



The Daily Star

SECOND EDITION

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Your Right to Know

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"I think it has to happen."
BIDEN ON TRUMP'S IMPEACHMENT TRIAL AS HOUSE DELIVERS CHARGE TO SENATE



"Pacers here need to maintain a pretty straight length and challenge the batsmen on the front foot."
WEST INDIES FRONTLINE PACER KEMAR ROACH AHEAD OF THE TEST SERIES AGAINST BANGLADESH



"Every day that passes, the divide grows larger between the world's haves and have nots."
WHO CHIEF TEDROS ADHANOM GHEBREYESUS ON VACCINE NATIONALISM



Officials distribute polling materials among election officers at the gymnasium hall of MA Aziz Stadium in Chattogram city yesterday. The polls to Chattogram City Corporation are being held today amid tight security. Seven mayoral and 229 councillor candidates are contesting the elections in 41 wards.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

STOCKPILING OF RICE, POTATO, ONION

Govt measures failed miserably

Finds BARC study on markets last year

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Many traders indiscriminately stockpiled rice, potato, and onion to drive up prices even when there was a supply surplus.

In the meantime, government interventions wholly failed to manage the crisis.

These findings of three study teams from Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council were revealed yesterday at a press conference at the capital's Barc office.

The agriculture ministry initiated the market research on October 20 last year following public outcry over the prices. The ministry formed the three teams to investigate why prices of the three essential food items soared in the market.

In the months following the monsoon in mid-October, onion prices rose as high as Tk 80 per kg at the wholesale market and Tk 90-95 at the retail, while each kg of potato was sold for Tk 50 at the retail front. Even prices of rice went beyond the reach of

Many traders create artificial crises, hike prices

Rice, onion prices rose when there was surplus

Govt procurement from farmers not enough

Govt interventions failed to stabilise market

many. Different varieties of the staple, like Miniket and Nazirshail, was sold at Tk 60 per kg.

The study teams found that 52 percent of farmers sold their Boro paddy within a month of harvesting, and only an insignificant minority (five percent) sold it more than four months after the harvest.

"It means, when the price of rice increased, the staple was not with the farmers," Prof Jahangir Alam, a former director-general of Bangladesh Livestock Research Institute and the coordinator of the study teams, told the press conference yesterday.

"The millers told us that Boro production decreased resulting in the high prices, but the farmers told us that Boro production had actually increased. Sure, Aman production was less than usual, but there was plenty of Boro in stock," he added.

The per person demand for rice per day is 551gm, while the per person availability was 621gm (per day), estimated the teams.

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AL, BNP lock horns for port city

VOTING TIME 8:00AM-4:00PM

TOTAL VOTERS 19,38,706

POLLING CENTRES 735

RISKY CENTRES 416

EVM MACHINES 4,886

Law enforcement personnel 15,000

Mayoral candidate 7

Councillor candidates (general wards) 172

Councillor candidates (reserved wards) 57

RASHIDUL HASAN and DWAIPIYAN BARUA from Ctg

More than 19 lakh voters are going to decide today the outcome of a high-voltage contest between the ruling Awami League and its archrival BNP in the Chattogram City Corporation election amid tight security.

This is the first time the port city polls are being held under party banner and also through electronic voting machines (EVMs).

Though seven mayoral candidates are contesting the polls, the main contest is likely to take place between AL's Rezaul Karim Chowdhury and BNP's Shahadat Hossain.

Voting will start at 8:00am and continue

till 4:00pm without any break.

Election observers as well as the city residents will keep their eyes on the polls with 22 AL rebel candidates vying for councillor posts in 22 of the 41 wards. The rebels remain a major concern for the ruling party which could not deter them from contesting the polls despite repeated attempts.

In reality, the local body to be formed through people's mandate will not be able to solve many of the decades-old problems of the city residents due to constraints on its jurisdiction. Yet, there had been a lot of excitement in the run-up to the polls due to the presence of a large number of AL rebel candidates.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

Primary schools may also reopen next month

Says state minister

ASIFUR RAHMAN

In line with the resumption of secondary-level schools and colleges, the government is also planning to reopen primary schools and kindergartens after 10 months of shutdown.

The Directorate of Primary Education (DPE) has already sent a guideline to all primary schools to prepare for reopening by February 4.

Zakir Hossain, state minister for primary and mass education, yesterday said, "We are planning to reopen primary schools on any day of February."

"Schools may reopen on the first or second week of February with the permission of the prime minister."

About the primary schools, he said, the authorities would operate classes from the first to fifth grades in multiple shifts.

"Students of fifth grade will get priority. The rest will visit schools in person once a week," he said.

Asked about the kindergarten schools, he said, those institutions too could reopen on any day.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

Covid vaccination kicks off today

PM to inaugurate the piloting

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh joins the world today in the vaccination campaign against Covid-19 pandemic with a robust stock of vaccine doses in hand.

Of the south Asian countries, Bangladesh has the highest number of vaccines in hands -- 70 lakh doses -- after India.

Covid-19 has already claimed more than 8,000 lives in the country and over 2.14 million in the world.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is expected to inaugurate the pilot vaccination virtually from Kurmitola General Hospital at 3:30pm.

She is also expected to launch the registration app called "Surokkha" for mass inoculation, scheduled to start on February 7.

The government has targeted vaccinating 60 lakh people in the first month and another 50 lakh the following month. The pilot will start with the vaccination of a nurse of Kurmitola hospital.

According to government officials, 20-30 people will get vaccinated on the opening day. The first recipients will include nurses, doctors, freedom fighters, media personnel and other frontline workers from different professional groups.

The pilot vaccination will take place in five public hospitals of Dhaka. The Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) has already completed all the procedures to that end.

"From tomorrow [today] vaccination [pilot] will start in Dhaka and then it will be expanded across the country. By that time, all preparations for smooth vaccination will be completed," Prof Abul Bashar Mohammad Khurshid Alam, director general of DGHS, told The Daily Star yesterday.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

I'm not afraid, want to be a part of history

The nurse who will get the first shot tells The Daily Star

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Runu Beronica Costa wanted to become a part of the country's history.

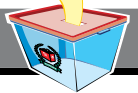
Today, the senior nurse's wish will be fulfilled when Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina virtually inaugurates the country's pilot Covid-19 vaccination programme at Kurmitola General Hospital, where Costa works.

She will get the first shot of the vaccine on the auspicious occasion.

"When I came to know that the prime minister would inaugurate the vaccination at Kurmitola, I immediately thought: Why not me?" Costa said in an exclusive interview with The Daily Star last night.

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CHATTOGRAM CITY POLLS 2021



Intra-party rivalry not a challenge

Says AL's mayor candidate Rezaul

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Chattogram

Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, Awami League's mayoral candidate for the Chattogram city polls, has said intra-party rivalry over councillor posts will not have a damaging impact on his bid as both the party-supported and "rebel" candidates are working for him.

Instead of taking it as a challenge, Rezaul said he would like to think of it as an opportunity to increase voter turnout in the polling centres.

Voters' presence at the polling stations will be significant as the councillor candidates will put all their efforts towards bringing voters out to the centres, he told The Daily Star in the interview on Sunday over the phone.

Rezaul said voters will choose him as he was by their side in their toughest times.

"I have been in politics since the 1960s.

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Cases filed against 600 BNP men

Says BNP's mayoral aspirant Shahadat

RASHIDUL HASAN, from Ctg

Shahadat Hossain, BNP's mayoral candidate for the Chattogram city polls, has vowed not to leave the electoral battle despite what he said were various obstacles and harassment by police and ruling Awami League men.

Asserting that most voters are with him, Shahadat said he has instructed the BNP leaders and activists to remain in the field till the end of the polls.

"I am a seasoned politician. 80 percent voters are with me. It is obvious that I will win the election and you will find proof in favour of my claim if you conduct a survey among voters. So, I will remain in the battle of the election till the end," he said.

In an interview with The Daily Star on Sunday, he said, "I have told my workers that I will arrange their bail if police arrest them and in case they are injured or come

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BUSINESS

Economy to return to high growth trajectory next fiscal year

Bangladesh's economy will return to the high growth trajectory in the next fiscal year overcoming the scarring impacts of the coronavirus pandemic, according to a United Nations report. The gross domestic product will grow by 7.6 per cent in fiscal year of 2021-22 following a 5.1 per cent expansion in the current fiscal year, the World Economic Situation and Prospects 2021 report of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs said.

STORY ON B1

Farewell & Bon Voyage



CAPTAIN NURUL HUQ (12 Jan 1936 - 25 Jan 2021)

A proud warrior and an officer & a gentleman

Captain Huq served as the 1st Chief of Naval Staff from 07 April 1972 till 06 November 1973, having defected from Pakistan in February 1972. He also served as Chairman, BIWTC and Minister for Ports, Shipping & IWT and was elected MP from Dhaka 1. He was the youngest son of Late Khan Bahadur Abdul Khaliq, elected MLA of Bengal Legislative Assembly in 1946. A devoted husband, a loving father and doting grandfather, Capt. Huq was a patriot above all else. He lived his entire life his own way maintaining the highest standards of integrity, rectitude and duty.

May his soul rest in peace.

"Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un"
"We belong to Allah and to Him we shall return."