

**BANGLADESH UPDATE**



**1,514**  
New cases in 24hrs



**7,75,027**  
Total cases



**11,972**  
Deaths



**7,12,277**  
Recoveries

**GLOBAL UPDATE**



**3,311,617**  
Deaths



**159,318,864**  
Total cases

## Mamata's cabinet sworn in

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

A 43-member ministerial council, led by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, was sworn in yesterday -- eight days after the Trinamool Congress stormed back into power for the third consecutive term following a landslide victory in the state assembly elections.

On the other hand, Mamata's former protégé and BJP leader Suwendhu Adhikari, who defeated her in Nandigram by less than 2,000 votes, was elected unanimously as the leader of the BJP legislature party today, paving the way for him in becoming the opposition in the state assembly and setting the stage for a faceoff in the House.

The name of Suwendu, who joined the saffron party in December last year as the BJP legislature party, was proposed by Mukul Roy, another former Mamata confidante, who defected to BJP some years ago.

Soon after the swearing-in at the Raj Bhavan at 10:45 local time, Mamata distributed the portfolios retaining the Home, Health and Information and Cultural affairs to herself and allocating the Industry and Commerce to senior TMC leader Partha Chatterjee, who was the education minister in the previous government.

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## PM reiterates firm solidarity with India

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has reiterated firm solidarity with India in a letter addressed to her Indian counterpart Narendra Modi.

She conveyed condolences and prayers for victims of the unprecedented devastation taking place in India due to Covid-19 pandemic, said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday.

The premier pledged to combat the pandemic together with all-out support from Bangladesh.

## Family irked

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touching the bed and both knees were a little bent, said the complainant in the case statement.

The victim's sister said she and her husband went to Dhaka on Wednesday as police wanted to speak to them.

They met deputy commissioner of Gulshan division, an additional deputy commissioner and the investigation officer of the case, also the officer-in-charge of Gulshan Police Station where she lodged the case on July 27.

"Police confirmed us that they have found evidence that suggests Anvir had instigated my sister to take her life. But police did not quiz him yet," the victim's sister said.

She added that the ADC during the meeting assured them that they would submit a charge sheet against Anvir for abetting the suicide after completing the probe.

She said the officer also told her that there are some issues in arresting Bashundhara Group MD and they could not arrest him without permission from the higher authorities as the case is filed under Section 306 of the Penal Code.

The victim's sister also said immediately after her sister's death, she was in trauma and had missed some noticeable issues that she failed to mention in the complaint.

The fully furnished flat was chosen by Anvir that means he was already acquainted with the flat/building authority, she added. There is no grill in the dining room balcony and anyone can enter the flat through the balcony from the back side or from adjacent flat or building to avoid CCTV cameras.

"We asked the police to investigate this point, but police apparently did not take my point into consideration," she added.

She alleged that her sister was murdered by Bashundhara Group MD. "If Anvir is innocent, then why some of his family members left the country," she questioned.

The complainant also alleged that the Bashundhara Group is using its influence on a section of media to assassinate her sister's character. "Even the Bashundhara Group had persuaded their only brother to file a murder case against Sharun in this connection possibly to divert the focus against Anvir," she said.

The brother who had no contacts with the sisters for the last two years following a dispute with them over ancestral land lodged the case against Nazmul Karim Chowdhury Sharun, son of Awami League lawmaker and parliament whip Shamsul Haque Chowdhury, with a Dhaka court on May 1.

After recording the complainant's statement, the court ordered that all proceedings of the murder case would be stayed until the probe report over abetting suicide of the college girl is completed.

Shafiqul Ahmed Babul, commander of Cumilla Muktiyoddha Sangsad, said, "The victim was a daughter of a freedom fighter. We want proper investigation and immediate arrest of Bashundhara Group MD."

The death of the girl created stir and there were protests in Cumilla and Dhaka.



Police personnel deployed in front of the gate of Creative Collections Ltd, a readymade garment factory, in Gazipur after the workers there demonstrated demanding that their Eid holidays be extended. Police said they had to fire shots in the air to bring the situation. Inset, an injured worker who claimed he was hit by shotgun pellets fired by the law enforcers. Story on Page 12.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## Pandemic to be budget mainstay

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FROM THE next budget should focus on crisis management, prioritising spending on health, enhancing social protection and building on the resilience demonstrated by the agriculture sector.

Apart from enhancing the health system's capacity, priority should be given to vaccine diversification in terms of procurement and local production, they point out.

"A business-as-usual budget like last year's will miss the boat again," said Zahid Hussain, former lead economist at the World Bank's Dhaka Office.

"There is a lot to learn from the implementation experience in health and social protection. Last year, we did not have the benefit of knowing what we know now about how the policy response to the pandemic works and where the fault lines are," he told this newspaper.

Binayak Sen, director general of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, said that in the next budget, special attention should be given to public health, social protection, especially in urban areas, and also agriculture.

The government will make a block allocation of Tk 10,000 crore for procuring Covid vaccines to reach the target of inoculating the eligible citizens free of cost. Besides, the money will also be used to meet emergency requirements in the health sector and take up special programmes for the poor, according to them.

The government allocated the same amount of money in the current budget for health emergencies. It has already spent Tk 3,500 crore that included a payment of Tk 1,200 crore to the Serum Institute of India for Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine.

To roll out Covid vaccination as early as possible, the government signed a tripartite deal with Serum and Beximco Pharmaceuticals Limited in November last year to buy three crore doses of the vaccine scheduled to arrive in six monthly instalments.

Serum delivered 70 lakh doses in two consignments in January and February this year. It stopped supplying jobs after the Indian government restricted vaccine export in March amid a surge in virus infections in that country.

As a result, the vaccination programme in Bangladesh suffered a setback. The authorities stopped administering the first jab in late April, about three months after mass inoculation started in early February. Registration for jabs was also temporarily suspended due to a shortage of vaccines.

Amid uncertainty over further shipments, the government recently approved China's Sinopharm and Russia's Sputnik V vaccines for emergency use. It is in talks with Russia over purchase of Sputnik V.

Around five lakh doses of Sinopharm vaccine are likely to arrive from China tomorrow.

Referring to the vaccination campaign, Zahid said, "Vaccination should be the priority number one."

He further said the strategy to rely solely on one country and one domestic distributor has brought many regrets, including a weaker

bargaining power in negotiating vaccine import and production deals.

Apart from vaccination, testing, contract tracing, preventing transmission, treating the infected ones, and non-Covid care deserve a lot of budgetary care, he noted.

Binayak said, "We should seriously think about our own vaccine production and encourage vaccine diversification."

Seeking anonymity, a finance ministry official involved in budget formulation said, "No matter whether we go for local production or procurement, vaccines are going to get the highest priority in the next budget."

The health sector would also get significant importance, the official mentioned.

### ECONOMIC RECOVERY

There will be continuation of some programmes in the upcoming budget to revive the economy and rehabilitate the industries as well as the poor and low-income people affected by the pandemic.

One of those is economic stimulus package. The government has so far rolled out 23 packages, which have been provided in the form of food security, social protection, special allowances and low-cost loans to micro, small, medium and large industries.

The duration of the large packages will end next month. The government is likely to extend the duration of most of those by one to two years.

It will also allocate around Tk 12,000 crore as subsidy to help borrowers under the packages pay interests on their loans.

The total outlay of the packages is now Tk 124,053 crore, which is

4.4 percent of the country's GDP.

Around 65 percent of the amount was disbursed till March this year.

### FISCAL SUPPORT FOR THE POOR

In the next budget, the government will allocate Tk 19,000 crore under social safety net programmes for providing food support to the poor. The allocation is over Tk 17,000 crore in the current fiscal year.

Various studies by think-tanks suggest that the pandemic rendered jobless a huge number of people, especially in the urban service sector, making them new poor.

A study by Power and Participation Research Centre and the Brac Institute of Governance and Development said the economic shock induced by the pandemic pushed 2.45 crore people into poverty in one year.

To help them in this crisis, the government will take up special programmes in the budget. It will bring all elderly poor, widows and destitute women in 150 poverty-stricken upazilas across the country under social safety net programme.

It will also implement safety net programmes involving Tk 100,000 crore in the upcoming budget, said finance ministry officials.

Economists suggest that the government should identify and reach out to the real beneficiaries through a combined effort, engaging all stakeholders so that none of the affected or vulnerable poor people is left out.

Binayak said, "If we can achieve a stable 5-6 percent growth rate with broad-based healthcare for all, social protection for the poorest and the new poor, and robust agricultural growth in the next two-three years, this will be good for the economy and for the citizens."

## Rejoinder, our reply

Dragon Sweater Bangladesh Ltd has sent a rejoinder to a report headlined 'Jobs Taken, Benefits Too' published in The Daily Star on April 27.

"It has come to our attention that a news article was published titled 'Jobs Taken' dated 27/04/2021 on The Daily Star -- the article wrongly claimed that Dragon Sweater DHAKA factory was closed permanently since March 26, 2020, and never reopened. It is to be noted that the factory had temporarily shut down from March 26, 2020, due to the Covid-19 lockdown and subsequent order cancellations, however the factory restarted operation from April 16, 2020, and is now under full operation," said the rejoinder sent by Md Mahbubur Rahman, head of the factory's Human Resources and Public Relations.

About whether the factory was open or not following the lockdown, the newspaper report cites workers and employees of the factory, who were served a factory closure notice, never received a note saying the factory is reopening. A similar narrative was found across the board, in the case of multiple workers interviewed.

The Daily Star's correspondent tried reaching the Chairman of Dragon Sweaters Ltd, Md Golam Kuddus, over phone multiple times, but the calls were neither picked up nor was his text messages responded to.

The rejoinder further stated, "It was claimed in the article that many workers still haven't received their dues. The actual fact is that a tripartite agreement was made under the supervision of government officials between the workers and the management for the settlement of the workers. And, accordingly, all workers had been paid within the stipulated dates."

The report, however, mentioned the agreement.

The Daily Star has found multiple workers who were not paid their dues and has included some of their narratives in the report. The newspaper also cites a report by Worker Rights Consortium titled 'Fired then Robbed', which claimed that Dragon Sweaters still owes workers their money.

The rejoinder went on to state, "However some 25 officers out of 89 decided to violate the agreement and claimed a prefabricated compensation amount. The matter is now under judicial litigation at a labour court. Abdul Kuddus and others mentioned in the report are not workers in the factory and were management staffers. They are legally accused of vandalism and for instigating workers and for actively engaging in the pilferage of company resources."

The newspaper report mentioned that there were multiple cases filed in a labour court against Dragon Sweaters by its former workers. It also mentions that Dragon Sweaters filed lawsuits accusing Kuddus and others of vandalism.

According to Kuddus' lawsuit against Dragon Sweaters, Kuddus, as a floor manager, is a worker under Article 2(65) of Bangladesh Labour Act 2006.

"The report was initiated to malign our organisation and its hard-earned reputation globally."

The report was not initiated with any malafide intentions and we stand by it. We thank Dragon Sweaters for their rejoinder.

## Nepal's PM Oli

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But the former political prisoner was able to secure only 93 votes in the parliament instead of the 136 needed.

More than 120 parliamentarians voted against and nearly two dozen leaders from Oli's own party skipped the process.

According to procedure, the president will now call for parties to propose a new candidate, backed by a majority.

Nepal has been roiled by months of turmoil after Oli dissolved parliament in December, accusing members of his Nepal Communist Party (NCP) of being uncooperative.

The NCP was formed in 2018 by a merger between Oli's communist party CPN-UML and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre) of former rebel leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal.

Two months later, the Supreme Court reinstated parliament. Another ruling broke the merger and split the ruling party into two.

In recent months, Oli has faced fierce criticism over his handling of the pandemic as the second wave sweeps over the country, with half of people tested now returning positive.

However it was more political infighting rather than his handling of the pandemic that caused him to lose the vote of confidence.

Yesterday, Nepal reported 9,127 cases, the highest increase yet. Nearly 4,000 people have died since the pandemic began, according to official figures.

"Both the parliament and the government have failed to address the Covid-19 crisis in the country. Instead they are engaging in a political game when most citizens were struggling for oxygen cylinders and hospital beds," said Gunaraj Luitel, editor of Nagarik newspaper.

The NCP's triumph over the incumbent Nepali Congress party in elections in 2017 had been seen as the final step in Nepal's post-civil war transformation into a republic.

Brittle alliances have been struck between Nepal's three dominant parties since 2008, and there was hope a majority government would bring stability and much-needed development to the nation.

## Covid negative certificate a must for release

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recklessly, a situation like [that in] India and Nepal may be created in Bangladesh after Eid," he warned.

The minister also said immediate steps need to be taken so that vehicles from border districts cannot move to other districts.

The health ministry also instructed field officials to send critical patients returning from India to tertiary-level hospitals under police guard to ensure quarantine.

It also instructed that if medical treatment is possible in the district of the land ports, patients returning from India will have to take treatment there, said health officials.

The health ministry held the emergency meeting yesterday with divisional health officials and officials of border districts, including those of Jashore and Brahmanbaria, to analyse the current situation and to contain the transmission of the

Indian variant.

"All who came back from India will have to stay in institutional quarantine. After completing the quarantine period, they have to go through [Covid-19] tests and if the results come negative, they will be released from quarantine," Prof Dr Abul Bashar Mohammad Khurshid Alam, director general of Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), told The Daily Star yesterday.

He also said a decision was made to scale up testing facilities in the border districts to contain the transmission of the Indian variant.

"After people's arrivals from India, random samples will be collected to see whether anyone is infected with Covid-19. If found, those will be sent for genome sequencing," the DG said.

Khurshid asked the civil surgeons of border districts to ensure proper contact tracing if any Indian returnees

were found infected with Covid-19.

The meeting also decided that those who have visas for longer stays in India will be discouraged to return to Bangladesh right now.

"We will request all the ministries concerned to be stricter in limiting the movement between the two countries," Khurshid said.

The concerns have arisen after the double mutant Indian Covid-19 variant made its way to Bangladesh due to a lack of strict enforcement of institutional quarantine for those returning from India.

The government has found eight people infected with the Indian variant and all of them entered the country through the Benapole land port. In the meeting, it was said that the presence of the Indian variant is a matter of serious concern.

Soon after the announcement on Saturday that the Indian variant was detected in the country, the

## If Dhaka joins Quad, it'll harm ties with Beijing

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should make joint efforts against powers outside the region, setting up military alliance in South Asia and practising "hegemonism", Wei was quoted by Xinhua as saying.

Known as the "Quadrilateral Security Dialogue", representatives of the four Quad member nations met periodically since its establishment in 2007.

### ROHINGYA, TEESTA

The Chinese ambassador said no one

can say that the situation in Myanmar is improving. He said Bangladesh will have to wait to resume the tripartite talks on Rohingya repatriation with China and Myanmar.

He said China could not contact the Myanmar government on the Rohingya repatriation issue as the situation there was not normal now.

Two repatriation attempts turned futile as Myanmar "failed to remove trust deficit" among the Rohingyas and there was a "lack of conducive

environment" in Rakhine for their return.

Bangladesh and Myanmar signed the repatriation deal on November 23, 2017. On January 16 the following year, Bangladesh and Myanmar signed a document on "Physical Arrangement", which was supposed to facilitate the return of Rohingyas to their homeland.

Bangladesh says Rohingyas do not trust their government and it gave a number of proposals to build

trust among them. Myanmar did not say "no" to those proposals but no proposal was implemented.

Responding to another question, Ambassador Li said China will sincerely consider its engagement in the Teesta river management project if the country gets a feasibility study report on the project.

The Bangladesh government should conduct a study on the project first before sending the proposal, he added.