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Your Right to Know

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"Those police personnel who got involved in crimes will be punished."

HOME MINISTER
ASADUZZAMAN KHAN KAMAL



"President (Joe) Biden's decisions have us hurtling toward an even worse sequel to the humiliating fall of Saigon in 1975"

-- TOP REPUBLICAN SENATOR MITCH MCCONNELL ON US'S
AFGHANISTAN STRATEGY



"We oppose political tracing... and abandoning the joint report... We support scientific tracing."

CHINA'S VICE FM MA ZHAOXI ON FURTHER WHO COVID
ORIGINS PROBE



Wonder nasal vaccine knocking on the door

Swedish drug awaits human trial in Bangladesh; successful test may see it available for use at start of next year

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

One sniff, and you're vaccinated against Covid-19! Almost 100 percent protected against almost all variants.

It could be just that simple. No hassle for registration, hospital visit, cold chain storage or inoculation by medical staff. Just vaccinate yourself, at your convenience.

And that's the promise an under-trial powdered vaccine is showing in which Bangladesh can be a part. A potential game-changing vaccine, as dubbed by Swedish researchers, now awaits human trial -- the third and final phase of vaccine research and development before approval for use -- which can be conducted right here in Bangladesh from next month.

If the government weighs in to ensure a smooth research and approval process, the nasal vaccine could be available for use by the start of next year.

And, if the trials get a clean chit, Bangladesh is free to buy the vaccine at production cost or even produce it on its

own for being a party to the development of the vaccine, planned to be named after the Father of the Nation -- Bangabandhu ISR.

Swedish research organisation Holding AB (ISR) is closing in on conducting human trial of its invented vaccine in Bangladesh, thanks to intense engagement of some Bangladesh-born doctors and scientists living in Sweden, the USA and Canada.

To conduct the human trial, the ISR signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Bangladesh Clinical Trials Ltd as its Contract Research Organisation (CRO) earlier this month.

Renowned physicians Prof ABM Abdullah and Prof Ahmedul Kabir are the principal investigators of the CRO, which plans to conduct the trial at Mugda Medical College Hospital in the capital.

They are planning to carry out the Phase-I trial on 180 healthy persons.

Contacted, Prof Abdullah said that after taking the first sniff, one has to get the

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After failing to get their mother admitted to six different hospitals in the capital, the desperate daughter cries for help in front of Dhaka Medical College Hospital while her brother, *inset*, is being tackled by police after he engaged in a fight with the hospital employees. Eventually, the family from Gazaria, Munshiganj, was able to get her admitted to the dedicated Covid treatment facility of the hospital yesterday morning.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

FUNDS FOR VACCINE PURCHASE Disbursement remains slow

Unavailability of jabs a challenge

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The unavailability of doses is once again posing as the sole reason behind the slow disbursement of the Tk 14,200 crore fund allocated for Covid-19 vaccine procurement in the budget for the current fiscal year.

In the first two months of the fiscal year, about Tk 500 crore has been released for procuring vaccine shots from Chinese drugmaker Sinopharm, according to finance ministry officials.

In the last fiscal year, the government had set aside Tk 10,000 crore for vaccine procurement, which was later revised down to Tk 6,377 crore.

Even then, it could disburse only Tk 1,553 crore, of which Tk 1,272 crore went towards advance payment for 30 million doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine from the Serum Institute of India and the remaining sum to Sinopharm.

With these amounts, the finance ministry has so far disbursed about Tk 2,100 crore in total for procuring vaccines since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic in March last year.

"We are releasing money as soon as we get demand from the health ministry. The money is not an issue but getting hold of vaccines is," said a top official of the finance ministry requesting anonymity.

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Kandahar falls to Taliban

Insurgents also take provincial capital 50km south of Kabul, other key cities; UN warns of humanitarian catastrophe

AGENCIES

The Taliban seized more major cities yesterday as they raced to take full control of Afghanistan and inched closer to Kabul, with the United States and Britain deploying thousands of troops to evacuate their citizens from the capital.

The evacuation orders came as the Taliban took control of Kandahar -- the nation's second-biggest city -- in the insurgency's heartland, leaving only Kabul and pockets of other territories in government hands.

The Taliban also captured the capital of Logar province, just 50kms (30 miles) from Kabul, with a local lawmaker saying the insurgents were in complete control of Pul-e-Alam city.

Earlier yesterday, officials and residents in Kandahar told AFP that government forces had withdrawn en masse to a military

facility outside the southern city.

"Kandahar is completely conquered. The Mujahideen reached Martyrs' Square," a Taliban spokesman tweeted, referring to a city landmark.

Hours later, the Taliban said they had also taken control of Lashkar Gah, the capital of neighbouring Helmand province.

A security source confirmed the fall of the city, telling AFP that the Afghan military and government officials had evacuated Lashkar Gah after striking a local ceasefire deal with the militants.

The Taliban also captured the town of Qala-e-Naw in the northwest, security officers said. Firuz Koh, capital of central Ghor province, was handed over without a fight, officials told Reuters.

The loss of Kandahar will be a heavy blow to the government. It is the heartland of the Taliban, ethnic Pashtun fighters who

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Infection rate drops to 21pc

Less than 200 deaths first time since July 24

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The daily infection rate of Covid-19 has been dropping consistently over the last couple of weeks.

The rate began to rise from June and it reached 21 percent on June 25. From there, it went up further and surged to 33 percent.

Yesterday, after 50 days, the infection rate dropped to 21 percent. The same day, the country witnessed the lowest death toll in three weeks.

At least 197 more deaths were recorded from Covid-19 in 24 hours ending at 8:00am yesterday, read a press release of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

On July 24, the death toll was 195 and after that it remained over 200-mark every day until yesterday.

The number of Covid-19 deaths in the country now stands at 23,810 and the death rate is 1.69 percent.

At least 8,465 fresh infections were recorded

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A group of boys playing football in the capital's Suhrawardy Udyan as it drizzled the whole morning yesterday. Such sights are quite common during monsoon in the villages and small towns, but less so in the city.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Ferry hits Padma bridge pillar again

BIWTA to relocate Banglabazar ghat to avoid further collision

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority is mulling over the relocation of the Banglabazar ferry terminal in Madaripur to another area as ferries continued to collide with the pillars of the under-construction Padma bridge.

A BIWTA committee was formed in this regard after the first such collision in July.

Yesterday, a Ro-Ro ferry named Kakoli hit a pillar on the route from the Banglabazar terminal to Munshiganj's Shimulia terminal.

This is the fourth time a pillar was hit by a ferry on the route in just one month.

Commodore Golam Sadeq, chairman of the BIWTA, yesterday told The Daily Star that they will ultimately have to shift the Banglabazar terminal to Shariatpur's Mazhighat area once the bridge comes into operation.

"But to make the shift, they have to develop land for vehicles in the new terminal and construct connecting roads and to do so, the state minister for shipping and other top officials visited the spot today [yesterday]."

Replying to a question, he said no final decision was taken to shift the terminal immediately.

On August 9, a Birshrestha Jahangir ferry plying the route hit the same pillar.

Md Badal Hosen, an official of Shimulia ferry terminal, said the incident occurred due to strong winds and currents in the river.

He added that no passenger or vehicle was harmed and the ferry was taken to Shimulia terminal's workshop for repair work.

The frequent collisions prompted Obaidul Quader, road transport and bridges minister, and Khalid Mahmud

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