



# The Daily Star

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Your Right to Know

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"In addition to spreading more quickly, it also now appears that there is some evidence that the new (Covid) variant... may be associated with a higher degree of mortality."

BRITISH PRIME MINISTER BORIS JOHNSON



"... I'm especially proud to be the first African American to hold the position."

RETIRED GENERAL LLOYD AUSTIN AFTER THE US SENATE CONFIRMS HIM AS SECRETARY OF DEFENSE



"We can only end the pandemic anywhere if we end it everywhere."

WHO CHIEF TEDROS ADHANOM GHEBREYESUS WELCOMES PFIZERS OFFER TO GIVE 40M SHOTS TO COVAX

## Pandemic pushes 42pc into poverty

Finds a survey on 5,577 households

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Forty-two percent of 5,577 households covered by a nationwide survey were found below the poverty line, according to the findings of the study released yesterday.

South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM) carried out the survey over November and December last year to find out how the socio economic condition of the families changed because of the pandemic

The non-profit organisation had interviewed the same group of households in 2018 and had found 21.6 percent of them to be below the poverty line. This shot to 42 percent last year.

The poverty line, measured by the per capita expenditure per month, is calculated regionally across the country, with rural and urban areas as well as different divisions having different measurements for the poverty line.

In rural areas, a person below the poverty line would be spending less than Tk 2,260 to Tk 2,916 per month, while in urban

51.2pc of 'new' poor belong to service sector

Proportion of extreme poor jumped to 28.5pc last year from 9.4pc in 2018

Highest increase in upper poverty found in Rangpur

Non-food expenditure fell sharply

areas, it ranges between Tk 2,516 and Tk 3,295.

SANEM's findings indicate that 42 percent of the country's population were spending less than the above-mentioned figures per month, it said.

These findings were revealed in a virtual discussion organised by the organisation.

"The proportion of extreme poor has also increased," Dr Selim Raihan, executive director of SANEM and a professor at Dhaka University's economics department, said at the discussion.

The survey found that the proportion of extreme poor jumped to 28.5 percent last year from 9.4 percent in 2018, nationally.

In urban areas, it climbed up from 6.1 percent in 2018 to 19 percent in 2020, and in rural areas, the increase was three-fold from 11.2 percent in 2018 to 33.2 percent last year.

People whose per capita monthly expenditure is below Tk 1,925 -Tk 2,537 in rural areas, and Tk 1,970 -Tk 2,773 in urban areas are considered to be below the line of extreme poverty.

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A man selling freshly picked pumpkin flowers in the capital's Ahmedbagh area yesterday morning. Many farmers travel to the city from the outskirts to sell winter vegetables in different neighbourhoods to get better prices.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

### COVID TESTING

## Govt approves first locally developed kit

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Directorate General of Drug Administration (DGDA) has approved for the first time a locally developed RT-PCR testing kit that can detect the novel coronavirus.

Bangladeshi biotech company OMC Healthcare Pvt. Ltd developed the kit, which the DGDA approved on January 3, officials said.

The company claims the kit has 98 percent accuracy in detecting the Covid-19 virus.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Md Salahuddin, director of the DGDA, said, "Yes, we have approved the RT-PCR kit developed by OMC Healthcare for production and commercial supply. Their kit passed in the efficacy trial and our technical committee has given its nod after evaluating the trial result."

To approve any RT-PCR kit, the DGDA follows the guidelines of World Health Organisation and the US Center for Disease Control.

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## A nurse to get the first jab Wednesday

PM to virtually launch pilot vaccination at Kurmitola hospital; priority list not prepared yet

MOUDUD AHMED SUJAN

Piloting of the government's Covid-19 inoculation programme will launch on Wednesday through vaccinating a nurse at the capital's Kurmitola General Hospital.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate the programme virtually, said Abdul Mannan, secretary of the health services division at the health ministry.

After the nurse, 24 other frontline workers, including journalists and members of the civil society, will get the vaccine shot, he added.

From January 28, around 400-500 people will be inoculated at multiple vaccination points in five hospitals of the capital every day. People getting shots will be observed for seven days for adverse effects.

The five hospitals are Dhaka Medical College Hospital, Kurmitola General Hospital, Mugda General Hospital, Kuwait Bangladesh Friendship Hospital and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University.

The secretary said these at the National Institute of Kidney Disease and Urology yesterday.

However, officials have yet to finalise the list of frontline health workers who would be vaccinated at the beginning.

"Some 80-100 employees will be vaccinated on the first day [Jan 28]," said Col Md Nazmul Haque, director of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), adding that there are almost 8,000 employees at his organisation.

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### ROHINGYA CRISIS

## Dhaka seeks active global support

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh has sought effective and proactive support from the international community to find a solution to the Rohingya crisis apart from management of the huge displacement.

"We need effective and proactive support from the international community to manage this huge displacement," said Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen.

He said the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) provides a voluntary, non-binding and government-led process to discuss all possible solutions.

The minister also said they had the firsthand experience as Bangladesh is hosting 1.1 million Rohingyas who were forcibly displaced from their ancestral home and a good number of Bangladesh population was regularly displaced due to erratic climate change every year.

Momen made the remarks during his

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### CHATTOGRAM CITY POLLS

## Internal strife has AL worried

BNP better off in terms of intra-party feud

RASHIDUL HASAN and FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN from Ctg

The ruling Awami League is likely to face a stiff test in Wednesday's Chattogram city polls due to a division in the local party unit and presence of a good number of rebel councillor candidates.

Party insiders said councillor elections in many wards may turn out to be AL vs AL contests. With rebel candidates in the electoral race, the party's votes may be split which would ultimately benefit the BNP supported contestants.

The long-standing dispute between two AL factions, led by immediate past Chattogram mayor AJM Nasir Uddin and Deputy Minister for Education Mohibul Hasan Chowdhury Nowfel, is getting worse as the election is only two days away. The party high command is yet to bring the rebels under control.

Failing to make the rebels withdraw their nominations, the AL on January 18 published an advertisement in a leading local Bangla daily with names of party-supported councillor hopefuls.

Two supporters of as many councillor hopefuls have been killed and several others injured in campaign violence in the city so far. The candidates are involved in AL politics.

Besides, clashes broke out during campaigning in many wards of Chattogram City Corporation (CCC) over the AL's intra-party feud.

The ruling party's main rival BNP is comparatively in a better position regarding division in the local party unit.

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## Finally, a roof over their heads

JAMIL MAHMUD, from Habiganj

Abdul Jalil being landless was rooted to poverty of his ancestors.

It was that poverty that forced him to migrate from his birthplace in Noakhali's Begunanj to Habiganj's Chunarughat in 1973. He was just 31.

Since then, Jalil mostly worked as a day-labourer, growing crops in others' lands to earn a living for his family.

But he couldn't earn enough to build a house of his own in all these years.

Yesterday, Jalil's family was given a two-room tin-roofed concrete house built on a khas land in Chunarughat under a government initiative to provide landless and homeless people with land and homes on the occasion of Mujib Borsho.

"Now, I am thinking of leasing in some arable land here to start farming," Jalil said.

Yesterday, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the handing-

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Extremely poor people who just received a piece of land and a home from the government in Chunarughat, Habiganj, watching Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina making an address from the Gono Bhaban yesterday. Landless and homeless families across the country received the benefit under a project taken as part of Mujib Borsho.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Everyone will have a home, a standard life

PM says at ceremony for handing over houses to 66,189 families on occasion of Mujib Borsho



Bss, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said her government would manage shelters for all marking the "Mujib Borsho" to enable them to lead a standard life.

"We have set a target in the Mujib Borsho that not a single person will remain without address or home. I will somehow manage an address for everyone," she said.

The PM was addressing a programme marking the distribution of homes among 66,189 families alongside rehabilitating 3,715 others in the barracks under the Ashrayan-2 project.

Joining the event virtually from the Gono Bhaban, SEE PAGE 2 COL 1