



PARTIAL RESUMPTION OF CLASSES

Schools, colleges asked to prepare

Govt sends guidelines to secondary educational institutions; preparations by Feb 4; classes for students of class 10 and 12 to start first

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR and JAMIL MAHMUD

Only the 10th and 12th graders have to attend classes in person every day while other secondary school and college students may visit their classrooms once a week during the pandemic.

Education Minister Dipu Moni said this in parliament yesterday after the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education on Friday instructed all schools and colleges to be prepared to reopen by February 4.

She said the government will bring students of classes 10 and 12 back to schools and colleges for the sake of their preparation for the SSC and HSC exams.

"We will decide when the schools will reopen after analysing the Covid-19 situation and consulting with the National Technical Advisory Committee on Covid-19," she told parliament while discussing the "Bangladesh Technical

Education Board (Amendment) Bill, 2021". She said students of grades VI, VII, VIII, IX, and XI will come to educational institutions once a week and collect their tasks for the whole week.

"It is not possible to maintain health directives properly... as a result, there will be no scope to bring all students at a time to the educational institutions," she said.

Speaking at a press conference on December 29, Dipu Moni said classes for SSC candidates will be held from February to April and for HSC students from February to May.

She said the government was planning to hold the SSC exams in June and the HSC exams in July or August if the Covid-19 situation in the country does not deteriorate. Usually, the SSC exams start on February 1 and the HSC on April 1 every year.

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A nurse stands in a booth bearing the label "Covid-19 vaccination" at the capital's Mugda General hospital yesterday. With 50 lakh doses arriving today from India today, many such hospitals in the country will soon get busy administering the vaccines in the fight against the pandemic.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

HSC, EQUIVALENT EXAMS

Govt can now publish results without exam

3 bills passed in JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three separate amendment bills were passed in the parliament yesterday, paving the way for publishing results without holding a public exam during a pandemic, epidemic, and Act of God.

The bills are the Intermediate and Secondary Education (Amendment) Bill, 2021, the Bangladesh Vocational Education Board (Amendment) Bill, 2021, and the Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board (Amendment) Bill, 2021.

As per the existing laws, there is no provision to publish the results of HSC

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KASHIMPUR JAIL INCIDENT

Jail super, jailer also withdrawn

They allowed an inmate to spend time with a woman at prison officer's room.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A senior jail superintendent and a jailer were withdrawn yesterday from Kashimpur Central Jail-1 for allowing an inmate to spend time with a woman at a prison officer's room.

Superintendent Ratna Roy and jailer Nur Mohammad Mridha are among five prison employees to be withdrawn after leaked security camera footage showed a woman meeting inmate Tushar Ahmed, general manager of Hallmark Group, on January 6.

Ratna and Nur were withdrawn for the sake of investigation, said Brig Gen Mominur Rahman Mamun, inspector general of prisons. "Further steps will be taken after [we] receive the investigation reports from the probe committees," he added.

Deputy jailer Golam Saqlain, sergeant instructor Abdul

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Antibody test for Covid-19 gets govt nod

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has approved rapid antibody tests for Covid-19, Health Minister Zahid Maleque said yesterday.

"There has long been a demand for the approval of antibody tests. We have now approved it, effective from today," he told reporters at his secretariat office.

The antibody tests can detect if a person had been infected with Covid-19 in the past and a possible immune response to the virus.

For months, there were strong recommendations from the National Technical Advisory Committee (NTAC) on Covid-19 to introduce

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OXFORD VACCINES FROM SERUM, INDIA

50 lakh shots arrive today

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

With all uncertainties over obtaining Covid vaccine removed, the main challenges for the government ahead are to run the mass inoculation campaign smoothly and involve people in the process, say experts.

Bangladesh has already received 20 lakh doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine as a gift from the Indian government. And the first consignment of 50 lakh doses of the same vaccine called Covishield arrives in Dhaka today from the Serum Institute of India.

The country has so far bought three crore doses from Serum through Beximco Pharmaceuticals Ltd, local agent of the Indian firm.

A special flight of Air India carrying the first consignment of vaccine shots is expected to land at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport at 11:30am today, Nazmul Hassan Papon, Managing Director of Beximco Pharmaceuticals Ltd, told The Daily Star yesterday.

The vaccine shots will then be transported to Beximco warehouses in Tongi before being dispatched to the government-designated destinations.

Talking to this newspaper, a number of experts and government officials welcomed the news of arrival of vaccine shots after more than 10 months of detection of the first Covid case in the country.

Initially, there were doubts whether Bangladesh would get the vaccine

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Experts allay fear of major side effects

MOUDDUD AHMED SUJAN

As the government is preparing to vaccinate millions of people across the country, likely from February 8, with the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccines, many people are indecisive due to fears of possible side effects.

Unlike any other vaccine in history, the Covid-19 vaccines were developed fast, causing people to question its safety.

According to experts, however, the Covid-19 vaccines

approved so far are safe, or those would not be approved by the regulatory authorities like the US Food and Drug Administration, European Medicines Agency and the World Health Organization.

The Directorate General of Drug Administration (DGDA) has also issued Emergency Use Authorisation for the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine on January 4.

"With the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine, no serious side effect was reported so far.

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The portion of the Kohelia river in Moheshkhali's Matarbari union is in a sorry state after an under-construction four-lane highway began encroaching upon the once might water body five years ago. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: MOSTAFA YOUSUF

The killing of Kohelia

River integral to livelihoods of villagers in Matarbari being encroached upon to build a road with DoE clearance

MOSTAFA YOUSUF, back from Cox's Bazar

One fine morning in 2015, fisherman Mohon Jolodas woke up to the roar of dump trucks close to his home, adjacent to Kohelia river in Matarbari union of Moheshkhali.

To his utter surprise, the truck started dumping sand into the river -- the source of his community's livelihoods.

These last five years, Mohon has watched the once-vibrant river die in front of his very eyes.

The seasoned fisherman said the 12-kilometre-long river was his main source of income. He used to earn Tk 700-Tk 1,000 by fishing, a daily wage enough to maintain his four-member family.

"The dumping did not stop for a single day since 2015, encroaching around 2km of the water body to make a road so that the authorities could easily move with their vehicles to and from the power plant," Mohon told The Daily Star earlier this month.

He was referring to the 1.2-gigawatt coal-fired power plant being constructed by Coal Power Generation Company (CPGC) in Matarbari on 1,400 acres of land.

The under-construction 13km four-lane road starts from Rajhat bridge point of Kohelia and leads right up to the confluence of the river, where the power plant is being built.

On a visit to the Rajhat bridge area of Matarbari on January 11,

this correspondent saw dozens of dump trucks, excavators and cranes engaged in filling up the river under supervision of CPGC engineers.

Large geotextile bags filled with dredged sand are being put down and large iron sheets were seen being installed for the road.

Around 2km of the river have been engulfed completely. The mangrove forest along the river bank has also been destroyed for the road, locals said.

Interestingly, the sand used for filling up the water body itself comes from the river's east point. Large dredgers were seen extracting sand which was being carried by the truck to dump at the west side of the river

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