

**'LET US STAND UNITED'**

Karen rebels urge other ethnic armies to unite against Myanmar junta  
**SEE PAGE 6**

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**"This is our expectation that the existing relations between the two countries and neighbouring West Bengal will further develop...."**  
INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING MINISTER HASAN MAHMUD ON WEST BENGAL ELECTION RESULTS



**"If people again became indifferent to the health safety guidelines as they had become after the first wave [of Covid-19], the third wave could begin in the country very soon."**  
HEALTH MINISTER ZAHID MALEQUE



**"And if you shut down, you don't have to shut down for six months..."**  
US PRESIDENTIAL MEDICAL ADVISER ANTHONY FAUCI ON INDIA LOCKDOWN

## Bittersweet win for Mamata

West Bengal chief minister leads Trinamool Congress to a landslide but is on the verge of losing her own seat

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE and PALLAB BHATTACHARYA

Mamata Banerjee's fate as a Member of the Legislative Assembly may be in the balance, but the charismatic Trinamool Congress leader brought her party to power in West Bengal for the third time in a row.



The two parties formed an alliance after being adversaries for over 70 years. But the friendliness among the top leaders never trickled down to the grassroots. Added to it was the decision of Congress and left to join hands with Indian Secular Front headed by Abbas Siddiqui, the cleric of Furfura Sharif Shrine in Hoogly.

In the last assembly polls in 2016, the left and Congress won 76 seats. Now they are heading for just one.

Although Mamata is set to retain power in Bengal with a spectacular 200-plus seats, her fate is still uncertain in the high-stake seat of Nandigram, the town that catapulted Mamata to power in 2011 for the first time, against her aide-turned-rival Suwendu Adhikari.

Yesterday, Mamata and Suwendu alternately led in different rounds until the Election Commission suspended the result and announced a recount.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

The foot bridge near the capital's New Market is teeming with pedestrians, many of whom are stopping to shop for various items such as handbags from makeshift stalls. Although the country is still in the midst of the restrictions imposed to curb the spread of coronavirus, many in this picture are seen without masks and there is no evidence of social distancing. The photo was taken yesterday.

## Vaccines will be bought at any cost: PM



UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday reaffirmed that the government would procure vaccines at any cost to protect the people from coronavirus.

"We're bringing more vaccines; no matter how much money is required, we'll bring more vaccines," she said.

The prime minister said this while providing cash support of Tk 2,500 to each of 36.5 lakh low-income families engaged in different occupations so that they can survive amid the pandemic.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

### TACKLING COVID SURGE

## Govt plans to isolate big cities

MOJIBUL AHMED SUJAN

Amid fears of a further surge in Covid-19 transmission, the government plans to segregate the big cities with higher transmission rate from the rest of the country and extend the nationwide restrictions with enforcement of stricter surveillance.

A preliminary decision in this regard was made yesterday at a virtual meeting presided over by Health Minister Zahid Maleque. It may be finalised at today's cabinet meeting, said several top officials present at the meeting.

The ongoing restrictions are likely to be extended till May 17, they mentioned.

"As the infection rate is higher in the big cities, [we have recommended] segregating those [from the rest of the country] and all the mayors concerned agreed. No vehicle will be allowed to enter or leave these cities. However, vehicles will run within the cities," said Prof Dr ABM Khurshid Alam, director general of the health directorate, who attended the meeting.

The government will allow public transport to operate inside the cities, but inter-district transport services will not resume anytime soon, he told The Daily Star yesterday.

The meeting was attended by, among others, Dhaka South City Corporation Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh, Dhaka North City Corporation Mayor Atiqul Islam, Inspector General of Police Benazir Ahmed and Health Secretary Lokman Hossain Miah.

It also decided that mobile courts will be engaged in penalising the

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

## COLLEGE GIRL'S DEATH Brother files murder case against AL whip's son

STAR REPORT

The brother of the college student found dead in a Gulshan flat filed a murder case against Nazmul Karim Chowdhury Sharun, son of Awami League lawmaker and parliament whip Shamsul Haque Chowdhury, with a Dhaka court yesterday.

This development comes less than a week after the victim's sister sued Bashundhara Group Managing Director Sayem Sobhan Anvir over abetting the college student's suicide.

The college student was found hanging from a ceiling fan in a rented Gulshan flat on April 26, and her sister filed the

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1

### CHINESE VACCINE

## 5 lakh doses may arrive on May 10

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Bangladesh will receive over five lakh doses of China's Sinopharm vaccine on May 10 if everything goes as planned.

Officials are making preparations to receive the shots that will be used as the first jab.

The government may send a special plane to bring the doses from Beijing, officials said.

"We have written to the foreign ministry to take action. Bangladesh Air Force will probably bring the vaccine from Beijing on May 10," Syed Mojibul Huq, additional secretary of the Health Services Division of the health ministry, told The Daily Star yesterday.

The Chinese embassy in Dhaka on April 29 in a letter addressed to Joint Secretary Shahriar Kader Siddiky of the Economic Relations Division said a special flight would be needed to bring the 5,24,800 doses.

It mentioned that Beijing would confirm the dispatch once the flight was confirmed.

If Bangladesh needs syringes, the Bangladesh government will have to notify, the letter read.

"We forwarded everything to the health ministry which will take the necessary action," Shahriar told The Daily Star.

Additional Secretary Mojibul said the health division received the letter and forwarded it to the foreign ministry, requesting necessary steps.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

**BUSINESS**

**Cashless shopping & dining during Ramadan**

Banks and financial institutions are trying to lure home-confined people with attractive offers and discounts ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr. To know more about the offers read today's business supplement.

### EXPERT'S VIEWS



## Can we administer different vaccine for 2nd dose?

DR KHONDOKER MEHEDI AKRAM

Devastated by the second wave of the pandemic, India has imposed a ban on all kinds of vaccine exports.

As a result, Bangladesh is not receiving the pre-purchased and already paid for 30 million doses of Oxford-AstraZeneca (Covishield) shots from Serum Institute. Till date, we have received only 7 million doses from Serum Institute, and 3.2 million doses as a gift from the Indian government.

In total, we have received 30.2 million doses. It is highly unlikely that we will get the additional vaccines from Serum Institute any time before July.

Due to this, the countrywide vaccination programme that started in Bangladesh in February is facing a bump on the road since April.

The government has put a hold on administering the first dose due to scarcity of vaccines. Now, only the second doses are being administered.

With the amount of shots in hand, the scheduled second doses for some 1.3 million people on time have become

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4



**COVID SURVIVED...** Jahanara Begum, 56, is flanked by her daughter and son in front of Dhaka Medical College Hospital's emergency department as they prepare to go to their Azimpur home yesterday. After testing positive for Covid-19, Jahanara was admitted to DMCH and battled the virus for 18 days, before finally testing negative on Saturday evening.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## PRESS FREEDOM DAY 200 violations of press freedom in Asia-Pacific Half of them in South Asia, says IPI

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Over 200 press freedom violations linked to the pandemic were reported in the Asia-Pacific region, of which about half were from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Nepal, stated a press release by International Press Institute (IPI).

"Seventy-one journalists faced arrests and charges for their coverage of the pandemic and its consequences in those countries, while 32 cases of physical attacks and verbal threats were reported," said the statement.

So far, IPI's has recorded 635 press freedom violations around the world related to Covid-19, it added.

"The Covid-19 pandemic has delivered a debilitating blow to press freedom across the globe. Governments have tried to stifle independent media, while an alarming number of journalists have come under attacks for their coverage of the health crisis," said the statement.

This trend has been observed to be perpetrated by "authoritarian and illiberal-minded" regimes, it added.

Myanmar's military junta has arrested more than 70 journalists, revoked licenses

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1