

BANGLADESH UPDATE

528

New cases in 24hrs



5,33,444

Total cases



8,072

Deaths



4,77,935

Recoveries



GLOBAL UPDATE

2,177,674

Deaths



101,240,424

Total cases

Govt to launch technical edu TV

PM tells House; 5G for Teletalk in 2023

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will set up a dedicated television channel for technical education.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday told parliament that an initiative has been taken to set up Karigar Shiksha Television for the technical education sector.

She also said the government is considering reopening educational institutions while observing the spread of Covid-19.

Candidates of SSC and HSC exams will get priority when in-person classes resume and steps will be taken to bring as many students as possible to classes maintaining social distance, Hasina said while answering a lawmaker's query.

The PM's answer was tabled at the beginning of the day's sitting at the House.

She said giving assignments to students and submission of the same to teachers may continue as the process has proved to be effective.

The PM's comments come against the backdrop of the education ministry and primary and mass education ministry had instructed all schools and colleges to complete their reopening preparations by February 4.

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

Shahnaz Rahman

FROM PAGE 1



Mahfuz Anam



Matiur Rahman

-- individuals and companies -- with the objective of motivating people to deposit due taxes.

The idea was to encourage compliance and bring more people in the tax net in a country where just over one percent of the population file returns regularly and tax avoidance is believed to be high.

Among journalists, Editor of Chattogram based daily Dainik Azadi MA Malek, Director and Head of News of Channel i Shykh Seraj and Editor-in-Chief of TV Today Monjurul Ahsan Bulbul have been named the highest taxpayers.

East West Media Group is another highest taxpayer in media category, according to the NBR notification.

These three companies -- sister concerns of one of the largest Bangladeshi conglomerates Transcom Group -- are getting the recognition from the tax authority since fiscal year 2015-16, when the NBR expanded the list of the awardees to include various professions and areas.

The NBR began to honour the highest taxpayers since the fiscal 2010-11 initially in two categories

A historic day

FROM PAGE 1

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

The PM said Covid-19 emerged at a time when the country was moving fast on the path of development.

She thanked the doctors, nurses, other healthcare workers, health ministry officials and civil administration, and law enforcement agencies for coming forward to fight the pandemic since its outbreak in the country on March 8 last year.

Praising their efforts, Hasina said, "Everybody has worked cordially. For this, I thank them all."

She also mentioned different initiatives of her government, including the announcement of financial stimulus packages.

She, however, turned critical about those who have a "negative attitude" towards any measures of the government.

She said though the vaccination programme has been taken following the protocols of the World Health Organization, some people are out to criticise the initiative.

Despite that, she said the government is ready to press on with vaccination as the criticism spurs it to work with further urgency in procuring the vaccine.

The PM said the government has signed a tripartite agreement to bring 3.40 crore doses of the vaccine developed by the University of Oxford and AstraZeneca, manufactured by Serum Institute of India (SII).

Of those, 50 lakh shots have already arrived and the rest will reach soon. The Indian government has also sent 20 lakh doses as gift, she said.

The prime minister thanked her Indian counterpart Narendra Modi in this regard.

Lifelong AL activist 'denied' his vote

So-called helper casts his vote for him

FM MIZANUR RAHMAN, Ctg

"Why did you cast my vote? It's my right. Who are you?"

This was what Awami League activist Jasim Uddin asked a Chhatra League man who allegedly cast Jasim's vote using an electronic voting machine.

People present in the polling booth became awkward after the two men working for the same camp started yelling at each other during yesterday's Chattogram City Corporation election which was marred by allegations of voter fraud.

"I have spent my life working

INAUGURATING THE VACCINE

After Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina announced the inauguration, Runu Veronica Costa was the first to get vaccinated.

Four others who took the shot in the virtual presence of the prime minister include Dr Ahmed Luftun Mobin, a physician of the hospital, Prof Dr Nasima Sultana, additional director general (admin) of the Director General of Health Services, Brig Gen M Imran Hamid, an official of Bangladesh Army, and Didarul Islam, a member of traffic police (Motijheel Zone).

Immediately afterwards, 21 more frontline Covid-19 fighters, including physicians, nurses, health workers, journalists and members of law enforcement agencies and army, were inoculated.

Each vaccine recipient was observed for a while at the observation room in the hospital.

None of them reported any adverse effects over the next two hours while this correspondent was present in front of the observation room.

"We have successfully concluded the inauguration today [yesterday]. None of the recipients reported any adverse effect," Brig Gen Jamil Ahmed, director of the hospital, told reporters.

At the event, Health Minister Zahid Maleque said 70 lakh doses of Covid-19 vaccines are currently available in the country. Bangladesh first received two million doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine from India as a gift and then received five more million doses from Serum Institute of India.

He said Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine is so far the safest in the world. Treatment facilities are available if any side effect is reported.

About whether high-ups of his office will be vaccinated, he said, "We will take the vaccine after we are able to vaccinate the people."

The incident happened yesterday at booth-2 at Bakalia Teachers' Training College around 10:00am.

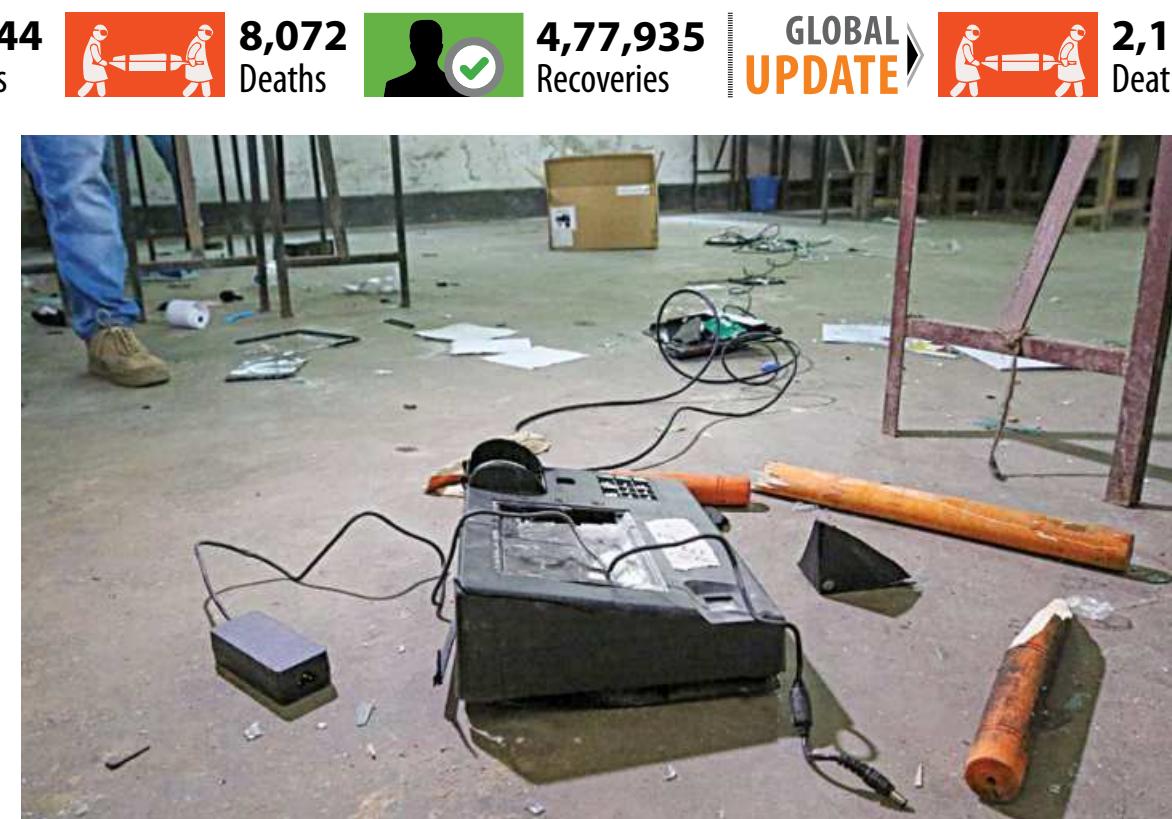
Jasim Uddin is the joint convenor of the polling centre committee of the Awami League.

"Why are you doing that? I was

going to vote for Boat [AL symbol]

but you pushed it without my permission," he was heard saying.

"I have spent my life working



A broken electronic voting machine lying on the floor at Patharghata Girls' High School in Chattogram after the polling centre got ransacked during a clash between the supporters of Awami League- and BNP-backed candidates yesterday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

AL wins big amid big irregularities

FROM PAGE 1

Briefing journalists at the Election Bhaban in the capital, Md Alamgir Hossain, senior secretary at the Election Commission, said that apart from some stray incidents, the CCC election was held peacefully in a free and fair manner.

"Some unruly people who opposed voting through EVMs attacked two polling stations. Voting was suspended there. Except for these two, polling in all other centres was held in a fair and manner," he said.

Earlier in the morning, one person was killed and more than a hundred were injured in sporadic clashes in at least eight wards during voting in the port city.

Supporters of an AL-backed councillor candidate clashed with followers of an AL rebel councillor candidate in the city's Ambagan area around 9:00am, leaving Md Alauddin, 28, dead.

Voting was postponed at two polling centres in Patharghata area following clashes, vandalising of electronic voting machines (EVMs) and the capture of polling booths.

BNP-backed councillor candidate Mohammad Ismail was detained from the area over links to the clashes.

Meanwhile, a 28-year-old man was killed allegedly by his brother near a polling station. Locals said it was the outcome of rivalry between the siblings over the polls. But police said the killing had nothing to do with the election, rather it was a family feud.

The man, Nizam Uddin Munna, was murdered in the port city's Bara Quarter area around 8:15am, said police.

VISIT TO POLLING CENTRES

Eight reporters and photojournalists of The Daily Star visited 45 of the 735 polling centres and found a very low turnout of voters at those centres.

Two reporters stayed at two polling centres throughout the polling from 8:00am to 4:00pm and saw the same picture.

Prior to the polls, the Election Commission on several occasions said the entire city area had been covered in a security blanket to ensure that voters can cast ballots freely without any fear.

But violence and irregularities spoiled the election atmosphere. There were clashes between supporters of AL-backed councillor candidates

and followers of AL rebel contenders.

In some areas, clashes broke out between activists of AL-backed councillor candidates and those of BNP-backed ones.

This discouraged voters, by and large, from going to the polling centres to cast ballots. Even in some areas, local AL leaders and their family members did not show up at the polling centres.

The polling agents of the BNP-nominated mayoral candidate were driven out of almost all the 45 polling centres visited by The Daily Star Correspondents.

Wearing badges of AL-nominated mayoral candidate and AL-backed councillor candidates, several groups of people were seen in front of almost all those polling centres. They were enquiring about the identity of those whom they suspected as loyal to BNP candidates.

MAYORAL CANDIDATES

AL mayoral candidate Rezaul cast his vote at Ekhsasur Rahman Government Primary School in Bahaddarhat area around 8:45am.

Later, he told journalists that he was confident about his victory. He, however, said he would accept the outcome whatever it may be.

BNP mayoral candidate Shahadat cast his ballot at Teachers Training College, Chattogram around 10:00am.

Later, he alleged that all his polling agents were driven out of the polling centres.

Around 2:30pm, he went to the RO's office to make complaints of irregularities in the polls.

A number of BNP-backed councillor candidates alleged that members of police, Rab and BGB as well as executive magistrates were virtually inactive in keeping the election atmosphere free and fair.

CONTROL OF EVMS BY AL MEN

AL men had taken control of the EVMs at all the 45 polling centres visited by The Daily Star correspondents.

Many voters at those centres alleged that they could not cast ballots as the ruling party men drove them out of the polling booths after getting their fingerprints on EVMs.

One of the correspondents stayed at Shahid Nagar City Corporation Girls' High School for eight hours and saw AL men wearing party badges take control of the EVMs there.

Around 9:00am, a young woman

recipients were then vaccinated one after another.

Before the start of the vaccination process, all recipients had to sign a consent paper where it was stated that they were being vaccinated voluntarily.

Prof Dr Nasima Sultana, additional director general of Directorate General of Health Services, said she took the vaccine to make people aware of it.

"I would say people should not be afraid of the vaccine without any reason. It will protect from Covid-19. We were saying from the beginning that [wearing] mask is a protector, social distancing is a protector; similarly, vaccines will provide long-term protection."

Prof Sultana, who has been on the frontlines since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, also asked people to come forward to be vaccinated.

"You should take the vaccine whenever you get the chance," she said.

After receiving his first vaccine jab, noted physician Prof Dr Arup Ratan Choudhury said, "I am a freedom fighter. I am also a frontline fighter against Covid-19. I would request all to take the vaccine without any fear."

When it was the turn of this reporter, it felt like a pinch but like others getting the vaccine, it was a fulfilling experience - the gloom and sense of fear that had prevailed for much of the last year dissipated to a certain extent.

In the observation room, doctors and nurses were asking whether anyone was facing any problems.

"Do you feel any localised pain? Do you face any abnormalities? Do you face any difficulties?" a doctor was

asking vaccine recipients, including this reporter.

Dipa Yasmin, a vaccinator, shared her joy after administering the doses.

"We regularly vaccinate but this vaccination is completely different. I am excited that I have become a part of history. I feel proud," Dipa said.

She said she will get the vaccine soon.

UN PEACE FUND

Over three dozen

nations pledge

\$439m

The sum falls far short of

hoped-for \$1.5b

Arp, United Nations

Over three dozen nations have pledged or contributed over \$439 million to help secure peace in conflict-stricken states, the United Nations said Tuesday, a sum that falls far short of the hoped-for \$1.5 billion.

Member states met via videoconference, committing to the importance of investing in peace, according to a UN statement.

"Including funds received for 2020,

39 Member States have contributed or pledged over \$439 million for peacebuilding in support of the Fund's 2020-2024 Strategy," the statement said.

"The goal is to mobilize \$1.5 billion

over five years between 2020 and 2024,"

said Marc-André Franche, the head of the Financing for the Peacebuilding Fund, which was created in 2006.

Schoolboy abducted, murdered in Habiganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Police have recovered the body of a schoolboy from a ditch in Habiganj's Shayestaganj upazila town on Tuesday evening.

Law enforcers said the victim, Tanvir Hossain