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Your Right to Know

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## SCHOOLS REOPEN

# Caged no more, back to fun

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The cadence of children is returning to the classrooms today after 543 days -- a major milestone in the government's effort to return the country to its pre-pandemic state.

Bangladesh's estimated 4 crore students have been out of the classroom for the longest in the world, according to Unesco.

Pervasive public fears about children falling ill from Covid-19 or turning vectors of the coronavirus from the overcrowded classrooms led the government to put the reopening of educational institutions lower down the pecking order.

But with the test positivity rate and fatalities declining after a devastating second wave a few weeks earlier, the government has become confident enough to bring students

back to the classrooms in phases.

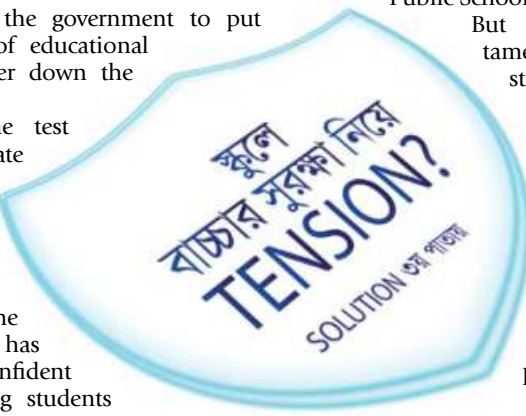
For students, the development is a major relief after a disorienting academic year: they struggled immensely with the social isolation of remote learning as well as suffered from learning loss for inadequate access to digital devices and reliable internet connections.

"I am happy to return to school -- it was boring at home," said Shartzat Habib Ayyan, a class-6 student at Mirpur Cantonment Public School and College.

But his excitement was tamed when he learnt that students of classes 1 to 4 and 6 to 9 will be attending in-person classes once a week for now, with online classes on other days.

"One day a week is too little. School is a place for us to learn, see our friends and have fun," Ayyan said.

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## 400 schools still flood affected

Some decide not to reopen today while others go for in-person classes

STAR REPORT

At least 400 educational institutions, mostly primary schools, remains waterlogged due to flood and many of them will not be holding in-person classes from today.

Considering the situation, some school authorities decided to reopen their institutions once the water recedes while others decided to resume classes today.

Students and teachers expressed their concerns saying the resumption of in-person classes would be difficult at the flood-hit schools.

Besides, at least 12 primary schools have already been eroded by adjoining rivers in three districts.

In Tangail, at least 245 primary schools remained waterlogged but the authorities decided to resume in-person classes.

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## BERC broke rules to make new rules

The 2016 amendment in licencing regulations favoured businesses; the energy regulator moves to rectify law violations over 2yrs after law ministry's interventions



ASIFUR RAHMAN

The fate of over 3,500 licences in the energy sector has become uncertain as they were provided under a regulation deemed illegal by the law ministry.

Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC) issued or renewed the licences for production, operation and marketing of electricity, gas or petroleum products under the Licencing Regulations-2016.

To pass a regulation, the law ministry's permission is mandatory. It is also illegal to publish any gazette on regulations without the ministry's vetting.

But the BERC violated both the rules to pass the 2016 regulations, a BERC official said, preferring not to be named. "The Commission suppressed this until the law ministry intervened. This is extremely embarrassing for us," he added.

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## 10cr people to get Covid shots by Dec

Health services secy says

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ten crore people in the country will be vaccinated by December, Lokman Hossain Mian, secretary at the Health Services Division, said yesterday.

He came up with the statement hours after 54 lakh doses of Sinopharm's Covid-19 vaccine reached Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport from China.

"Around 20 crore shots of Covid vaccine will arrive by that time [December] and we will be able to vaccinate 10 crore people with those," he told reporters following

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## Deaths on roads jump by 40pc

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The country witnessed a sharp rise in road accidents and deaths this year due to a huge numbers of small vehicles plying the highways and a lack of monitoring by the authorities concerned.

A total of 3,095 people were killed in 3,259 road crashes in the first seven months of this year -- over 40 percent higher than that of the same period last year, according to a police report.

Experts and road safety campaigners said higher numbers of small vehicles, including motorcycles and illegal three-wheelers, operated on the highways due to a suspension on buses and minibuses during lockdowns. This resulted in more accidents.

Besides, the government's monitoring was severely lacking, especially during the Eid rush, to prevent the road crashes, they said.

Moreover, different government initiatives to curb road crashes fell flat amid the pandemic, they added.

Concerns over road accidents and fatalities led to two major movements for road safety since July 2018.

Although, the authorities promised and undertook several steps to cut down road crashes, the recent data show those initiatives remain futile.

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Locals in Tangail Sadar upazila's Boro Basalia area have been suffering for 14 long months as the mouth of a bridge over the Louhajang river remains damaged. The bridge leads to a road, which is important for communication in the upazila.

PHOTO: MIRZA SHAKIL

## Rogue cop at it again

Police say 'suspended ASI took bribe to tamper autopsy report'

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Over a year ago, an assistant sub-inspector was suspended and attached to a police lines after a police investigation found him guilty of beating up a man and looting money from him.

He has committed another grave crime a year down the line, said DMP officials.

This time, the suspended ASI, Sazzad Hossain Mamun, took money from an alleged murderer promising him that the cause and time of death would be changed in the autopsy and police reports respectively.

A few journalists from some little-known newspapers are also involved in this criminal activity, said the officials, adding that they found the information while investigating the murder case.

Police have arrested Mamun, Nizam Uddin alias Sohag, 28, a sub-editor of the Daily Bartoman Kotha, and Mizanur Rahman Mizan, a senior staff reporter of the same daily, over the matter, Hafiz Al Faruk, additional



ASI Mamun

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## Next election must be under neutral govt

Says Fakhrul

UNB, Dhaka

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday said the next general election in the country must be held under a neutral government.

"We would like to say it unequivocally that there will be no such election in Bangladesh where voters can't go to polling stations. The election must be held under a neutral government and it must be conducted by an impartial election commission," he said.

Speaking at a discussion, the BNP leader also said before holding the next

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