

## BANGLADESH UPDATE

12,198  
New cases in 24hrs10,47,155  
Total cases16,842  
Deaths8,89,167  
RecoveriesGLOBAL UPDATE  
4,059,226  
Deaths188,404,749  
Total cases

# 1.6cr Covid shots to arrive by end of August

Says Momen

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The current Covid-19 vaccination campaign in the country is set to get a boost with the expected arrival of around 1.6 crore vaccine doses by the end of August.

The first phase of the campaign hit a roadblock in March due to a halt in supply from Serum Institute of India, following a massive surge of cases and deaths in that country.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen on Facebook yesterday said Japan will soon supply 2.9 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine while the European Union will provide more than seven million doses of the same vaccine by August.

"Japan will stand by Bangladesh in the fight against #COVID19," Japanese Ambassador to Dhaka Ito Naoki tweeted yesterday.

He said Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi had announced that Japan will provide 11 million vaccines to 15 countries in the region, including Bangladesh, under the Covax facility.

The AstraZeneca shots will be of special importance for Bangladesh as some 15 lakh people, who had been administered the first dose, have not been able to get the second one.

Momen said in the Facebook post that China will provide one million doses of the Sinopharm vaccine as a gift, in addition to the gift of 1.1 million doses earlier.

Besides, under a purchase agreement, China will supply five million more Sinopharm vaccines later this month or in early August, Chinese Embassy Deputy Chief of Mission Hualong Yan said at an event on July 11.

Bangladesh has so far received 1.6 crore vaccine doses -- 10.03 million AstraZeneca from India, 2.5 million Moderna and 1.06 lakh Pfizer from US and 3.1 million Sinopharm from China.

"Initially, we had a strong supply [of AstraZeneca vaccines] from India. There were problems in the vaccination programme after the halt in the supply, but we are in a good position now. Vaccines will keep coming," Momen told reporters yesterday.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said the government will vaccinate 80 percent of the population, for which 26 crore vaccine doses will be needed, he said.

Bangladesh already has contracts with the Serum Institute of India and China's Sinopharm, while agreements with Sinovac of China and Sputnik V of Russia are also in the final stages.

Bangladesh is also working with both the Russian and Chinese authorities for co-production of vaccines, he said.

"If we can produce vaccines locally, we will not have any problem at all," Momen had told reporters on Monday.



Launches parked at the Sadarghat terminal in the capital. Workers passed busy hours yesterday cleaning the vessels since they are set to resume operation tomorrow at half capacity and maintaining the health safety rules, after the end of a 14-day Covid-19 nationwide lockdown.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## As if Eid will give it a break

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and economic activities ahead of the festival," reads the notification.

"But people will have to remain cautious and strictly maintain the health safety guidelines, including wearing face masks, during this period."

It further said that taking into consideration the overall Covid situation, restrictions will be reimposed at 6:00am on July 23 and stay in force till August 5 midnight.

The Cabinet Division issued 23 directives for the said period.

Barring a few, all the directives are almost similar to those issued earlier for the current restrictions.

All the factories and industrial units will remain closed during the period, the circular said.

However, factories have been allowed to operate since the government first imposed the Covid restrictions last year, maintaining the health safety rules.

According to the directives, non-motorised vehicles, including rickshaws, will not be allowed on roads during the two-week lockdown.

"Operation of all kinds of vehicles, including public transport [river, rail and road], as well as domestic flights, will remain suspended," it read.

Kitchen markets will stay open from 9:00am to 3:00pm every day.

Now, those remain open from 9:00am to 5:00pm.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) in a circular said launches and other water vessels will be allowed to operate at half capacity from July 14 to 23 given that they follow the health safety guidelines.

Also, Bangladesh Railway announced operating 38 inter-city and 19 commuter and mail trains during the period.

Tickets for inter-city trains will

be available online while those for commuter and mail trains will be issued at counters, it said in a circular yesterday.

Two private airlines -- US-Bangla Airlines and Novoair -- said they will resume flights on all domestic routes on July 15 in compliance with the health safety rules.

In the capital, cattle traders have started bringing sacrificial animals to the makeshift markets. This year, the two Dhaka city corporations have permitted setting up of 18 such markets.

Talking to The Daily Star earlier, Prof Be-Nazir Ahmed, former director (disease control) of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), said, "Our unscientific approach of relaxing the lockdown will aggravate the crisis. If the government really wants to curb infections, it must continue the lockdown."

"We needed to put under complete lockdown the border areas where cases of delta variant were detected. But we didn't do that... Now it has spread all over the country."

"More than one lakh people got infected even during this lockdown. Following its relaxation, the number of Covid cases may double or treble."

"The infected people moved around and spread the virus. Similar things will happen during the home rush and at cattle markets," Be-Nazir cautioned.

At a virtual conference yesterday, State Minister for Public Administration Farhad Hossain called upon people to stay alert and avoid crowds during the Eid to protect themselves against the virus.

"Refusal to wear face masks [in public places] is one kind of offence. It increases the risk of infection," he said, adding that it is everyone's responsibility to take preventive measures against Covid.

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"I'm a versatile cook with affinity for all different cuisines, like any metropolitan person. When I do cook Bengali food though, I get a sense of pride. I think that shows," she said.

Kishwar's masterstroke came in the MasterChef grand finale, when she served "panta bhaat-aloo bharta" as her final dish to the judges.

Here's why this mattered: "panta bhaat-aloo bharta" is quintessentially Bangladeshi. We eat it on the first day of the Bangla year, but we think it's too plebeian to serve to outsiders.

What better way to say that as a nation we've arrived on the global food stage, than serve something as humbly Bangladeshi as this?

You may not be MasterChef Australia, Kishwar, but you're certainly MasterChef Bangladesh.

## To us, Kishwar has already

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"small dream" of highlighting Bangladeshi food on the show, perhaps most of us took it casually.

But then as the season progressed, she demonstrated that she meant what she said. Starting from "machher jhol" to "jau bhaat", "lau chingri", "begun bharta" to the inventive dessert highlighting "paan" -- her trajectory has generated immense interest not just in her home country Australia and ancestral home Bangladesh, but also in India.

In her own words while talking to The Daily Star: "My father is from Bangladesh, and was a freedom fighter. He moved to Australia about 50 years ago as a student and met my mother, who is from Kolkata. I was born and brought up here in Australia. I moved to Dhaka and lived there for five years for work. My in-laws are based in Dhaka and I used to travel there four to five times a

year pre-Covid. Therefore, living and working in Bangladesh played a role in shaping me.

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## Govt to open schools after inoculation

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are closed in 19 countries, affecting over 156 million students, said a Unicef and Unesco joint statement on Sunday.

The most affected are often the children in low-resource settings who do not have access to remote learning tools, and the youngest children who are at key developmental stages, the statement reads.

In Bangladesh, education of around four crore students has been affected by the Covid-induced closure since March 17 last year. As per the latest decision, educational institutions will remain closed until July 31.

The government started inoculating university students earlier this month to be able to eventually reopen the universities. No decision has yet been made regarding schools and colleges.

The health minister said the

government was contacting the World Health Organization seeking suggestions on vaccinating school and college students as a few countries have started inoculating students aged between 12-18 years.

Prof Dr Be-Nazir Ahmed, a member of the National Immunization Technical Advisory Groups (NITAG), said, "We have also discussed how we can reopen the schools and colleges and how the students can be vaccinated."

He said the USA, the UK and several other countries have started inoculating students aged between 12 and 18 years with the Pfizer vaccine.

"Regulatory bodies like the WHO, FDA [Food and Drug Administration] or CDC [Centre for Disease Control and Prevention] are making the strategies. We are also collecting

evidence and information from various sources to see the feasibility," he said.

Prof Mohammad Shahidullah, chief of the National Technical Advisory Committee (NTAC) on Covid-19, said the committee had recommended reopening the universities by inoculating the students and teachers in the soonest possible time.

About vaccinating younger students, he said, "We are waiting for WHO's suggestions."

On Sunday, Deputy Education Minister Mohibul Hassan Chowdhury said that the government made significant progress towards reopening schools as 65 percent of the secondary and about the same percentage of primary teachers have been vaccinated.

## Muezzin's body found floating in pond

Police suspect he was murdered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

Police recovered the body of a muezzin in Naogaon's Sadar upazila around 10:30am on Tuesday.

The body of Qudus Hossain, 52, muezzin of a local mosque, was found in a pond near MS Semana Brick Kiln in Chakchampai area, said police.

Nazrul Islam, officer-in-charge of Naogaon Sadar Police Station, said Qudus had been missing since Monday afternoon.

The muezzin headed towards Shailgachhi market on Monday afternoon and had remained missing ever since, said the victim's family members.

Later, the workers of the brick kiln found his body floating in the pond, they further said, adding that the workers then informed the victim's family members.

Suspecting the death to be a murder, the officer-in-charge said, the body bore injury marks.

"It is believed that some miscreants beat him, tied his hands, and threw him into a pond," he said.

The body was sent to Naogaon Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy.

No case was filed until this report was filed.

## Russia warns of hot summer after June records

AFP, Moscow

Russia's meteorological service said yesterday the country could see its hottest summer on record, driven by climate change, after a record-breaking heatwave in June.

Moscow was hit by a historic heat wave at the end of June, with temperatures reaching a 120-year record.

"We estimate that temperatures will be high in the country both in the second half of July and August," meteorologist Roman Vilfan of the Rosgidromet agency said at a press conference.

He added that it was "of course possible" that it will be the hottest summer ever recorded in Russia.

Vilfan said the average temperature in the European part of Russia was the highest since records began 130 years ago.

Russia as a whole saw its hottest June since 2012.

Vilfan said that not all of the country was affected by the heatwave, saying there were "swathes of cold in western Siberia."

He also explained that climate change is leading to a shift in atmospheric circulation, due to significant temperature contrasts between the country's Arctic and southern regions.

"There are more and more anticyclones in northern regions which increases the risk of fires," he said.

According to many scientists, Russia -- especially its Siberian and Arctic regions -- is among the countries most exposed to climate change.

Russia has set numerous records in recent years and in June 2020 registered 38 degrees Celsius (100.4 degrees Fahrenheit) in the town of Verkhoyansk -- the highest temperature recorded above the Arctic circle since measurements began.