesters were jobseekers. Everybody gives hope to jobseekers. There were some people who were not BCL men, he said.

Elias Hossain, a former BCL leader and a demonstrator, said, "We did not have any such conversations with the VC."

Meanwhile, Dablu Sarkar, general secretary of Rajshahi city Awami League, held a meeting with Prof Sobhan on January 13.

After the meeting, Dablu said the dedicated BCL activists were demanding jobs after completing their studies.

"Besides the VC, we all, Rajshahi mayor and MPs, will work so that the postponement on recruitment is withdrawn ... Once it is done, the door to jobs will be opened for the demonstrators," he added.