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Your Right to Know

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"About 80 percent teachers and students involved in medical treatment have been vaccinated."
HEALTH MINISTER ZAHID MALEQUE

"In-person classes will be taken one day per week in compliance with the health rules. However, the matter has not been finalised yet."
DEPUTY MINISTER FOR EDUCATION MOHIBUL HASAN CHOWDHURY NOWFEL

"I need to be able to have a clear picture of what I'm supposed to do, what they are going to allow me to do when I visit."
ASEAN ENVOY TO MYANMAR ERYWAN YUSOF SEEKS ASSURANCES FROM MILITARY RULERS

Children 12 and above to get jabs

Govt plan strewn with challenges, analysts say

- Govt to inoculate children with Pfizer, Moderna shots
- It has 1.79cr jabs of various brands
- Only 22 other countries approved vaccinating children

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR *and* MOUDUD AHMMED SUJAN

The government is planning to inoculate children aged 12 and above against Covid-19.

Health Minister Zahid Maleque revealed the plan yesterday after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Thursday said school students will be given Covid shots in line with the World Health Organisation protocols.

After nearly one and a half years of online education, schools and colleges will bring students back to their classrooms from September 12. But it is not known when the authorities will begin to vaccinate the children.

Contacted, Infectious Disease Specialist Prof Ridwanur Rahman, said vaccinating children depends on the availability of shots. The reality doesn't support the plans.

"The mass inoculation is not systematic yet. We must first inoculate the vulnerable groups to reduce deaths. The countries that decided to vaccinate children have already inoculated the vulnerable groups. We should also do the same," he said.

Only about 22 countries have approved or started giving Covid shots to children younger than 18.

The minister on Thursday said the government was considering whether to vaccinate students aged below 18 with Pfizer and Moderna shots.

Different vaccines for children are being trialed in different countries. But the World Health Organisation's Strategic Advisory Group of Experts endorses only the Pfizer/BionTech vaccine to be given to children as young as 12.

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After almost one and a half years of online teaching amid coronavirus restrictions, schools are making preparations to have the children in the classrooms as the government announced that students will attend classes from September 12. Agrani School and College in the capital's Azimpur, pictured here, also arranged an isolation corner in case anyone falls sick while at school. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

POSITIVITY RATE

Below 10pc after three months

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Covid-19 positivity rate declined below 10 percent after more than three months as the country logged 1,743 new cases yesterday.

Against a total of 17,750 tests done in the past 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, the positivity rate was 9.82 percent.

Earlier on May 31, the positivity rate was 9.82 percent.

As the Delta variant of the coronavirus started spreading across the country from May 8, the positivity rate started galloping and reached the all-time highest 33 percent on July 24.

From early August, it started declining due to different virus containment measures including lockdown enforced by the government.

With the latest count, the total number of confirmed cases rose to 1,512,026.

Meanwhile, a total of 61 Covid-19 patients died in those 24 hours yesterday, raising the total number of fatalities to

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HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Families' wait for justice gets longer

CID probe has no headway over the death or disappearance of 21 fortune seekers

SHARIFUL ISLAM

Justice remains elusive for 21 fortune seekers, who either died or went missing after being trafficked abroad, as investigators could not collect any evidence in around one and a half years since filing of the cases.

Family members of the victims -- all from Sylhet -- filed nine cases between May 2019 and March last year.

Five of those nine cases were filed over the death of Bangladeshi fortune seekers in one of the deadliest boat disasters in the Mediterranean Sea on the night of May 9, 2019. It left as many as 71 people, many of whom

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ROAD RECONSTRUCTION

RHD asked to explain delays, cost escalation

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The Planning Commission has raised question about a Roads and Highways Department (RHD) project requesting more money when the project deadline had already been extended trice and its cost increased.

The RHD had taken up a Tk 321.56 crore project in January 2017 for reconstructing a 38-kilometre portion of Jashore-Khulna national highway. The work was supposed to be completed within December 2019.

But the project authorities could not meet the deadline. Ruts developed in the road within March 2020, making movement of transport difficult.

"Even though there were no land acquisition-related complexities, taking such a long time for developing [reconstructing] such a short road is not expected," the commission said.

The commission also asked the project authorities to explain the reasons for the

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Illegal weapons sneak in on credit

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

A transnational syndicate has adopted a new strategy to smuggle firearms and bullets from India.

DB officials said the racket is bringing in the weapons on credit. They got the information following the arrest of five alleged members of the syndicate, including a Chhatra League leader in Jashore.

The smugglers use hundi, an illegal mode of transaction, for the crime, they said.

Explaining how the smuggling is done, the officials said syndicate members in Bangladesh first place orders on massaging apps WhatsApp and Signal for firearms like 7.65mm or 9mm pistols.

Receiving the orders, smugglers in India send the arms and bullets to the Bangladeshi side, dodging the border guards.

Once the consignments make their way into Bangladesh, money change hands through some designated illegal shops in the two countries. The smugglers here pay in Bangladeshi Taka while the smugglers in India collect the payment in Indian Rupee.

DB officials said the five arrestees included Akul Hossain, secretary of Bangladesh Chhatra League's (BCL) Sharsha upazila unit in Jashore. They said he has alone sold 200 firearms to different people, including muggers and political leaders, since 2014, claimed DB officials.

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AL runner wins in a low-turnout by-election

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, *Sylhet*

The by-election to Sylhet-3 constituency was marked by a very low turnout of voters yesterday.

The seat fell vacant after parliamentarian Mahmud Us Samad Chowdhury died of coronavirus on March 11.

AL candidate Habibur Rahman Habib won with 90,064 votes, while JP candidate Atiqur Rahman Atik earned the second highest number of votes -- 24,752.

BNP rebel Shafi Ahmed Chowdhury got 5,136 votes while Bangladesh Congress candidate Junayed Mohammad Miah got 640. No other BNP candidate participated in the polls.

Meanwhile, BNP rebel candidate Shafi Ahmed Chowdhury and Bangladesh Congress candidate Junayed Mohammad Miah alleged the election was influenced in favour of the AL candidate, adding that AL

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A security personnel stands guard at the polling centre of Ilashpur Government Primary School in Dakkhin Surma, Sylhet, yesterday during the by-polls to Sylhet-3 constituency. The centre is mostly devoid of voters. PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

Fighting rages on for Panjshir

Taliban defer govt announcement to next week as they press on to crush resistance

AGENCIES

Fresh fighting was reported between the Taliban and resistance forces in Afghanistan's Panjshir Valley yesterday, as the hardline Islamists delayed finalising a new government that will set the tone for their rule.

Facing the challenge of morphing from insurgents to rulers, the Taliban appear determined to snuff out the Panjshir resistance before announcing who will lead the country in the aftermath of Monday's US troop withdrawal, which was supposed to end two decades of war.

But Panjshir, which held out for nearly a decade against the Soviet Union's occupation and also the Taliban's first rule from 1996-2001, is stubbornly holding out. It is the last province in Afghanistan holding out against the hardline Islamist group.

Taliban sources said on Friday the group's fighters had taken the valley, although the opposition denied it had fallen.

Meanwhile, a Taliban source said the announcement of a new government would be pushed back to the next week.

Taliban co-founder Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, reported by some Taliban sources to be in line to lead the new government, said in remarks on Qatar's Al Jazeera channel that the new administration "will include all factions of the Afghan people".

The National Resistance Front of Afghanistan, which groups opposition forces loyal to local leader Ahmad Massoud, said Taliban forces reached the Darband heights

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