



Schools not opening soon

Reopening might be late as infections surge, say edn ministry officials

MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

The government has extended the closure of educational institutions till June 12, saying the reopening is subject to the drop in Covid infection rate below 5 percent and inoculation of university students.

Education ministry officials said the reopening might be delayed further, considering the rise in virus infection rate in recent weeks and uncertainty over vaccination due to a shortage of jabs.

At present, educational institutions are offering online classes and the government is broadcasting educational programmes on state-run television channels.

Experts said the government is not eager to reopen the educational institutions though it recently allowed resumption of different types of business activities.

They fear that the long closure will increase the number of dropouts as well as child marriage. Besides, it is taking a toll

Plan to start reopening educational institutions on June 13

Reopening only after virus infection rate drops below 5%

Government to vaccinate 1.3 lakh university students

on many children in rural areas, most of whom are deprived of online classes.

At a joint press conference yesterday, Education Minister Dipu Moni and State Minister for Primary and Mass Education Zakir Hossen talked about the reopening of educational institutions that have remained closed since March last year amid the pandemic.

Dipu Moni said they have been relying on the suggestions of the National Technical

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SOUTH AFRICA

Mobs loot 50 shops of Bangladeshis

RASHIDUL HASAN and JAMIL MAHMUD

A mob looted and vandalised around 50 shops and malls owned by Bangladeshis in Brandfort of Free State province in South Africa on Tuesday.

The attack comes after businesses of foreign nationals were vandalised and looted over a five-day period since May 16 in Bloemfontein of the same province. The mobs had been protesting poor service delivery by the local government.

Around 10,000 Bangladeshis in Bloemfontein are living in fear after around 400 shops of Bangladeshis were vandalised, torched, and looted by the mobs there.

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A woman helps a man out of his flooded shack while carrying a few of her belongings as high tide flowing inland wash away properties on the low lying areas of Chattogram due to cyclone Yaas. The photo was taken at Anandabazar yesterday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

No reason to panic over black fungus

Health officials warn people to misconceptions

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Health officials yesterday said black fungus infection is not rare and it has treatment, but there is widespread misconception about it.

Black fungus has been in the environment since ancient times and there is no reason to panic about it.

"The way the media portrayed black fungus is not fully correct. This fungal infection has always been a threat to those with a compromised immune systems. It's normal. People should not panic over it," Prof ABM Khurshid Alam, director general of the health directorate, told The Daily Star yesterday.

The comments come at a time when many cases of black fungus, known among doctors as mucormycosis, are being detected in people who are recovering or have recovered from Covid-19.

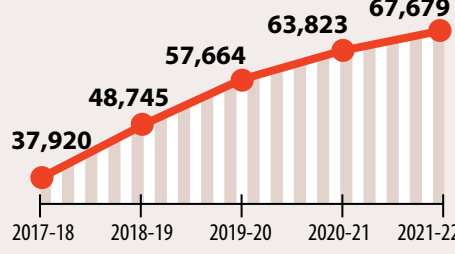
The health DG also said the detection of black fungus infection in two patients at Birdem Hospital was not properly proven yet.

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Interest burden 6pc heavier in next fiscal

GOVT'S INTEREST BURDEN GETTING HEAVIER EVERY YEAR (in Tk cr)

SOURCE: FINANCE MINISTRY *PROPOSED



REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The government's interest burden is set to get heavier in the incoming fiscal year, thanks to its inability to better choose from its financing options.

In the proposed budget for fiscal 2021-22, Tk 67,679 crore has been set aside for debt servicing purpose, up 6 percent year-on-year, according to finance ministry officials.

And as much as 92 percent of the sum would go towards paying interest on debt taken on from domestic sources: national savings certificates and local banks.

As of September last year, the total stock of domestic loans stood at Tk 540,935 crore -- and 58 percent of the sum is attributed to the high interest-bearing national savings certificates.

The government is offering about 11.3 percent interest on an average on

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Puzzled migrant workers on the footpath outside Sonargaon hotel in the capital as Saudi Arabian Airlines officials said they will no longer book hotels in Saudi Arabia for the workers who are required to stay quarantine in hotels for seven days on reaching the gulf country.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

WORKERS BOUND FOR KSA

Airlines make it harder for them

RASHIDUL HASAN and JAMIL MAHMUD

Bangladeshi migrants trying to go to Saudi Arabia have found themselves in more trouble as airlines are now saying that hotel bookings for the seven-day on-arrival institutional quarantine must be done by passengers.

Officials of Saudi Arabian Airlines yesterday said they can no longer help migrant workers with hotel bookings.

Biman Bangladesh Airlines, which is scheduled to resume flights to the Middle Eastern country on Saturday after nine days of suspension, too said passengers would have to book hotels on their own.

According to the latest travel

advisory issued by the Saudi civil aviation authority, "The reservation for the institutional quarantine shall be done through the airlines."

It also says airlines should contact the institutional quarantine establishments that are listed by the Saudi ministry of tourism and they shall inform the General Authority of Civil Aviation and the tourism ministry about the contacted quarantine institutions.

Citing the instruction, migrant workers alleged that the airlines were avoiding their due responsibilities.

Many migrant workers yesterday helplessly ran from desk to desk at the Dhaka airport looking for help regarding hotel reservations. They also

gathered in front of the Saudia airlines office in the capital's Karwan Bazar. They, however, found no designated person to talk to.

Talking to this correspondent, several workers said the airlines were avoiding their responsibilities by asking passengers to complete the hotel booking procedure.

According to several former top leaders of Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies, more than 33,000 Saudi-bound expatriate workers are waiting to go to Saudi Arabia in the next one month after completing their visa procedures and with tickets in their hands.

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2 killed as Yaas batters India

Villages in West Bengal, Odisha inundated; thousands of houses damaged

AGENCIES

Storm surges inundated dozens of villages in eastern India yesterday after a powerful cyclone moved inland from the Bay of Bengal, damaging thousands of mud homes in two coastal states and killing at least two people, officials said.

Barely a week after Cyclone Tauktae claimed at least 155 lives in western India, Cyclone Yaas has forced the evacuation of more than 1.5 million people in the eastern states of West Bengal and Odisha.

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4 children drown in storm surges

27 upazilas affected by Yaas; cyclone makes landfall in Odisha-West Bengal

STAR REPORT

Four children drowned in tidal water and a rickshaw-puller was crushed under a tree in Barishal division, while low-lying regions in the country were inundated after cyclone Yaas made landfall yesterday noon on the Odisha-West Bengal coast in India.

In a briefing yesterday, the state minister for disaster management and relief said 27 upazilas in nine districts were affected by the cyclone.

The met office said Yaas weakened to a severe cyclone from a very severe cyclone and was gradually losing its strength. Yet, all the passenger vessels and fishing trawlers were asked to stay close to the shore until further notice as sea remain very choppy.

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