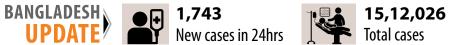
NEWS

Deaths



26,493



GLOBAL

220,917,814 Total cases 4,571,636

10k fake freedom fighters struck off list

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Liberation War Affairs Minister AKM Mozammel Haque yesterday told parliament that the certificates of 10,000 fake freedom fighters accepted from 2002 to 2010 in the civil gazette list have been cancelled.

The process of verification and selection regarding the new inclusion of heroic freedom fighters and cancellation of the names of the accused persons is underway, he said in reply to a query from ruling Awami League MP Nurunnabi Chowdhury.

In a written answer, the minister also informed that the number of gazetted freedom fighters in the country is 1,83,560.

FREEDOM FIGHTERS WILL GET DIGITAL CERTIFICATE

Responding to a question from Awami League MP Benjir Ahmed, Haque said the government will distribute digital certificates (permanent certificates) among the valiant freedom fighters while smart cards among the living families, Haque said.

freedom fighters.

"The matter is under process," he said

Once ready, the digital certificates will be distributed simultaneously throughout the country through Union Nirbahi Officers.

The temporary certificates are now void, he added. STATE HONOR TO THE FAMILIES OF 1,700 MEMBERS OF THE INDIAN

ARMED FORCES In response to a question from Mamunur Rashid Kiran of Noakhali-3, the minister said the government has decided to give state honours to the families of 1,700 members of the Indian Armed Forces for their contribution to the liberation war.

So far, 13 families have been honoured. The remaining crests of honour, which is made of precious metal and silver, are in a safe vault at the Bangladesh Bank.

Once the pandemic is over, the crest will be delivered to the recipients'



Worn tires waiting to be retreaded are left on what used to be a canal by the Dhaka-Chattogram highway in Sanarpar. Nearby neighbourhoods get inundated almost every monsoon, partly because of such occupation of drainage systems. PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Children 12 and above to get jabs 20. For others, the minimum age for the Sinopharm vaccines.

Bangladesh has so far received only 1 million shots of the two-dose Pfizer vaccine. It is not known when the next shipment of the vaccine will arrive in the country. Administering this particular vaccine also has its own challenges in rural settings because of its rather strict cold-chain requirements.

The country has now the capacity fridges from Unicef last week.

hiccups in the country's regular mass inoculation campaigns mostly because of shortage of doses. The government could not continue the special vaccination campaign held from August 7-12 because of the

Talking to reporters after an event in the capital, Health Minister Zahid Maleque vesterday said, "People aged 18 and above can get any [Covid-19] vaccine, but those below 18 cannot be

The health department has been allowing students aged 18 and above

Tunisian coast.

registration is 25.

He added, "There is a guideline of WHO on vaccinating children aged 12 and above and we have seen that many countries, especially America and Britain are giving Pfizer and Moderna vaccines to children. We will follow the process [adopted in other countries]."

Switzerland, Norway, San Marino,

Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan, the Philippines, the UAE, Palestine,

institutions across the country.

around 1.79 crore doses of mostly of

Families' wait for justice gets longer FROM PAGE 1 Crime unit, said they were yet to traceless since he last spoke to his

Bangladesh nationals, dead off the resolve several cases as the victims mother from Libya in December 2018. Complainants of four other cases

could not be traced. "Investigations are still underway," from Noagaon village in Bianibazar,

Education Minister Dipu Moni on Friday said the government was trying to get hold of the vaccines suitable for children aged 12-17.

In another development, Professor Kazi Shahidullah, chairman of the University Grants Commission, told this newspaper that the commission would consider if any university authority expresses willingness to reopen its campus even before October 15, the date set earlier for resuming in-person classes.

He added that the resident students must have at least one shot of a Covid-19 vaccine and the national positivity rate must be between 5 and ' percent.

Dipu Moni on Friday said it was decided that universities would reopen in mid-October but if the authorities of a university want to reopen sooner, they can do it afterSeptember 12.

Dipu Moni yesterday told reporters in Chandpur that the government had specific plans to make up for the losses in learning due to the pandemic.

On campus classes were suspended on March 17, 2020 to curb the spread of Covid-19

'BSF' shoots man dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

A Bangladeshi man was shot dead allegedly by Indian Border Security Force at Dantbhanga border in Kurigram's Roumari upazila early yesterday.

The dead, Shahibar Rahman, 36, was from Ambari village in Dantbhanga union of the upazila, police said.

The incident took place near Kauniar Char area of Dantbhanga union.

Upon receiving the information, police recovered the body of Shahibar Rahman in the presence of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) members on Saturday morning and brought it to the police station.

Quoting locals, Dantbhanga Union Parishad Chairman Reazul Haque said a group of people, including Shahibar, went to India on Friday night to smuggle cattle into Bangladesh.

At that time, BSF members from Dwipchar camp in India opened fired at the Bangladeshis, leaving Shahibar with bullet wounds to the chest.

Shahibar's partners rescued him from the spot, but he died on the way home. Police recovered the body from his house in the morning and took it to the police station, the UP chairman said.

However, family members of the deceased claimed that some locals, including Shahibar, went fishing in a river in the border area. Shahibar was shot dead when the BSF members opened fire on him taking him for a smuggler. They said Shahibar was not involved in smuggling.

BGB 35 Battalion's Dantbhanga Company Camp Commander Subedar Jayen Uddin said Shahibar's family members and locals told them that he was shot dead by BSF.

"We have sent a letter to the BSF asking them about the firing at border, but the BSF didn't reply until 3:00pm [yesterday]," he said.

Roumari Police Station Officer-in-Charge Montaser Billah said the body would be handed to the deceased's family members after an autopsy.

Below 10pc after FROM PAGE 1 26,493.

The deaths rate stands at 1.75 percent.

Of yesterday's deceased, 30 were male and 31 female.

The highest 32 of the deaths occurred in Dhaka division followed by 13 in Chattogram, six in Khulna, Hasna Begum, mother of Sufian four in Rajshahi, two each in Barishal and Rangpur and one in Sylhet division. Since March 8 last year when the first three cases were reported in the country, the first wave of Covid-19 ended as the positivity rate declined below five percent in February this vear.

12-to15-year-olds Decide UK advisers **REUTERS**, London Britain's vaccine advisers said they were

No vaccines for healthy

not recommending the vaccination of all 12- to 15-year-olds against Covid-19, preferring a precautionary approach in healthy children due to a rare side effect of heart inflammation.

The advice could see Britain pursue a different approach to the United States, Israel and some European countries, which have rolled out vaccinations to children more broadly.

However a final decision has not been taken, as the British government said it would consult medical advisers to look at other factors, such as disruption to schools.

Many politicians and some scientists have spoken out in favour of vaccinating more children amid concern that Covid-19 could spread in schools that are re-opening after summer holidays, further disrupting education.

Britain has reported more than 133,000 deaths from Covid-19 and nearly 7 million cases, and while

more information on the longterm effects of rare reports of heart inflammation, known as myocarditis, in young people following vaccination with Pfizer's shot.

Myocarditis is rare and normally mild, with patients usually recovering in a few days.

"Of course these vaccines do work and would be beneficial to children in terms of preventing infection and disease, but the number of serious cases that we see of Covid in children this age are really very small," JCVI member Adam Finn told Reuters.

"There are uncertainties about the long-term implications of myocarditis), and that makes the risk-benefit balance for these children really quite tight and much tighter than we would be comfortable to make the recommendation."

UK health minister Sajid Javid, who sets policy for England, and his counterparts from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, wrote to the chief medical officers (CMOs) of the four nations, asking for further advice. "including on educational impacts". "Given the importance of this issue, we would be grateful if you could provide your advice as soon as possible," the four health ministers said in a letter to the CMOs. The JCVI is also expected to advise on a potential booster vaccine programme for the elderly and vulnerable which could start this month. read more

to store over 1 crore doses of the Pfizer vaccine after receiving 26 special Besides, there has been frequent

shortage of doses.

given just about any vaccine."

to register for vaccination since August

Spain, Lithonia, Italy, Hungary, France, Germany, Austria and Estonia are either planning or have approved giving Covid shots to children. Asian countries like China,

Pakistan, and India are also considering the possibilities. If Bangladesh is to vaccinate every

child aged 12 and above, it will need two shots for each of the secondarylevel students and many other out-of-

The health minister on Thursday said that there are around 1.5 lakh students in different medical and dental colleges and technical

The government currently has

school children in this age group.

ransmission among children can be high, they are rarely severely ill from the disease.

Joint Committee on The Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) on Friday said children with underlying conditions that made them more at risk from Covid-19 should get vaccinated.

For healthy children, there was still a small benefit from receiving Covid-19 vaccination, and advisers said the risk-benefit was "finely balanced".

However, the JCVI said it wanted next few days."

JCVI member Finn said there would be an update on boosters "within the

Fighting rages on for Panjshir

FROM PAGE 1

on the border between Kapisa province and Panjshir but were pushed back.

The defence of the stronghold of Afghanistan is unbreakable," Front spokesman Fahim Dashty said in a tweet.

Facebook post, Massoud In a insisted his forces would resist and said Panjshir "continues to stand strongly in the fight".

A Taliban source said fighting was continuing in Panjshir but the advance was slowed by landmines placed on the road to the capital Bazarak and the provincial governor's compound.

"Demining and offensives are both going on at the same time," the source said.

It was not immediately possible to get independent confirmation of events in Panjshir, which is walled off by mountains except for a narrow entrance.

Celebratory gunfire resounded in Kabul on Friday as reports spread of the Taliban's takeover of Panjshir, and news agencies said at least 17 people were killed and 41 hurt in the firing.

Meanwhile, Pakistan's spy chief Lieutenant General Faiz Hameed flew into Kabul yesterday, sources in both capitals said. It was not clear what his agenda was, but a senior official in Pakistan had said earlier in the week that Hameed, who heads the powerful Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency, could help the Taliban reorganise the Afghan military.

Washington has accused Pakistan and the ISI of backing the Taliban in the group's two-decade fight against the US-backed government in Kabul, although Islamabad has denied the charges

Analysts have said Pakistan's role in Afghanistan will be much enhanced

TALIBAN RULE IN AFGHANISTAN

Pakistan spy chief flies to Kabul to 'help reorganize military' Kabul airport reopens to receive aid, domestic flights restart At least **17** killed in celebratory gunfire in Kabul UN to convene Afghanistan aid conference on Sept 13

with the Taliban in power, although the Pakistani government has said that its influence over the movement has waned.

"I assure the people that we strive to improve their living conditions, and that the government will be responsible to everyone and will provide security because it is necessary for economic development, not just in Afghanistan but in the whole world, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, the head of the Taliban's political office, told Al Jazeera from Kabul.

Baradar added security was necessary to kick-start major economic projects in the country.

The Taliban swept into Kabul virtually unopposed on August 15 following rapid advances across Afghanistan, as United States-led foreign forces withdrew from the country and President Ashraf Ghani fled.

On Friday, sources within the Taliban told Reuters news agency Baradar, a co-founder of Taliban, would lead the new government in Afghanistan, with Mullah Mohammad Yaqoob - the son of late Taliban founder Mullah Omar - and Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai taking senior roles.

could only say their loved ones went to European countries like Greece,

Spain, Turkey, and Malta and then went missing. Investigators of the Criminal

Investigation Department (CID) said collecting evidence had been the main challenge as they found no information about the recovery of the bodies or any circumstantial evidence.

"We wrote to our embassies in the countries concerned requesting information as to whether those countries or any other agencies have any records about the victims, but we did not get any reply," a CID investigator said with frustration.

Sixteen survivors narrated to the media the perilous journey they were forced to take and how the victims drowned one by one.

Family members said traffickers took between Tk 8 lakh and Tk 10 lakh from each job seeker.

They filed the cases on receiving news of deaths of their near ones or after failing to contact them for a long time

The cases were filed with Bianibazar, Jalalabad, Biswanath, Golapganj, Borolekha, and Goainghat, and Kotwali police stations in Sylhet.

The CID investigator said they wrote to the Interpol recently seeking information about the capsize and the trafficked victims, but to no avail.

Currently, CID is investigating at least 110 human trafficking cases, including the nine in question that has no headway despite all-out efforts, the officer added, requesting anonymity. Saidur Rahman Khan, Special Superintendent of CID's Serious

he told The Daily Star

According to a criminal law expert, it is difficult to prove charges in these cases without concrete evidence.

"If the investigators and the prosecution fail to produce hard evidence, it is highly likely there will be no conviction," Supreme Court lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan told The Daily Star.

Khurshid, also editor of Dhaka Law Reports (DLR), said, "It is possible to prove the charges against the accused even if the victims cannot be found. In that case it needs strong circumstantial evidence."

He suggested formation of a separate investigation agency and appointing special prosecutors to deal with cases involving human trafficking, money laundering, and suspicious transaction as these crimes are often interlinked.

With law enforcers struggling to get information about the victims, reports of fortune seekers perishing in boat capsize in the Mediterranean continue to pour in.

Quoting International Organisation for Migration (IOM), international news agencies reported that around 500 migrants died in the central Mediterranean route in the first four months of this year.

Last year, more than 2,200 people perished at sea, IOM said in a report in March this year.

BROKEN HOPES

The Daily Star has spoken to families of six victims and they all wait for justice, but with shattered hopes. One of the cases was filed by the

mother of Abu Sufian, who remains

said local manpower broker Motiur Rahman offered a job for her 18-yearold son in Italy.

Despite financial hardships, she gave Tk 8.5 lakh to the broker. She had to borrow heavily and sell whatever little properties she had to collect the money, in the hope that one day her son would be able to change their fortune.

"My son called me from Libya on December 22, 2018, exactly seven months and 22 days after he left home," Hasna told The Daily Star by phone.

"'Amma, I will fly to Italy today. Keep me in your prayers' -- this was the last thing he ever told me... Since then there is no trace of him," said the grieving mother.

Three days after the conversation with her son, she called Motiur to know her son's whereabouts, but Motiur only said Sufian would call her. "But my son never called again." She called Motiur three days later again, only to find her number blocked.

Finally, she sued Motiur and his wife Mahbuba, who allegedly received parts of the contract money from her, in December in 2019.

CID records show Sufian was killed in a boat capsize in the Mediterranean Sea near Tunisia coast.

Sabbir Khalid is another trafficking victim. His elder brother Shahnaj Mia filed a case with Jalalabad police in October 2019 against seven people.

"The only information we got from

Billal, who survived the boat capsize, is that my brother drowned in front of his eyes," he said.

AL runner wins

FROM PAGE 1

agents misguided voters to vote for Habibur as most people were unfamiliar with EVMs.

They, however, did not lodge any written complaint with the returning officer in this regard.

M Kazi Emdadul Islam, deputy commissioner of Sylhet and the returning officer (RO), declared the result at 9:00pm.

However, only 1,20,591 votes were cast from 3.49 lakh, from Dakshin Surma, Fenchuganj and Balaganj upazilas, which means only 34.46 percent of all voters exercised their voting rights.

Around 8:50am, only 25 out of 1,932 votes were cast at the Purbobhag Govt Primary School centre in Dakshin Surma upazila.

A total of 399 votes were cast till 4:00pm -- only 20.65 percent of the total, said Md Abdul Momin, the centre's presiding officer.

This correspondent visited 15 of the 149 centres and witnessed a low turnout of voters in all of them.

At Kotalpur Government Primary School centre in Fenchuganj upazila, 27 percent votes were cast till around 2:00pm.

Alauddin, a farmer in Dakshin Surma upazila, voted at the Haji Mohammad Raja Chowdhury High School, said, "People are busy these days with farming and no longer interested in elections as the result is predictable.'

However, RO Emdadul Islam said the votes cast ranged between 30-40 percent.

EVMs (electronic voting machines) were used in all centres, which confused many voters, but they were happy as there were no long queues.

Polin Begum, of Fenchuganj upazila, after casting her vote at Dargapur Govt Primary School, said, "I was afraid before coming to the polling centre, but it was easier than I thought."

NZ Covid outbreak claims first death in six months

AFP, Wellington

New Zealand recorded its first Covidrelated death in six months yesterday, but health authorities said there were signs the outbreak of the highly infectious Delta variant was coming under control.

A woman in her 90s, who had underlying health conditions and could not receive a ventilator or intensive care support, died in an Auckland hospital on Friday night.

She is the 27th person to die with Covid-19 in New Zealand and the first

recorded since February 16 this year.

Authorities said the woman was a household contact of a person who had already tested positive for the virus in Auckland, New Zealand's largest city with a population of around 1.7 million.

New Zealand has been battling a coronavirus outbreak since the first locally transmitted case in six months was detected in mid-August, thrusting the country of five million into lockdown.

Since then, 782 cases have been to stop its spread."

recorded, primarily in Auckland, which remains at its highest level of restrictions while the rest of the country has eased back restrictions.

The death was "a deeply sad reminder of why the measures we are undertaking right now are so important," Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said.

"Our older New Zealanders and those with underlying health issues are by far the most at risk from the virus, and one of the reasons lockdowns are such an important tool