

**BANGLADESH UPDATE**



**473**

New cases in 24hrs



**5,31,799**

Total cases



**8,023**

Deaths



**4,76,413**

Recoveries



**2,132,781**

Deaths



**99,451,688**

Total cases

# Cattle take the brunt of cold

Infected by cold related diseases

STAR REPORT

Cattle in the country's northern districts are being infected with different cold-related diseases due to the bitter cold that has been prevailing over the region for the last couple of weeks.

Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), locally known as Khura Rog, is spreading fast, forcing cattle farmers to invest extra efforts and money to protect the cattle.

Milk production has declined as the cattle are suffering from disease as well as malnutrition, said farmers.

"My eight cows and a calf were infected with the disease. Later, the calf died. I am worried about the rest of my cattle," said Amijul Islam, 60, a cattle farmer of Jhaljhali Kazipara village in Boda upazila of Panchagarh.

"I have to spend Tk 1,500 for each of my cattle to provide them treatment," he added.

Rabul Islam, 32, a cattle farmer of the upazila's Shingpara village, said, "One of my cows used to give around eight litres of milk every day. Now, the cow has been infected with the disease and gives significantly less."

Contacted, a local veterinary worker Ahsan Habib said when a cow is infected with FMD, the cow cannot take food properly and gradually become weaker. Thus, fail to produce regular milk.

Thakurgaon's livestock officer Altaf Hossain said the numbers of infected cattle are increasing as the cold prolonging.

He also advised cattle farmers to keep cattle shades clean and to wash cattle's feet and mouths with water mixing Potassium permanganate to control the infection.

In Lalmonirhat, cattle are suffering from malnutrition as they cannot take food and water due to severe cold.

"My cows and goats are suffering from cough and fever. They cannot drink water and food. So, they cannot give me sufficient milk," said Afzal

Hossain, 60, a farmer from Char Kulaghat village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila.

"Normally, I used to get around nine litres of milk per day from three cows. Now, I get between 5 and 6 litres of milk," he informed.

In Bogura, cattle farmers are working hard to protect their cattle that have been suffering from a different cold-related disease.

"My two cows have suffered from cough Banga (a cold-related disease) for the last few days. I am trying to keep them well by treating them with hot water and mustard oil," said Habizar Mollah, 70, of Kuripara Char in Sariakandi upazila.

Contacted, the district livestock officer Rafiqul Islam Talukdar said they were running a vaccination program to protect cattle from cold-borne diseases.

In Nilphamari, cattle are being infected with diarrhoea, pneumonia, sneezing, cough, and fever.

Many farmers are gathering at different upazila livestock offices to cure their livestock.

Meanwhile, ferry services on two major routes -- Paturia-Daulatdia and Shimulia-Banglabazar -- remained closed for eight to twelve hours from Saturday night to yesterday morning due to dense fog.

Several hundreds of vehicles were stranded at the sides of the Padma due to the suspension of ferry services.

A weather bulletin of the Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD) yesterday said, "Moderate to thick fog may occur over the country during midnight to noon."

"Night and day temperature may rise slightly over the country," it added.

The 24-hour bulletin was released at 9:00am yesterday.

Yesterday's lowest temperature was recorded 9.7 degrees Celsius at Sreemangol of Moulvibazar.

[Our correspondents from Thakurgaon, Lalmonirhat, Bogura, Nilphamari, and Manikganj contributed to this report]



Police look on as structures built illegally on around 66 decimals of land are demolished by the district administration in Tangail yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## Experts allay fear of major side effects

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So, there is no reason to hesitate to take this vaccine. As a frontline health worker, I will take this vaccine for sure," Prof Dr Mohammad Robed Amin, line director of the National Centre for Disease Control at the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) told The Daily Star on Thursday.

**MILD SIDE EFFECTS**  
Like any other vaccine, the Covid-19 vaccines may have some side effects, which are signs that your body is building immunity against the virus, according to the US Center for Disease Control (US-CDC).

These side effects may affect one's ability to do daily activities, but they should go away in a few days. Common side effects may arise on the arm where the shot is injected and throughout the rest of the body.

The vaccine recipient may feel pain or swelling on the arm where the shot is given.

Throughout the rest of your body, the side effects may appear as fever, chills, fatigue and headaches, according to the US-CDC.

Accordingly, such typical vaccination reactions have also been reported after receiving the AstraZeneca, BioNTech-Pfizer, Moderna, Sinovac and the Russian Sputnik V vaccines, which are already in use.

"Serious allergic shock is the only severe side effect of any

vaccine, which, in case of the Oxford one, was not reported so far," Robed Amin said.

**OXFORD-ASTRAZENECA SIDE EFFECTS**

On September 6, the company paused the trial to investigate a patient who developed transverse myelitis -- a dangerous inflammation of the spinal cord, reports MedShadow, an independent non-profit health news site.

Researchers determined that the incident was unrelated to the vaccine and quickly restarted the trial in most countries. It, however, remained paused in the US until October 26.

On October 21, scientists reported a patient in the trial had died.

The trial resumed after it was reported that the patient's death was caused due to other reasons.

In earlier trials, many patients reported mild adverse effects similar to those associated with other vaccines, including injection site pain, rash, headaches, muscle soreness, and fever. Referring to the primary study result, Robed said, "Most vaccine recipients will not face any side effect. Only 5-10 percent so far had mild to moderate side effects."

The Oxford vaccine has been approved for use in the U.K., Argentina, India, and Mexico, and received emergency approval in Bangladesh.

**HOW TO TACKLE SIDE EFFECTS**

The DGHS has set up vaccination centers only in healthcare settings like upazila health complexes, district hospitals or diagnostic centers.

"Every vaccine recipient will be observed for 10-15 minutes after a shot is injected. If anybody faces any side effects even after that, treatment will be arranged in each centers. In that case, a vaccine recipient can call 16263 for DGHS telemedicine service," said Prof ABM Khurshid Alam, director general of the DGHS.

DGHS officials have advised pregnant women, people over 90 or under 18, and those with serious allergic reaction to any drug not to take the vaccine.

The US-CDC has advised taking the second shot timely, even if anyone has side effects after the first shot, unless a vaccination provider or doctor suggests otherwise.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Prof Sayedur Rahman, chairman of pharmacology at the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, said, "Some 98 percent of those who will face side effects will be ok within 24 hours after taking the shot. In rare cases, a few might need drugs like paracetamol [to tackle the side effects]."

"The vaccine is the best weapon we have so far to fight Covid-19. So, we have to take the vaccine," he added.

## 50 lakh shots arrive today

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does timely or whether it has the capacity to store and transport those properly.

Health Minister Zahid Maleque yesterday said there will be no crisis of vaccine in the country and everybody will get the vaccine free-of-cost.

Dr Abul Bashar Mohammad Khurshid Alam, director general of the Directorate General of Health Services, said, "We are happy that we are going to get the vaccine in time. This is a real morale boost for us."

He also hoped the vaccination programme will run smoothly.

DGHS officials said the government plans to give the first dose of vaccine to 60 lakh people in the first month and another 50 lakh in the second month.

The COVAX programme, led by the World Health Organisation and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, offered Bangladesh around four lakh doses of Pfizer vaccine earlier this month. The alliance has committed to give Bangladesh a total of 6.8 crore vaccine shots.

Pilot vaccination in the country will start on January 27 while mass vaccination will begin on February 8.

The online registration for vaccination starts tomorrow. A press conference in this regard will be held at the Prime Minister's Office today.

Experts, however, said one of major challenges for the government now is to make people aware of the necessity of taking vaccines and to get them vaccinated.

Prof Sayedur Rahman, chairman of pharmacology department at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU), said the vaccine's arrival in the country is indeed good news.

But before launching vaccination,

the government should make an immediate assessment to identify the most vulnerable groups and the areas with high infection rates, he said.

"There should be a vaccine trial to see whether the process runs smoothly or not. Besides, it is also important to vaccinate people efficiently without infecting others."

The registration process should be hassle-free and measures need to be put in place to ensure that vaccines are administered at every designated centre in an orderly fashion to prevent chaos, Sayedur observed.

"There should be a backup plan in case there is any unexpected disruption during transportation and storage of vaccine. Another point is that the government should take some remedial measures to raise confidence among people about vaccines."

Prof Be-Nazir Ahmed, former director (disease control) at the DGHS, said that now it's time to administer the vaccine to people efficiently and skillfully in an organised manner.

The aim of vaccination is to save lives and break the chain of virus transmission. And people have to be involved in the process to achieve that, he pointed out.

"There must be community mobilisation and also huge publicity. This will make people feel that they are very much part of this process. We got enough time for preparations but it seems that the government could not utilise the time properly."

Be-Nazir further said the listing of vaccine recipients could have been completed and more vaccination centres readied by this time to cover more people.

Covid has already claimed 8,023 lives and infected 531,799 people in the country. Besides, there are asymptomatic cases.

## Antibody test for Covid-19

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both antigen and antibody-based rapid testing for Covid-19.

However, there was no progress in this regard till yesterday.

Officials, however, said they have not finalised any plan on how the antibody kits will be used.

Prof Nasima Sultana, additional director general of the Directorate General of Health Services, told The Daily Star, "We are busy implementing the Covid-19 vaccine rollout. We have no plans regarding antibody tests right now. We will start working on it later."

On June 26 last year, the Directorate General of Drug Administration (DGDA) disapproved a rapid antibody testing kit developed by Gonoshasthaya Pharmaceuticals as it was found capable of detecting antibodies in only "40 percent Covid-19" cases.

On June 24 that year, the DGDA published a draft policy on its website

setting some criteria for the approval of rapid antibody testing kits. It said antibody kits with a minimum 90 percent sensitivity and 95 percent specificity will be approved.

According to the government policy, the rapid antibody testing kit can be used for sero-surveillance, convulsant plasma therapy and research.

The kit will be permitted to be used only by the laboratories, according to the government policy.

This newspaper made phone calls to Md Salahuddin, director of the drug administration, to learn whether there any new antibody testing kits in the country that meet the standards, but he did not answer.

On September 17, the government permitted antigen-based rapid testing at public healthcare centres.

As of yesterday, a total of 56 government healthcare establishments had the rapid antigen testing facility, according to the DGHS.

## Schools, colleges asked to prepare

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The syllabuses for the exams will be reduced.

A top National Curriculum and Textbook Board official said they have completed the work on reducing the syllabuses and submitted those to the education ministry.

"We cannot tell what percentage of the syllabus has been reduced. We have cut the syllabus keeping in mind the issue of ensuring minimum basic competence of students for continuation of education in their next classes," NCTB Chairman Prof Narayan Chandra Saha said.

On March 17, the government closed all schools to contain the spread of coronavirus.

The closure -- has led to the cancellation of exams and left academic calendars in disarray -- has recently been extended till January 30.

After the school closure, the government started TV education through Sangsad TV for secondary and primary students. The school authorities are working to continue imparting lessons online.

Most students in urban areas have access to learning through the internet, but the digital divide has so far proved to be a great disadvantage for the underprivileged learners as they face the prospect of dropping out, mainly for the lack of devices and poor access to the internet.

On January 19, the interim Education Watch Report 2020-21 said about 69.5 percent of students did not participate in distance learning, of

whom 57.9 percent of them said they could not join the classes due to a lack of devices.

Of the students in rural areas who were interviewed for the report, about 69 percent said they could not take part in classes due to not having devices.

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.

The study report said 75 percent of students surveyed want to be back in the classroom soon and 76 percent parents, 73 percent district-level education officials and 80 percent education-related NGO officials are in favour of schools reopening.

**DSHE GUIDELINES**  
DSHE, with Unicef's assistance, recently published a guideline on reopening educational institutions maintaining health guidelines and public health safety measures amid the pandemic.

It was prepared in line with different government directives as well as guidelines of the World Health Organisation, Unesco, Unicef, World Bank, and the US government's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The guidelines, available on the DSHE website, prioritised ensuring that all students, teachers, staff and others concerned wear face masks throughout

school hours.

It also prioritised maintaining three feet of physical distance while running institutions, classes and other relevant activities.

Besides, the guidelines place importance on discouraging large numbers of attendance at a time.

The guideline says educational institutions need to assess how many students could be accommodated in one classroom at a time based on the size of the classroom.

For example, it said, if a classroom can accommodate 10 benches and desks in two columns -- each bench is less than five feet in length -- then only six students could be accommodated in that classroom, with just one student per bench or desk.

In the above example, the second and fourth benches have to be removed to ensure the requisite physical distance. If it is not possible to remove the benches then those have to be cross-marked so that students cannot sit there.

On the other hand, if the length of a bench is five feet or more, then two students will seat on the bench.

According to the guideline, to monitor the daily health situation of all including teachers, students, staff and cleaners, necessary steps like installing contactless thermometers and maintaining a daily database has to be ensured at educational institutions.

The guidelines also said educational institutions must arrange required number of safe water and sanitation facilities for all and consider ensuring toilets for students.

## Johnson, Biden discuss 'deepening alliance': PM's office

AFP, London

Boris Johnson and Joe Biden on Saturday vowed to deepen ties and cooperate on tackling climate change in their first conversation since the US president's inauguration, the British prime minister's office said.

Johnson congratulated Biden on his inauguration and "the two leaders looked forward to deepening the close alliance between our nations", said the statement from Downing Street.

British newspapers reported that Johnson was the first European leader to receive a call from Biden,

who earlier spoke to Canadian and Mexican counterparts.

The right-wing Sunday Telegraph reported that Johnson was the first leader outside North America to speak to Biden "after his scheduled call was brought forward two days in what will be seen as a major boost for the special relationship between the UK and US."

Biden on Friday spoke to Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in his first call to a foreign leader.

The White House in a readout of the call said that Biden "conveyed his intention to strengthen the special

relationship between our countries and also "noted the importance of cooperation, including through multilateral organizations, on shared challenges".

Johnson tweeted a picture of himself in shirt-sleeves laughing as he spoke on the phone. "Great to speak to President @JoeBiden this evening," he wrote.

The conversation appeared aimed at warming frosty relations after Biden in 2019 described Johnson as a "physical and emotional clone" of Donald Trump, his predecessor as US president.

## Govt can now

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and equivalent exams without holding tests.

The amendments were incorporated to Intermediate and Secondary Education Ordinance, 1961, Bangladesh Vocational Education Board Act, 2018, and Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board Act, 2020.

Education Minister Dipu Moni placed the bills that were passed by voice vote.

The authorities will be able to publish result if it is not possible to hold and conduct exams at the end of the intermediate and secondary stage and any other stage because of a pandemic, epidemic, and Act of God or any other inevitable circumstances as determined by the government, by an order in the official gazette, said the bills.

The government moved the bills as it could not hold and publish HSC and equivalent exams due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

Dipu Moni said that they would issue a notice notification within the next two days and subsequently announce the HSC exam.

The authorities have completed all their works to announce HSC and equivalent exams, she added.

Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam, after a weekly cabinet meeting, assured that the results of the HSC and equivalent exams would be published by January 28.

The scheduled HSC and equivalent examinations were cancelled on October 7 due to the pandemic. It was decided that students will get their results based on their SSC and JSC results.

A total of 1,365,789 candidates under 11 educational boards by the first week of this January.

The results will be published after coordinating 75 percent of the SSC and 25 percent of JSC-JDC results, Dipu Moni told the media earlier.

The HSC batch of 2020 will be the first batch of students who will get certificates without sitting for the examinations as it is the first time in the history of the country that a public examination has been cancelled.

On March 17, the government closed all schools to contain the spread of coronavirus. The closure has recently been extended till January 30. The authorities have yet to decide when to reopen the educational institutions.

The long closure has led to the cancellation of exams and left academic calendars in disarray.

BNP MP Harunur Rashid, while taking part in the discussion on the bills, said that some kind of exams should be taken.

"Auto pass will call on a grave crisis. Meritorious students will be the worst sufferers of the auto pass," he said.

Gonoforum MP Mukabbir Khan also said that exams could be held following health guidelines but the government failed to hold this.

Jatiya Party MP Mujibul Haque said that there was an instance of giving an auto pass to students in 1961 and people who passed in such a way still face a disgrace.

BNP MP Rumeen Farhana said students rigorously become attentive to lessons ahead and during a public exam. In this corona situation, students were out of the classroom and practical classes.

"If you give HSC results based on results of previous public results, will not ensure justice for candidates", she said.

## Jail super, jailer

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Bari and assistant chief prison guard Khalilur Rahman were withdrawn earlier.

Tushar, brother-in-law of Hallmark Managing Director Tanvir Mahmud, was allowed a visitor in violation of the coronavirus restrictions.

Two committees investigating the incident have identified some of those involved from security camera footage, officials said.

In the footage, Tushar was seen walking around wearing black clothes in the area where jail officials' cabins are located shortly before a woman in purple clothes was seen entering from outside and going to the said area around 12:55pm.

The footage also showed Saqlain greeting the woman and leaving a room after the woman walked in. Saqlain came back with Tushar and after around 10 minutes, Ratna left her room and two minutes later Tushar went towards Ratna's room with the woman. Two minutes later, Tushar and the woman returned to Saqlain's room where they spent about 45 minutes.

A committee headed by Additional Deputy Commissioner Abul Kalam was formed on January 12 to investigate the matter. Another committee headed by Additional Inspector General of Prisons Col Abrar Hossain was formed on January 21.

Abrar said officials would look into whether the prison officials gave Tushar the privileges in exchange for money.