



The Daily Star

www.thedailystar.net

SECOND EDITION

REGD. NO. DA 781

VOL. XXXI No. 25

MAGH 24, 1427 BS

Your Right to Know

JAMADIUS SANI 24, 1442 HIRI

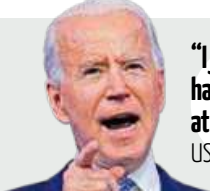
16 PAGES PRICE : Tk12.00



"I believe, a little scratch will do no harm to the image that we have as a nation before the outer world at present."
PLANNING MINISTER MA MANNAN ON AL JAZEERA REPORT
"ALL THE PRIME MINISTER'S MEN".



"I made clear the US will defend our national interests, stand up for our democratic values, and hold Beijing accountable for its abuses of the international system."
US SECRETARY OF STATE ANTONY BLINKEN



"I just think that there is no need for him [Donald Trump] to have the intelligence briefings ... What impact does he have at all, other than the fact he might slip and say something?"
US PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN

MASS VACCINATION

Poor response poses a stiff challenge

Drives begin today with aim to immunise everyone eligible for Covid shots

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM and
MOUDUD AHMED SUJAN

The coronavirus vaccine is being rolled out across the country today amid lukewarm interest from the people in getting the shots.

The vaccine doses arrived in the country on time, the vials were sent across the country as planned before, and the vaccinators and volunteers have been trained.

The two-day piloting was done with success on January 28: Not one of the 567 volunteers who took the first shot of the two-dose Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine has complained of any major side effect.

But the response from people eligible for inoculation in the first phase has been underwhelming.

The government's plan is to inoculate everyone aged over 55 and those of certain professions.

As of yesterday afternoon, a little less than 3.5 lakh people registered online for the vaccine. But the government's plan at the beginning was to inoculate 60 lakh people in the first month of the campaign. The

authorities then lowered their expectations and set the target at 35 lakh people.

Healthcare officials and experts said absence of a mass awareness campaign, difficulties in online registration, misinformation, and scepticism about the vaccines' effectiveness were the key reasons behind people's indifference.

The health minister along with some top officials are likely to get the jabs at the Sheikh Raseel Gastroenterology Institute and Hospital in the capital today, as they hope to dispel any fear that people might have of the vaccine.

Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain and Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan will get inoculated at the Shuhrawardy Medical College Hospital while State Minister for Public Administration Farhad Hossain, State Minister for Disaster Management and Relief Dr Enamur Rahman, and Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam at the Sheikh Hasina National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery.

People will be inoculated at every district and upazila from today, according to health officials.

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THE VACCINE DRIVES

- First Covid-19 case identified in Bangladesh on **MARCH 8** last year; first death on **MARCH 18**
- Bangladesh signs MoU with Serum Institute of India on **NOV 5**



- Bangladesh receives **20 lakh** doses from Indian govt as gift on **Jan 21**; **50 lakh** out of its **3 crore** purchased shots on **Jan 25**

- Piloting in five hospitals of Dhaka on **Jan 27 to 28**; total recipients **567 people**

MASS VACCINATION STARTS TODAY

- Total registration till 4:00pm yesterday **3,28,013**
- A team of six persons -- two vaccinators and four volunteers -- will administer **150 doses** at every centre per day
- **35 lakh** people will be vaccinated in the first month

- Dhaka city **50** hospitals, **204** teams
- Countrywide **955** hospitals, **2,196** teams



MYTH VS FACT

MYTH: The Covid-19 vaccine can affect women's fertility.
FACT: It will not.

MYTH: If someone already had Covid-19, he or she doesn't need a vaccine.

FACT: People who have already been infected with coronavirus may still benefit from getting vaccinated.

MYTH: Getting the Covid-19 vaccine means a person can stop wearing a mask and taking coronavirus precautions.

FACT: Individuals who received the Covid-19 vaccine still need to practise infection prevention precautions. Vaccines do not stop the coronavirus from entering the body; they only prevent a person from developing moderate to severe Covid-19.

MYTH: The side effects of the vaccine are dangerous.

FACT: The vaccine can have side effects but mostly very short term -- not serious or dangerous. The vaccine developers report that some people experience pain where they were injected, body aches, headaches or fever, lasting for a day or two.

UK PM Boris Johnson may visit this year

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh is expecting visits by British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and several other VIPs to Bangladesh this year on the occasion of the country's 50 years of independence and of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

Bangladesh High Commissioner to UK Saïda Muna Tasneem and British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) Permanent Under-Secretary Sir Philip Barton KCMG OBE discussed the possible visits, said a statement of the Bangladesh High Commission yesterday.

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Put them before people's court

HC verdict observes about corrupt public officials, judges

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

The High Court has observed in a verdict that it is about time corrupt military and civil officials and staffers, and judges were put before the court of people in order to establish the rule of law.

"Some unscrupulous government officials and employees are looting the hard-earned money of hardworking farmers and labourers. It's high time corrupt military and civil public officials and staffers, and judges and justices were put before the court of people. Only then it will be possible to establish the rule of law," the HC bench of Justice Md Ashraf Kamal and Justice Razik-Al-Jalil said in the full text verdict.

The 123 pages of the verdict's full text were released recently.

The HC bench delivered the shorter verdict on February 4, 2020, on a writ petition filed over the ownership of a vested

property in Savar.

Savar Thana Osahay Poribar Punorbason Bohumukhi Samobay Samity Ltd filed the petition challenging a lower court verdict that ordered the release of a land of vested property measuring 15.74 acres at Gandharia Mouza in Savar in the possession of Sree Madhob Chandra Saha Poddar and his now-dead brother Sree Ruhi Chandra Saha Poddar from North Kalshi in Dhaka's Mirpur area.

In the full text, the HC said the hard-earned money of Bangladesh's farmers, labourers, garment workers, and all working people and foreign-currency earning people... are the source of food for the salaried officials, staff members, judges, justices, and military and civil forces.

"All needs of our families, including education, are arranged from the hard-earned money of farmers and workers. They give their hard-earned money to us

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Daily Covid cases drop to 10-month low

8 more die

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The health directorate yesterday reported 305 new Covid-19 cases, the lowest daily number in 10 months after the first three cases were recorded in the country on March 8 last year.

The authorities reported the number after 12,135 samples were tested in 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, according to a press release from the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

The positivity rate stood at 2.51 percent, also the lowest in 10 months.

The government had reported 312 new Covid-19 cases on April 19. At that time, the positivity rate was two percent.

With the new cases, the total number of confirmed cases rose to 537,770 in the country, according to the press release.

In the same 24 hours, eight people died from Covid-19, it said, adding that the death toll from novel coronavirus reached 8,190.

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AKHAURA-SYLHET RAIL LINE

Derailments all too frequent

179km stretch saw 9 accidents in 2 years; no major track upgrade done in century

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, Sylhet

After a freight train carrying diesel derailed at Gutigaon village of Sylhet's Fenchuganj around Friday midnight, the fuel spilled from the tank wagons. Hearing the news, several locals rushed to the spot with whatever they had and started collecting the diesel.

Luckily, a fire disaster did not occur.

This was not the first time such an incident happened at the Akhaura-Sylhet section under Bangladesh Railway's Eastern Zone. Four other fuel-laden trains derailed at the section in the past five months alone, causing substantial damage to the trains, their wagons and the tracks.

The accidents also upset the train schedule, causing suffering to people. After the latest derailment, it took the authorities 27 hours to restore the rail link on that particular route.

THE DERAILMENTS

According to Bangladesh Railway's annual report, 91 train accidents, including 78 derailments, took place in the country in the fiscal 2018-19. The damage caused in the accidents was estimated to be Tk 5,696 crore.

The data on the current year is not available.

As per media reports, nine major train derailments took place in the

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Ask delegation to explain

7 rights bodies urge UN over Al Jazeera report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Seven human rights groups have urged the United Nations to use its meetings with senior Bangladeshi military officials next week to seek explanations regarding an Al Jazeera report that alleged controversial purchase of a highly invasive spyware from Israel.

The Bangladesh government earlier termed it "nothing more than a misleading series of innuendos and insinuations in what is apparently a politically motivated 'smear campaign'".

According to a post in the New York-based Human Rights Watch website today, they also wanted the UN to discuss the alleged human rights violation record at home.

"The UN should conduct its own inquiry into the allegations and take a fresh look at the human rights record of

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Bangladesh Test captain Mominul Haque drives through the off side during his record 10th Test century for Bangladesh on the fourth day of the first Test at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday. The left-hander scored 115 off 182 balls to help set a 395-run target for West Indies, who finished the day at 110-3. Story on page 12.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

COUP IN MYANMAR

Military imposes internet blackout

Thousands take to the streets

AGENCIES

Myanmar saw its largest anti-coup protests yet yesterday with young demonstrators spilling on to the streets to denounce the country's new military regime, despite a nationwide internet blackout aimed at stifling a growing chorus of popular dissent.

Soon before nearly all lines of communication in and out of the country went dark, an Australian advisor to ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi told media he had been detained.

The shutdown did not stop thousands of demonstrators from gathering across Myanmar's largest city yesterday, beginning on a road near Yangon University where many flashed the three-finger salute that has come to symbolise resistance to the army takeover.

"Down with the military dictatorship!" crowds yelled, many donning red headbands -- the colour associated with Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party.

A large riot police contingent blocked nearby roads, with two water cannon trucks parked at the scene.

At least two other groups of demonstrators marched south to downtown Yangon's Sule Pagoda, carrying posters of Suu Kyi and president Win Myint to call for their release.

The protests ended by dusk, and demonstrators have vowed to return to the streets today.

Further north in Mandalay, as many as 2,000 people were also protesting, AFP reporters on the ground said.

All were out to condemn dawn raids that brought a sudden halt to the country's 10-year experiment with

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