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"As long as I'm in the government, freedom fighters without homes and addresses will never happen."
PRIME MINISTER SHEIKH HASINA



"You said you did not support terrorists, when in fact you are on their side and behind them."
ERDOGAN ACCUSES US OF BACKING 'TERRORISTS' IN IRAQ



"We were absolutely right to make the decision to be extra cautious..."
NZ PM JACINDA ARDERN ON NEW COVID CURBS

Second dose now after 8 weeks

Govt decides in light of WHO suggestion; it also plans to vaccinate 70 lakh people in the first phase

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has reverted to its original plan of administering the second dose of Covid-19 vaccine eight weeks after the first jab instead of the gap of four weeks between the two doses.

It has also decided to inoculate 70 lakh people in the first phase instead of 35 lakh.

The National Immunisation Technical Advisory Committee meeting took these decisions on Saturday.

The decisions were taken in the light of a strong response from people to get inoculated against Covid-19, as well as assurances of getting the second consignment of vaccines on time.

"The national committee has suggested administering the second dose after eight weeks instead of four weeks and we agreed on it. We have the liberty to customise our procedure according to requirements," ABM Khurshid Alam, director general of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), told The Daily Star yesterday.

He also said 70 lakh jabs will be administered in the first phase but could not say when exactly the phase would end as it depends on the people's response.

Those who have already received the first dose of the vaccine and got the date for the second dose will be informed of the new date through SMS, the DG said.

Last week, AstraZeneca said the key to the success of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine is a longer gap between the two doses.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) also recommended extending the gap between the first and second doses to improve efficacy.

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A man shows three children their photo which he just took with his mobile phone on board a navy ship at Chattogram Boat Club around 9:30am yesterday. Two thousand and ten Rohingyas left the place in five such ships soon afterwards and reached Bhasan Char later in the day. It was the fourth batch of Rohingyas to have been relocated to the island from their camps in Cox's Bazar. Story on Page 2.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

The Daily Star
CELEBRATES
GLORIOUS
50 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE
COURAGEOUS
30 YEARS OF JOURNALISM

The fourth installment of the anniversary supplement, Golden Jubilee Beginnings, is a celebration of life from its highs to lows, and all its glory. We look into the wider world around us and appreciate that life is all about learning to see different perspectives.
DON'T MISS OUT ON
GOLDEN JUBILEE BEGINNINGS
AS IT HITS THE STANDS TOMORROW.

'My impression is polls want to go into exile'

Says Election Commissioner Mahubul Talukdar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Election Commissioner Mahubul Talukdar yesterday said that elections in the country are becoming "one-centric" which cannot be an element of multi-party democracy.

Democracy cannot flourish through a controversial election. "Looking at the results of the ongoing municipality polls, my impression is that election wants to go into exile," he told reporters at the Election Commission office in the capital yesterday on the occasion of the fourth anniversary of the current EC.

"Since democracy cannot be established without elections, it [democracy] has to be protected by strictly following each and every electoral law and the code of conduct," he noted in his written speech.

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WRIT FOR BAN ON AL JAZEERA

5 of 6 amici curiae against the plea

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Five out of six legal expert amici curiae (friends of court) yesterday told the High Court that the writ petition seeking a ban on the broadcast of Al Jazeera and removal of its report "Al the Prime Minister's Men" from digital platforms was unacceptable.

Since there is no allegation of violation of fundamental rights because of the Al Jazeera report, the writ petitioner has no logical reason to be aggrieved and move the petition, they said.

The petitioner has not served any legal notice to the government demanding steps to this effect and a decision to block or restrict Al Jazeera may tarnish freedom of speech and freedom of press in Bangladesh. Besides, the laws of the land are not enforceable to restrict freedom of speech outside the country, according to their opinions.

The amici curiae have placed at the HC the legal and constitutional interpretations and examples of decisions of courts from home and abroad and the possible consequences of banning the broadcast of Al Jazeera in Bangladesh.

The five experts are, former attorney generals AJ Mohammad Ali and Fida M Kamal, and senior lawyers Kamal Ul Alam, Probrir Neogi and Dr Shahden Malik.

The other expert Abdul Matin Khasru did not clearly state his opinion on the acceptability of the writ petition, but said the HC could order the government over the issue if it felt necessary because the video documentary was an attack on the prime minister, the army, and the integrity and solidarity of the country.

After hearing the opinions, the HC bench of Justice Md Mozibur

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BUSINESS

Economy going through an uneven recovery: CPD

Bangladesh's economy is going through an uneven recovery as larger firms are recovering at a faster pace while small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are falling behind, the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) said yesterday. The independent thinktank said smaller firms, people belonging to the low-income category, and the poor people in general have been affected disproportionately and have not received adequate government support. The CPD said stimulus packages and liquidity support will help large industries and public organisations recover at a faster pace while the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) will fall behind.

STORY ON B1

KILLING OF BANGLADESHI FEMALE WORKER

In landmark verdict, KSA woman given death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A court in Saudi Arabia has handed down death penalty to a Saudi woman and gave different sentences to her husband and son in the case over the murder of Bangladeshi migrant worker Abiron Begum.

Abiron's employer Ayesha al-Jizani, the main accused in the case, was sentenced to death on Sunday for killing the female worker "with a motive", according to a report of Bangladesh Embassy in Riyadh. The Saudi Criminal Court-6 in Riyadh sentenced Ayesha's husband Basem Salem, also employer of Abiron, to imprisonment for three years and two months and fined him 50,000 Saudi Riyal, mentioned the report prepared by the embassy's labour welfare wing.

The court ordered sending the employers' son Walid Basem Salem to a juvenile correction centre for seven months on the charges of non-cooperation to the migrant worker and not arranging her treatment, said the report.



Murdered Abiron

Abiron, who went to Saudi Arabia in 2017, was tortured at her employers' house and killed on March 24, 2019. Her body was kept at a mortuary in the kingdom for seven months before being flown home.

Meanwhile, various organisations working on migrant rights in Bangladesh have termed the verdict in the case, as "exemplary" and "landmark" judgment, urging Bangladesh missions in different countries to closely monitor and keep track of the incidents of torture and abuse of Bangladeshi migrant workers.

The embassy report mentioned that Basem was found guilty of destroying evidence, not arranging treatment for the domestic worker and illegally employing her outside the residential premises.

In its verdict of "qisas" or retributive justice, the Saudi court mentioned that if any of the parties feel aggrieved by the judgment, they will be able to file an appeal with the court concerned within 30 days.

The three convicts attended Sunday's

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Prosperous Bangladesh is in India's interest

Says Vikram Doraiswami

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Any perception that India is not interested in Bangladesh's development should be dismissed as a conspiracy theory, Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Vikram Doraiswami said yesterday. "Sometimes there is a sense that there is a lot of mistrust about our [Indo-Bangla] relations. Let me say categorically that a strong, stable, prosperous, flourishing Bangladesh is in India's fundamental national interest. Your success is the best thing that can happen to us," he said.

"Therefore, all the ideas that we are somehow not interested in Bangladesh's development, you can please dismiss them as

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Vehicles stuck in a traffic jam in the capital's Tejgaon Industrial Area around 11:00am yesterday. Many parts of the city witnessed severe traffic congestion over the last couple of days, something seen not so frequently since the coronavirus outbreak.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

FREEDOM FIGHTER'S ALLOWANCE PM raises it to Tk 20k a month

Nearly 2 lakh to get the benefit after budget

STAR REPORT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday announced the increase of valiant freedom fighter allowance to Tk 20,000 from Tk 12,000 a month.

A total of 1,92,532 freedom fighters will get the financial benefit after the next budget, as it requires allocation, report UNB and BSS.

"I think the current monthly allowance of Tk 12,000 is not enough... We will increase the amount to Tk 20,000..." Hasina said.

"But to make it happen, it will require some time as the government also needs time to allocate money for this purpose in the national budget," she said, adding, "But we'll surely do it."

The PM made the announcement while inaugurating the transfer of monthly allowance to 168,000 freedom fighters and their families through electronic fund transfer system of the Bangladesh Bank that uses the management information system (MIS).

Hasina joined the programme held at the Osmani Memorial Auditorium from the Gono Bhaban.

Currently, 2,05,206 freedom fighters are getting the allowance. Of them, the families of martyred war heroes are getting Tk 30,000 a month, while that of war-wounded ones are getting Tk 25,000.

The families of the seven Bir Shresthas, the highest gallantry award, are receiving Tk 35,000 while recipients of Bir Uttams get Tk 25,000, Bir Bikram Tk 20,000, and Bir Pratik Tk 15,000. The rest freedom fighters get Tk 12,000.

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