

'LET US STAND UNITED'

Karen rebels urge other ethnic armies to unite against Myanmar junta
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The Daily Star

SECOND EDITION

www.thedailystar.net

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REGD. NO. DA 781

VOL. XXXI No. 107

BAISHAKH 20, 1428 BS

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RAMADAN 20, 1442 HJRI

16 PAGES PRICE : Tk12.00



"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 loses the battle for her own seat

Of blitz & brash in Bengal polls

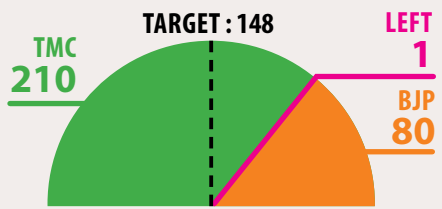
KUMAR CHATTERJEE

Main zindagi ka saath nibhata chala gaya... Har fikr ko dhuyen mein udata chala gaya... Remember Mohammad Rafi humming for Dev Anand in the film Hum Dono? The song was revisiting my mind since early yesterday morning when tubes began beaming how the fate of this state would be sealed this day - in the ruins or in the wrecks.

Does it matter, really? It does, perhaps, when you look at your child in his pre-teens and try to convince yourself that he is being raised up in an environment conducive for his growth as a human being, and not a human bomb, well, metaphorically.

Perhaps one of the dirtiest dances of democracy in the history of West Bengal came to an end on Sunday with the Trinamool Congress retaining power for the third term and the warring

WEST BENGAL POLLS



PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE AND PALLAB BHATTACHARYA

Mamata Banerjee lost her seat in the high-stakes Nandigram assembly, but the charismatic Trinamool Congress supremo brought her party to power in West Bengal for the third time in a row.

Mamata showed the grit and political acumen needed to single-handedly defeat the Narendra Modi wave that has swept over India, despite his Bharatiya Janata Party launching an all-out campaign of the Saffron star cast.

Analysts say her victory is a triumph of secularism against the divisive politics of religion and nationalism.

However, the BJP has many reasons to cheer as it is now the second-most popular party in West Bengal, surpassing National Congress and Communist Party of India (Marxist). These two parties ruled the WB for over 64 years combined.

The Congress and CPIM were absolutely decimated.

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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 yesterday and there is no evidence of social distancing. Inset, shoppers in an accessories shop at a nearby market.



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

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.

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TACKLING COVID SURGE

Govt plans to isolate big cities

MOJIBUL AHMED SUJAN

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

The ongoing restrictions are likely to be extended till May 17, mentioned the officials present at yesterday's meeting.

"As the infection rate is higher in the big cities, recommendations were made for segregating those [from the rest of the country] and the mayors concerned agreed. No vehicle will be allowed to enter or leave these cities. However, vehicles will run within those 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 this newspaper.

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 shopping malls that are not adhering to the health safety guidelines.

"People who will go outside without masks will be jailed or fined as

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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 lodged the

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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 5,02,400 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.

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THE 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

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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

DIGITAL SECURITY ACT 5 journos sued last month alone

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Just in the month leading up to World Press Freedom Day today, five journalists were sued under the Digital Security Act, according to voluntary research outfit Our Media, Our Rights.

A total of 24 journalists were sued under different laws in the month of April, it said in a statement yesterday.

Six of the plaintiffs had political backgrounds.

Five of the cases were filed for news reports and three for social media posts, found the group.

"Most of the cases were filed by ruling party lawmakers, or their men, after journalists shared news content on social media," said Ahammad Foyez, a journalist, who put out the research.

Last week, Article 19 said 38 DSA cases were filed in the first three months of the year, and five journalists were prosecuted.

It had also recorded 631 incidences of attacks on journalists and human rights defenders in 2020, according to its annual report.

A total of 265 journalists were attacked, said the organisation.

The report also recorded three major

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RELATED STORY ON PAGE 2

PRESS FREEDOM DAY