

COVID VACCINATION IN UK
People aged over 50 to be offered 3rd jab in autumn
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"We will take the money back when we will finally come to know that no vaccine will be supplied. We will definitely get back the money."

FINANCE MINISTER AHM MUSTAFA KAMAL ON GETTING MONEY BACK FROM SERUM



"I spoke to Prime Minister [Narendra] Modi. What he needs most is the material... that can make the vaccine work. We're sending him that."

US PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN



"The reality is, the way we get through this pandemic is to get vaccinated with whatever vaccine is offered to us."

PM JUSTIN TRUDEAU TELLS CANADIANS NOT TO CHOOSE VACCINES



CURBS ON HOMEGOING

Directives hard to enforce

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE and TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The government has imposed several restrictions including an embargo on leaving work stations during the upcoming Eid holidays to check the mad rush of holidaymakers, but it lacks a clear outline on how to enforce these restrictions aimed at curbing the spread of Covid-19.

For example, the Ministry of Public Administration has a full grip on all government officials. The case, however, is not the same with those working at non-government and autonomous organisations.

There are chances that a huge number of these employees, along with their family members, will leave the capital to spend the festival with their loved ones.

The apprehension stems from a few factors.

As per a new government circular, public transport, including buses and minibuses, will be allowed to operate only inside the territory of each district. Bus operators, however, have pointed out that it will be difficult to enforce since most of the vehicles ply from one stop to another, not based on the territory of the districts.

People will be able to travel beyond

- Public transport would be allowed inside districts
- People are leaving Dhaka by microbuses, small vehicles
- Ferry services remain normal
- No political, social and religious gathering allowed

the boundary of a district and take a new vehicle to go further, advancing towards their destinations -- their village homes.

Also, a huge number of cars and microbuses continue to carry passengers to and from Dhaka on rent, charging almost double the usual bus fare. The number of such vehicles is expected to go up during the Eid.

The rush at the ferry terminals is increasing every day.

In such a situation, officials said they fear the government will not be able to prevent the mad rush during the festival and it will ultimately help the virus spread further.

The Cabinet Division yesterday issued a circular with a six-point directive, extending some restrictions on the movement of

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There is barely any room left due to congestion on Dhaka-Chattogram highway in Sanarpur area amid what officials say is a "lockdown" aimed at containing the second wave of the pandemic. It has been proven across the world that travel restrictions and social distancing yield lower number of new infections and deaths.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

India's Covid surge spreads to Nepal

Says Red Cross as top scientific advisor warns further waves 'inevitable' in India

AGENCIES

Nepal is being overwhelmed by a Covid-19 surge as India's outbreak spreads across South Asia, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies said yesterday.

"We need to act now and we need to act fast to have any hope of containing this human catastrophe. This virus has no respect for borders and these variants are running rampant across Asia," said Alexander Matheou, Asia Pacific director for the Geneva-based agency representing the global humanitarian network.

Nepal is now recording 57 times as many cases as a month ago, with 44% of tests now coming back positive, the statement said.

Nepalese towns near the Indian border could not cope with the growing number of people needing treatment, while only

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FOR TREATMENT ABROAD

Khaleda's family seeks govt's nod

Her breathing problem persists

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's family has sought permission from the government to take her abroad for better treatment.

Khaleda's sister Selima Islam told The Daily Star last night that their brother Shamim Iskandar submitted an application to the home ministry in this regard yesterday.

Contacted, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal said they have received the application and are considering it positively.

"We will send the application to the law ministry for its opinion. Upon getting its view, we will make the decision," he told this newspaper last night.

He further said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is very considerate on such issues, and this request is being considered positively.

Asked, Law Minister Anisul Huq said the secretary at his ministry received the files regarding Khaleda's treatment abroad from the home ministry at about 11:00pm.

"I'm yet to get the files. I'll go through those and then give my opinion..." he told The Daily Star around 12:30am today.

Earlier around 8:30pm yesterday, Shamim went to the home minister's residence and handed him the application, said Selima.

"We will decide on the next course of action after getting the government decision."

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Lowest number of daily deaths since April 2

1,742 new cases detected in 24hrs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fifty people died from Covid-19 in 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, according to a press release from the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

This is the lowest number of deaths recorded in the span of a day since April 2.

With this, the total number of Covid-19 deaths in the country reached 11,755.

The death rate stands at 1.53 percent, said the release.

In the same 24 hours, 1,742 new coronavirus cases were recorded, taking the total number of people infected to 767,338, it said.

Against 20,284 tests conducted in the period, the positivity rate was 8.59 percent.

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VACCINES FROM OTHER SOURCES

Stock depleting, but no deal yet

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

The stock of Oxford-AstraZeneca doses is running out fast but the government, despite frantic efforts to keep the inoculation campaign on track, is yet to secure a contract for bulk supply of alternative Covid-19 vaccines.

The government suspended administration of the first dose on April 26, immediately after the Indian government barred export of Covishield -- the AstraZeneca vaccine produced by the Serum Institute of India.

The Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) yesterday said the stock of the Covid-19 vaccine is running out as there are only 14 lakh jabs in stock with no sign of fresh shipment from India.

There will be a vaccine crisis if a fresh consignment does not arrive in the country before the existing stock is exhausted, DGHS spokesperson Dr Robed Amin said.

Since the suspension of the first dose, the government has been communicating through diplomatic channels to procure Russia's Sputnik V, China's Sinopharm as well as vaccines from other sources.

China has offered five lakh doses of Sinopharm vaccine as gift, which Bangladesh is expected to bring from Beijing at its own expense.

The government is also working on signing an agreement with the Russian government for procuring the Sputnik V vaccine.

Bangladesh, however, is yet to get any response from China regarding its proposal made last week to purchase

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THE BUSINESS

Jobs restored, incomes not: CPD-Oxfam survey

Although almost all the people who had lost jobs in April to May last year because of the coronavirus pandemic found jobs by February, 86 per cent said they are not earning enough to meet their daily necessities, according to a survey of the Centre for Policy Dialogue and Oxfam Bangladesh.

STORY ON B1



Mamata sworn in as West Bengal CM

Opposition parties boycott oath-taking ceremony

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Amidst opposition boycott, Mamata Banerjee, who powered Trinamool Congress to a landslide victory in West Bengal assembly elections, was sworn in as Chief Minister of the state for the third consecutive term under the shadow of violence in several parts of the state post-poll results in which 14 people were reportedly killed.

Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar yesterday administered the oath of office and secrecy to 66-year-old Mamata at a low-key ceremony in

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Monsur Ali, an elderly man with severe breathing difficulties due to Covid-19, arrives at Dhaka Medical College Hospital from Lakshimpur. Confirmed cases of Covid-19 have fallen in recent days after peaking a month ago.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

MAMATA'S WIN: FOR DHAKA Not much hope for Teesta deal

Say international relations analysts; 'relief that secularism triumphed'

PORIMOL PALMA

Over the last decade, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has been widely known in Bangladesh for her last-minute opposition to the Teesta water-sharing deal that could not be signed during the then Indian prime minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Dhaka in 2011.

Now, upon any Indian dignitary's visit to Dhaka, the most prominent question is when the Teesta deal will be signed.

The response is always that it depends on West Bengal, as "the Indian constitution guarantees the state's right to say on international agreements on transboundary rivers."

As India's ruling party BJP conducted a major campaign spree in West Bengal before the polls, it had indicated the signing of the deal if BJP won the polls.

Even though the BJP bagged 77 seats in the assembly polls -- a significant advancement from the three seats it won in 2016 -- it is the Trinamool Congress, led by Mamata Banerjee, which has secured 213 of the state's 294 constituencies and is forming government for the third consecutive term.

Bangladesh Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen congratulated her for her victory.

"We believe, with your cooperation and commitment, the relations between the two countries will strengthen further and help resolve any outstanding issue," he said in a message sent to Mamata yesterday.

However, is the much-talked about Teesta issue really going to be resolved?

Former foreign secretary Touhid Hossain says the Teesta deal is not dependent on who's in power in West Bengal. It has been hanging for long and is likely to remain the same for a while longer.

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