

ILLUSIVE HERD IMMUNITY
WHO Europe chief Hans Kluge says Covid vaccines may help curb serious illness, not pandemic
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"If we see an alarming increase in infection rate of [Covid 19], the education ministry will decide on closing schools. We will give our recommendation,"
HEALTH MINISTER ZAHID MALEQUE.

"We must maintain a dialogue with the Taliban, where we affirm our principles directly -- a dialogue with a feeling of solidarity with the Afghan people."
UN CHIEF ANTONIO GUTERRES PLEADS WITH THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

"Whether China and the US can properly handle their relations... is critical for the future and destiny of the world."
CHINESE PRESIDENT XI JINPING TELLS US PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN

Two crore doses every month

Govt plans to revamp vaccine campaign as supply now getting smooth



- 20 crore doses expected by this year
- 3.90 crore received so far
- 2.01 crore people got their first dose; 1.25 crore got both
- 6% of inoculation target met
- Vaccination campaign began Feb 7

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

The government plans to administer two crore shots of Covid-19 vaccine each month to ramp up the ongoing vaccination drive as it hopes to get around 20 crore doses by the end of this year.

The plan might appear ambitious given the scale of vaccination over the last eight months -- with some three crore doses administered since the campaign started on February 7 -- but health officials believe it is very much achievable.

"Initially we are targeting to administer two crore doses of Sinopharm vaccines each month if we get those as per the commitment," Health Minister Zahid Maleque told The Daily Star yesterday.

The vaccination campaign got some momentum after the government purchased 1.5 crore doses of Sinopharm vaccine from China in June.

Besides, the country has also got around one crore doses of different brands from Covax, a global initiative aimed at equitable access to Covid-19 vaccines, in the last three months.

"The supply chain is a bit smooth now. We are planning to administer two crore doses per month from October," said Prof Abul Bashar Mohammad Khurshid Alam, director general of the DGHS.

Health officials say Bangladesh is supposed to get another purchased six crore doses of Sinopharm vaccine between

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Jhumon Das's wife Sweety Das does not know what crime her husband committed and why he was not getting bail. She sits with her daughter in front of a photo of her incarcerated husband during a rally at Shahbagh in the capital yesterday. The rally demanded Jhumon's immediate release as he has been behind bars for over five months in a Digital Security Act case. Story on page 3

PHOTO: STAR

Daily deaths lowest in 3 months

Covid positivity rate declines to 8.65pc

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country recorded 38 deaths from Covid-19 in the 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, the lowest daily death toll in the last three months.

On June 9, 36 people died from the highly transmissible virus, according to data from the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

The Covid-19 situation is currently improving in the country as both infection and death rates are falling.

In the 24 hours, 2,325 more people tested positive for coronavirus, said the regular health bulletin of DGHS.

With the latest data on deaths and infections,

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PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

Not more than 3 classes a day

In-person classes resume tomorrow

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Primary students will attend three classes a day from tomorrow when in-person classes resume, Directorate of Primary Education (DPE) decided yesterday.

The DPE also asked teachers to make sure that only two students sit on each large bench to maintain social distancing inside the classroom.

Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) has asked all school authorities to reopen hostels ensuring enforcement of Covid-19 health safety protocols and keeping in mind the dengue fever situation.

Meanwhile, Health Minister Zahid Maleque yesterday said his ministry would recommend closing schools and colleges if the Covid infection rate surged again alarmingly.

He made the comment at a time when the school and college authorities are making final preparations for partial reopening of their institutions.

Following a significant fall in the Covid-19 daily positivity rate, the

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PK HALDER'S SCAM

2 fake firms, Tk 118 crore shady loans

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a rented flat in the capital's Banani, Subrata Das, a friend of Proshanta Kumar Halder alias PK Halder, set up offices of two shell companies -- Wakama Limited and A&B Trading.

With the help of his friend, Subrata then took Tk 31 crore loan from FAS Finance in the name of A&B Trading and Tk 87 crore from International Leasing and Financial Services (ILFS) Ltd for Wakama Limited.

The Anti-Corruption Commission already filed a case against Subrata, who is now in the US, his wife Shuvra Rani Ghosh, former managing director of NRB Global Bank PK Halder and three others.

In connection with the case, a four-member team, led by ACC's Deputy Director Gulshan Anwar Prodhan, interrogated Shuvra, director of both the shell companies, for about five days last week.

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Master of swindling

Rab arrests man who defrauded thousands of people thru' MLM scheme using religious clout, embezzled at least Tk 110cr taken from clients

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fifteen years ago, he started working as an imam in a Pirojpur mosque. Around the same time, he joined a multi-level marketing (MLM) company with a salary of only Tk 900.

Two years later, Mufti Ragib Ahsan established his own MLM company named "Ahsan Real Estate", enticing people into making interest-free investments following Islamic Shariah with promises of lofty returns.

Ahsan even used programmes like waz-mahfil and well-known religious preachers to attract attention of the devotees in Pirojpur and other parts of the country and called on them to invest in a Tk 1 lakh deposit scheme. In the first year, he managed to get around 10,000 clients, accumulating a sum of Tk 110 crore.

Ahsan, now the chairman of Ahsan Group Pirojpur, established 17 businesses using the MLM company's money, most of



which have now vanished. The company could not pay profits to its investors since 2018, let alone return their deposited money. As cases after cases were filed against Ahsan, he went into hiding.

The Rapid Action Battalion yesterday arrested Ahsan, 41, and his brother Abul Bashar Khan, 37, a director of the company, from Topkhana Road in the capital on charge of swindling crores of taka through the shady businesses.

Rab initially said in a SMS sent to the media that the amount of the embezzled money was around Tk 17,000 crore, but its Legal and Media Wing Director Commander Khandaker Al Moin could not exactly say what the amount was during a press conference later in the afternoon.

"The Anti-Corruption Commission and the Criminal Investigation Department [CID] of police will figure out how much money they have actually embezzled,"

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Tigers end NZ series with defeat

SPORTS REPORTER

New Zealand clinched the fifth and final T20I by 27 runs at Mirpur yesterday in a surface that provided much more to batters than the previous matches. Bangladesh, coming into the match having already sealed the series, fought back with Afif Hossain's unbeaten 49 in chase of 162 but eventually the Kiwi bowlers prevailed with intelligent pace variations to seize victory.

Despite coach Russell Domingo previously insisting that there were no issues at the top-order, the Tigers' problems at the top became apparent in chase of 161 for five posted by New Zealand.

The start from Liton Das and Mohammad Naim was stable as they reached 18 for no loss after three overs but things soon unravelled when Liton sliced one in the fifth over off Ajaz Patel to Scott Kuggeleijn at point and departed after a 11-ball 10.

Soumya Sarkar (4 off 9) did not trouble the scorers much, falling in much the same manner as Liton

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Afif Hossain and Mahmudullah Riyad stitched together a 53-run partnership in quick time in chase of 163 but eventually Bangladesh fell short of the target by 27 runs in the fifth and final T20I against New Zealand at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Afghanistan at risk of total collapse: UN

Int'l community urged to keep flowing money into the country; Taliban accused of harassment

AGENCIES

The United Nations has warned that Afghanistan is at risk of "total breakdown" if the international community does not find a way to keep money flowing into Afghanistan despite concerns over the Taliban government.

The warning comes as a second charter flight was due to leave Afghanistan yesterday carrying foreigners and Afghans to Qatar in a sign the country's main airport was close to resuming commercial operations. It also comes as the United Nations warned of "credible allegations" of reprisal killings by the Taliban.

Unconfirmed reports in the capital, meanwhile, suggested the Taliban may hold a ceremony to swear in the new government today-- the 20th anniversary of the September 11 attacks that triggered the end of their first stint in power.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) said in a report released on Thursday that about 97 percent of Afghanistan's population may sink below the poverty line unless the country's political and economic crises are addressed.

Nearly \$10bn of Afghanistan's central bank assets are currently frozen overseas and considered key leverage over the new administration.

But the UN special envoy on Afghanistan Deborah Lyons told the Security Council on Thursday that a way needed to

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