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# The Daily Star

SECOND EDITION

www.thedailystar.net

PLUS BELTER, THE ICC T20 WORLD CUP 2021 SPECIAL PUBLICATION

REGD. NO. DA 781

VOL. XXXI No. 265

ASHWIN 31, 1428 BS

Your Right to Know

RABUL AWAL 8, 1443 HIJRI

16 PAGES PRICE : Tk12.00



## FOOT-DRAGGING at its best

Performance of BMRC, the apex research institution, during pandemic pitiful

MOUDDUD AHMED SUJAN

Bureaucratic foot-dragging appears to be what Bangladesh Medical Research Council (BMRC) has done most of the time during the pandemic.

The government body, tasked with determining and facilitating priority areas in health research, took five months, from February to June this year, to inform local drugmaker Globe Biotech Ltd that animal trials would be required for the formal approval of its Covid-19 vaccine.

Also, in April this year, when many hospitals were struggling with patients needing high-flow oxygen due to a scarcity of high-flow nasal cannulas, inventors in Buet developed a device that could make high-flow oxygen support available at facilities lacking proper equipment.

But BMRC took three months to announce that the device, named OxyJet, could be trialed at hospitals. By the time the approval came, new cases of Covid-19 had declined and then there was another spike in the coronavirus infections.

A BMRC official familiar with the proceedings said the council did not have members with expertise to make decisions on such matters. Neither did the council bother to look for individuals who could make such decisions promptly.

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### BANGAVAX CAUGHT IN RED TAPE

- 🔴 Invention announcement: July 20, 2020
- 🔴 Applied to BMRC for clinical trial: January 17, 2021
- 🔴 BMRC asked for additional information: February 9, 2021
- 🔴 Information provided: February 17, 2021
- 🔴 Five months later, BMRC asked to run a trial on monkeys or Chimpanzees before the human trial

### UNNECESSARY DELAY

OxyJet, an oxygen supply device developed by the researchers at BUET, showed huge potential in initial trials. It was developed at a time when Covid patients were dying due to the shortage of high-flow oxygen devices in April this year. BMRC took more than three months to approve it for final-stage trial.



### OPPORTUNITY LOST

Bangladesh lost an opportunity to hold human trials of China's Sinovac vaccine at seven hospitals. BMRC neither took a proactive role nor urged the health ministry to make prompt decisions in this regard.

"BMRC could have done a lot of things to facilitate research during the pandemic. But I don't know what role it has played."

**PROF NAZRUL ISLAM**  
Member of NTAC & former VC, BSMMU

"Fund shortage was mostly responsible for BMRC's lackluster performance."

**DR MAHMUD-UZ-JAHAN**  
Immediate past director, BMRC

### HUNGER INDEX 2021

## Bangladesh's status now 'moderate'

Fares better than India, Pakistan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has been ranked 76th in the Global Hunger Index 2021 among 116 qualifying countries, with a score of 19.1.

The country has slipped one notch from last year's 75th position.

Bangladesh, however, fared better than its South Asian neighbours Pakistan (92nd), India (101st), and Afghanistan (103rd), according to the report jointly published by Irish aid agency Concern Worldwide and German organisation Welt Hunger Hilfe.

This year, Bangladesh's level of hunger has dropped to "moderate" from "serious" for the first time as it achieved a Global Hunger Index (GHI) score of 19.1 points out of 100, said the report.

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## Farewell, Durga

BSS, Dhaka

The five-day Durga Puja, the biggest religious festival of the Bangalee Hindu community, ended yesterday with the immersion of the idols of Goddess Durga and her children in water bodies across the country amid festivity.

The process of immersion of the idols started around 4:00pm instead of noon due to the

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PHOTO ON PAGE 16



## Violence, vandalism in several districts

Man killed in Noakhali; home minister warns troublemakers

STAR REPORT

Despite a strong vigil by law enforcers for ensuring peaceful Durga Puja celebrations, zealots beat and stabbed a man to death at a temple in Noakhali as idols, houses and shops of the Hindu community came under attack in different places yesterday.

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan said those behind the incidents would be brought to book.

"No one will be spared ... All the incidents will be investigated and the motive behind them will be revealed. Those trying to destabilise the situation will be punished," he told The Daily Star last night.

Asked whether they had any clue about the culprit(s) behind Wednesday's incident in Cumilla, that sparked

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### 3G, 4G MOBILE INTERNET

## Service resumes after puzzling 11-hr outage

STAR REPORT

After 11 hours of outage, 3G and 4G mobile data services resumed across the country yesterday evening.

Contacted, Posts and Telecommunications Minister Mustafa said the disruption could be due to a technical glitch.

"We are trying to identify the issue," he said.

Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission officials said 3G and 4G internet services resumed at different times in different regions yesterday evening.

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### SUICIDE BLASTS IN AFGHANISTAN

## Another mosque attack kills 41

At least 70 wounded; IS likely behind carnage

AFP, Kandahar

Suicide bombers attacked a Shia mosque in the southern Afghan city of Kandahar during Friday prayers, witnesses said, killing at least 41 people and injuring scores more.

The assault came just a week after a suicide attack on Shia worshippers at a mosque in the northern city of Kunduz, which was claimed by the Islamic State group.

There has not yet been any claim of responsibility for the attack in Kandahar, the spiritual heartland of the Taliban.

"Today, on the blessed day of Friday, a brutal attack has been witnessed on a Shia mosque as a result of which a huge number of our countrymen have lost their lives," Kandahar police chief Maulvi Mehmood said.

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