



# The Daily Star

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Your Right to Know

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**"Ninety percent of the Covid-19 patients going to the hospitals are not vaccinated. It means they were infected due to not taking the vaccines."**  
HEALTH MINISTER ZAHID MALEQUE



**"Bangladesh is lucky to have an old friend like Japan which sent AstraZeneca vaccine doses when Bangladesh needed them badly."**  
FOREIGN MINISTER AK ABDUL MOMEN



**"This is a dangerous industry that has operated on the edges of legality for too long, and this cannot be allowed to continue."**  
AMNESTY'S SECRETARY GENERAL AGNES CALLAMARD URGES MORATORIUM ON SURVEILLANCE TECHNOLOGY

## Built to crumble

*Absurd budget, selection of low-lying khas land, bypassing of engineering wing, construction in haste undermine a good initiative, PM's houses for the poor*



**"The land [on which Ashrayan homes were constructed] is khas land, which is the worst land in the area. Any structure on that land will have to be tailored for that. In this project, the construction is generic for every single upazila."**  
ARCHITECT IQBAL HABIB

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE and ZYMA ISLAM

It began with two things -- good intentions and a plan flawed to the core.

On the occasion of Mujib Borsho, the prime minister took the laudable initiative of giving homes to 69,904 families on January 23 this year and to a further 53,000 families later on June 20 under the Ashrayan Project-2.

The brick houses -- with two rooms, a kitchen and a toilet at the back, and a running porch in the front -- were allocated Tk 1.7-1.9 lakh each for construction. This scheme was entirely funded by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

Government engineers, however, say mishaps ruled at every step. This started with the site selection, preparing the

terrain, deciding the budget, procuring the materials, and building the foundation, down to the drying of the paint.

In light of these flaws, the PMO's noble objective of providing homes to the homeless made the same mistake that many well-intended top-down rehabilitation programmes do -- constructing cookie-cutter homes with no knowledge of local terrain and construction methods.

Currently, a total of 24 upazilas in 22 districts, from where allegations of irregularities in the scheme surfaced, are directly being investigated by the PMO. Housing projects in at least 10 of those districts had issues regarding construction, including homes collapsing.

First, let us take site selection. All the



**A man pushing the wheelchair of Covid-19 patient Achia Begum in the rain while a woman handles her oxygen tank. They were going to Bakshibazar from Dhaka Medical College Hospital and was finding it difficult to get transport.**

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Some good news comes along

*AstraZeneca from Japan arrives, oxygen from India on the way*

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The authorities have been struggling with the Delta variant of Covid-19 sweeping across the country and the DGHS has been coming up with grim data every day. But yesterday Bangladesh finally got some good news.

Bangladesh is expected to receive a good number of vaccines from Japan, ventilators from the US, and oxygen from India.

Bangladesh yesterday received 2.5 lakh Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccines from Japan under the COVAX facility.

On Friday, 5 lakh doses of the vaccine are expected to reach Dhaka from the same country.

In total, Japan is expected to supply 30 lakh doses of AstraZeneca vaccines to Bangladesh.

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## Covid rising in the heartland

*Country logs highest positivity rate; deaths cross 19,000*

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Covid-19 infection is on the rise in Dhaka and 23 other districts, according to data from the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

The authorities yesterday reported the highest daily positivity rate -- 32.55 percent -- after testing 20,827 samples across the country in 24 hours preceding 8:00pm yesterday.

With 195 deaths confirmed to be caused by Covid-19, the official death toll crossed the 19,000-mark.

Towards the end of last month, the districts surrounding Dhaka had been put under lockdown, and this was quickly followed by a nationwide lockdown beginning July 1.

But the lockdown was put on a ten-day hold for the Eid holidays, giving a scope for hundreds of cattle-laden trucks to enter the capital. Also, about a crore SIM card users left the capital to spend the festival in their villages.

This increased public and traffic movement apparently led to a rise in infections last week (July 16 to July 22), compared to the one before that (July 9 to July 15).

Narayanganj's positivity rate jumped from 31 percent during the July 9- July 15 week to 38 percent last week. Meanwhile, Narsingdi's positivity rate rose from 24 percent to 33 percent, shows DGHS data.

Shariatpur's infection rate rose from 41 percent to an alarming 51

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## Dhaka streets largely empty

*Hundreds of holidaymakers entered capital despite lockdown*

STAR REPORT

Intermittent rain and the strict lockdown kept the streets of Dhaka and elsewhere largely empty yesterday.

As the second day of the lockdown progressed, very few rickshaws, cars, and pedestrians were out.

But hundreds of holidaymakers returning to the capital after the Eid formed crowds at different entry points to the capital. Finding no transport, many had to walk long distances to reach their destinations.

Law enforcers expect that the public and vehicular movement may increase today which would be the first weekday day after the holidays.

Banks, stock exchanges and several emergency services reopen today.

Banks will remain open from 10:00am to 1:30pm. Stock trading at the bourses in Dhaka and Chattogram will be operational from 10:00am-1:00pm.

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EXPIRED DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

## Deadline missed even when asking for time

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED) is annoyed with a good few project authorities for breaking protocol for applying for extensions -- a practice that is hamstringing the appraisal process.

As is practice, the project authorities are supposed to apply for an extension to the IMED, the government agency tasked with monitoring and evaluating development projects, three months before the expiry of the tenure.

In the three months, the IMED officials would visit the site to get first-hand information and scrutinise all related matters before giving the go-ahead to the extension proposal, said Pradip Ranjan Chakraborty, the division's secretary.

Of the 1,426 projects ongoing, the deadline of at least 678 had expired by June.

More than 300 projects sought more time. Save for a handful of them, most of the project authorities did not apply on time, according to an IMED document.

Although the tenure of the projects was until June 2021, some proposals were sent in late June or even in July, which is inconsistent with the planning discipline, it added.

"Many project authorities are not following the procedure," Chakraborty told The Daily Star yesterday.

As a result, it has become difficult for the division to take prudent decisions, he said.

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## DENGUE OUTBREAK 104 land in hospital in 24 hours

STAR REPORT

At least 104 people were admitted to hospitals across the country with dengue fever in 24 hours ending at 8:00am yesterday, the highest in a day this year.

Of them, only 44 were from outside Dhaka.

With them, a total of 1,574 patients have been diagnosed with dengue this year, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

As many as 1,202 of them were diagnosed with

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**A deserted part of Mayor Mohammad Hanif Flyover in the capital's Jatrabari around noon yesterday, the second day of this spell of strict lockdown. Most city streets were largely empty due to enforcement of the lockdown.**

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## Looking for way back

*Returnee migrants seek to re-migrate amid lack of jobs, insufficient income at home*

JAMIL MAHMUD

Mustakim Alam quit his job and came home from Kuwait amid the Covid-19 pandemic in May last year after living there for over seven years, working at a printing press.

The 30-year-old from Khulna's Paikgachha has been unsuccessfully looking for a job this last year.

"I don't have enough cash to start a business. The savings that I brought home has already been spent on family expenses," he said.

Now Mustakim is trying to re-migrate to overcome financial hardship. He has already asked one of his acquaintances in Kuwait to secure a new work visa, for which he will have to pay between Tk 2-3 lakh, depending on the job type.

Mustakim's experience is shared by other migrant workers who find themselves unemployed back in Bangladesh. Surveys suggest people wishing to re-migrate abroad are forced by several socioeconomic drivers, including lack of job opportunities, and consider a life abroad as offering better opportunities than what can be achieved at home.

Upon returning home from Qatar in February last year, 40-year-old Murad Islam said he unsuccessfully looked for a job at local factories in Munshiganj where he lives.

He had lived in the Gulf country for seven years; earlier, he worked in Saudi Arabia from 2000 to 2005 after which he returned and opened a shop in Madhabdi, Narsingdi. Murad's shop did not run well and after several failed attempts to settle down, he flew to Qatar in 2013.

"It seems I have no alternative but to go abroad," said Murad. These experiences were reflected in a recent survey,

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## BUSINESS NOTICE

The business section is not being published today as regular business activities are yet to resume after Eid-ul-Azha holidays. The business pages will be out as usual from tomorrow.