

BANGLADESH  
UPDATE



253  
New cases in 24hrs



15,73,711  
Total cases



27,946  
Deaths



15,37,816  
Recoveries

GLOBAL  
UPDATE



5,151,284  
Deaths



256,573,477  
Total cases

COVID VACCINE

# US clears boosters for all adults

AFP, Washington

The United States authorised the Pfizer and Moderna Covid vaccine boosters to all people aged 18 and older yesterday, as the world's hardest-hit country enters a new winter wave of the pandemic.

Boosters were previously available to the immune compromised, over 65s, people at high risk of severe disease and people in high risk occupations.

The new decision "helps to provide continued protection against Covid-19, including the serious consequences that can occur, such as hospitalisation and death," said acting FDA commissioner Janet Woodcock in a statement.

"This emergency use authorisation comes at a critical time as we enter the winter months and face increasing Covid-19 case counts and hospitalisations across the country," added Moderna CEO Stephane Bancel.

The FDA said it based its decision on strong immune response data from hundreds of people dosed with the two vaccines.

Pfizer also carried out a clinical trial involving 10,000 people aged over 16 which found that the booster showed an efficacy against symptomatic infection of more than 95 percent compared to those who did not receive a booster.

This study was not cited by the FDA in making its decision, but it could nevertheless indicate the Pfizer vaccine works best as a three-dose shot -- or that the three-week time interval between first and second dose was never long enough to induce the best immune response.

Both vaccines are available to people six months after completing their primary series.

Pfizer's vaccine is dosed at 30 micrograms, the same as the

primary series, while Moderna's is 50 micrograms, half the primary series.

People who received the Johnson & Johnson one dose vaccine were already eligible for a booster two months after their first shot.

The booster decision comes as cases are rapidly rising nationally, reaching 88,000 new infections per day on average as the country enters its fifth wave, according to the latest data.

## MISGIVINGS

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention was set to hold a meeting later yesterday to discuss clinical recommendations for who should now seek a vaccine.

The meeting should provide greater insight into the thinking of top federal advisors, some of whom have expressed misgivings about a "booster bonanza."

The vast majority of those people becoming hospitalised or dying with Covid are unvaccinated, and thus the best way to control the winter wave would be to reach those people, rather than topping up the vaccinated, the critics say.

A potential downside, they argue, is that vaccine holdouts might conclude the shots are ineffective.

Another risk is a greater number of cases of vaccine-linked heart inflammation (myocarditis), especially among younger males.

Both companies are conducting post authorisation studies to assess the risks of myocarditis.

Experts are in broad agreement that boosters alone can't resolve the pandemic while the poorest countries, especially in Africa, remain stuck in the single digit percentages for people covered by their primary vaccination series.

## Docs closely monitoring

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physician to Khaleda, told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said the medical board, formed for treatment of Khaleda, is examining her almost every hour.

Meanwhile, the BNP yesterday alleged that a plan was made to put an end to the life of the party chief.

It also urged the people to get united and wage a movement to (compel the government) send Khaleda abroad for better treatment.

"The law minister lied saying that there is no legal provision for sending Khaleda Zia abroad for better treatment. According to section 401 of the CrPC, the government can suspend or pardon the conviction with or without conditions. But their only target is to keep Khaleda Zia away from politics and put an end to her life. That's why they [government] are not exercising that option," alleged BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir.

He was speaking at a discussion, organised by National Peoples Party at Dhaka Reporters Unity, marking the NPP's 14th founding anniversary.

Urging people to take part in today's mass hunger strike, Fakhrul said the BNP's next course of action will be announced demanding Khaleda be allowed to go abroad for better treatment.

The party will stage a mass hunger strike today demanding release of Khaleda and the government allow her to go abroad for better treatment.

The BNP leader said physicians are providing the best possible treatment available here, but they are not having expected results.

Fakhrul said the medical board also suggested sending Khaleda abroad for better treatment.

Taking part in the discussion,

## 'I apologise'

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complex system of farm subsidies and price supports that critics say the government cannot afford.

It could also raise questions for investors about how economic reforms risk being undermined by political pressures.

Protesting farmers, who have been camped out in their thousands by main roads around the capital, New Delhi, celebrated Modi's back-track.

"Despite a lot of difficulties, we have been here for nearly a year and today our sacrifice finally paid off," said Ranjit Kumar, a 36-year-old farmer at Ghazipur, a major protest site in Uttar Pradesh.

Jubilant farmers handed out sweets in celebration and chanted "hail the farmer" and "long live farmers' movement".

Rakesh Tikait, a farmers' group leader, said the protests would only be called off when parliament repealed the laws.

## VULNERABLE TO BIG BUSINESS

Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government said last year there was no question of repealing the laws. It attempted to break the impasse by offering to water down the legislation but protracted negotiations failed.

The protests took a violent turn on January 26, India's Republic Day, when farmers overwhelmed police and stormed the historic Red Fort in New Delhi after tearing down barricades and driving tractors through roadblocks.

One protester was killed and scores of farmers and policemen were injured.

Farmers say the changes would make them vulnerable to competition from big business and they could eventually

lose price support for staples such as wheat and rice.

The government says reform of the sector, which accounts for about 15% of the \$2.7 trillion economy, would have meant new opportunities and better prices for farmers.

Modi announced the scrapping of the laws in a speech marking the birth anniversary of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism. Many of the protesting farmers are Sikh.

He acknowledged that the government had failed to win the argument.

The farmers are also calling for minimum support prices for all of their crops, not just rice and wheat, a new demand that has gained traction among farmers across the country.

Some agriculture experts said Modi's reversal was unfortunate because the reforms would have brought new technology and investment.

The opposition has been keen to take advantage of the acrimony between farming communities and Modi's party and Rahul Gandhi of the main opposition Congress party, said the "arrogant" government had been forced to concede, reports Reuters.

"Just the beginning of many more victories for people's voices," Mahua Moitra, a lawmaker from the Trinamool Congress Party and one of Modi's staunchest critics, said on Twitter.

State elections are also due soon in Punjab and Uttarakhand in the north.

Modi's party looks well placed to fend off challenges in the next general election, due by 2024, but in a worrying sign for him, a regional party swept to power in West Bengal state in May.



A restaurant at the capital's Karail slum uses an illegal gas connection to run its stove. Numerous illegal gas links to eateries at the slum pose risk of explosions and casualties. *Inset*, a stove illegally connected to Titas gas line at another restaurant. The photos were taken yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

## Zahangir shown the door

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AL central committee member, who was present at the meeting, quoted Hasina as saying.

The AL chief also said she will run the party dropping the rebels and their patrons.

Around 40 people were killed in violence across the country over the November 11 UP polls (second phase). The ruling party UP chairman candidates had to contest against party dissidents in almost all unions.

Ignoring strong warnings from the AL high-ups, 1,069 leaders and activists of the ruling party are taking part in the November 28 UP polls (third phase) as independents.

The number of such candidates was 690 in the second phase. The AL recommended expulsion of all party men who would work in favour of party dissidents.

## ZAHANGIR'S EXPULSION

Yesterday, at least 10 party leaders spoke at the ALCWC meeting on the Zahangir issue and all of them demanded his punishment, said meeting sources.

They also demanded removal of Zahangir as mayor and legal action again him.

In response of their demand for removal of the mayor, Hasina said she would look into the matter, the sources added.

Addressing the October 22 meeting of the Awami League Nomination Board for Local Body Elections, Hasina expressed annoyance at Zahangir's controversial remarks.

The ruling party on October 3 issued a show cause notice to Zahangir asking him to explain within 15 days why action should not be taken against him. In reply, Zahangir offered apology and said he was sorry for his comments. But the AL top leadership

was not satisfied.

Speaking at a programme in late September, Zahangir made some comments on Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the number of Liberation War martyrs. Its video footage went viral on social media.

Incensed, AL leaders and activists and its associated organisations demonstrated and demanded punishment for the Gazipur mayor.

Zahangir, however, termed the allegations "a conspiracy against him" and blamed his political opponents for "spreading propaganda against him".

Meanwhile, leaders and activists of the mayor's rival group brought out processions in Gazipur city last night soon after the news of his expulsion from the AL spread. They celebrated the news by bursting crackers, reports our Gazipur correspondent.

Sweetmeats were also distributed among the leaders and activists.

## NEW PRESIDIUM MEMBERS

Yesterday's ALCWC meeting promoted two central committee members -- Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya and Kamrul Islam -- and Rajshahi City Corporation Mayor AHM Khairuzzaman Liton, also the Rajshahi city AL president, to members of party presidium, the AL highest policy-making body.

Those three posts had been lying vacant following the death of former health minister Mohammad Nasim, former home minister Sahara Khatun, and former law minister Abdul Matin Khasru.

Earlier, Hasina in her introductory speech at the meeting cited various incidents, including the August 21 grenade attack, and said BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and her allies always tried to wipe out the name and sign of AL.

## Everybody knows

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said Naimul Haque, commander of 14th Armed Police Battalion (APBn), which is in charge of law enforcement at a portion of Rohingya camps.

The Rohingyas need to go out of the camps for medical purposes and to receive relief goods, he said. "Some of them take advantage of this and engage in drug dealing. We even recovered yaba even from their stomach."

Former foreign secretary Touhid Hossain believes that one of the reasons why the government officials refute the existence of ARSA in Cox's Bazar is for the interest of the repatriation of refugees. "As far as I know, Myanmar says there are many terrorists among Rohingyas and the country doesn't want to take them back. But Bangladesh maintains that there is no ARSA in the camps."

Prof Shahab Enam Khan of Jahangirnagar University's Department of International Relations said external forces that are against Rohingya repatriation are backing the insurgent group.

On August 25, 2017, ARSA claimed responsibility for attacks on police posts across northern Rakhine. The Myanmar military used the attacks as a pretext for carrying out a massive clampdown on Rohingyas, resulting in the region's most severe refugee crisis in decades.

Rohingya sources believe ARSA members killed Mohib Ullah and the six others to thwart the repatriation process and to send out a message of their strength as they seek to be a party to formal repatriation talks.

Besides drugs and human trafficking, extortion is a major source of money for the ARSA men.

They make around 15,000 shops pay them every week. Rohingyas sources said there are around 500 madrasas in the camps. Most of the madrasas are controlled by an

associate body of ARSA known as the Ulama Council.

The other influential group is Islami Mahas, which used to be controlled by Mohib Ullah.

Islami Mahas is against all sorts of criminal activities and in favour of repatriation while the Ulama Council controls drugs and human trafficking.

Since the assassination of Mohib Ullah, more than 250 Rohingyas were arrested on criminal charges. At least 114 of them claim to be ARSA men, APBn officers said.

This correspondent talked to several dozen Rohingyas and their community leaders over the last few weeks. They spoke about ARSA on the condition of anonymity, as they fear reprisal by the group.

They said a huge number of ARSA members are agents of Myanmar and they get regular patronage from the Myanmar military.

"The ARSA operatives are working against repatriation as an agent of the Myanmar administration," said a community leader.

ARSA members claimed to be fighting for the rights of the Rohingyas and many commoners trusted them initially. But now the Rohingyas believe that ARSA is working as the agent of the Myanmar government and obstructing their return to their homeland, said many of the Rohingyas.

"The situation is so frightening that we cannot say publicly that we want to return to our home. Those who are talking about repatriation are being killed," said another community leader.

Popular leaders like the late Mohib Ullah, Arif Ullah, Abdur Rahim, Noor Alam, Hamid Ullah, and around 50 other Rohingya leaders have been killed since 2017. Family members of the assassinated leaders went into hiding fearing for their lives.

"ARSA is a terrorist organisation

of the Myanmar government. They staged this drama and pushed one million Rohingyas to Bangladesh. Now they are trying to create obstacles to repatriation," said a Rohingya man in Balukhali camp.

Major General (Retd) ANM Muniruzzaman, president of Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies (BIPSS), said the problem stems from various criminal activities and there is a growing nexus between criminal operatives in drug smuggling, small arms smuggling, and human trafficking.

## WHAT IS ARSA?

ARSA, which operates in Rakhine state in northern Myanmar, grabbed international attention in 2016 when it attacked three police outposts in the Maungdaw and Rathedaung townships in Myanmar, killing nine officers.

ARSA leader Ataullah Abu Amar Jununi defended the attack and said that there have been various crimes and atrocities committed against the Rohingya for over 75 years, reported BBC.

He said ARSA carried out the attack to send a message that if the violence is not stopped, the ARSA has the right to defend itself. It said they are fighting on behalf of more than a million Rohingyas, who have been denied the most basic rights, including citizenship.

The Myanmar authorities said that the ARSA members are Muslim terrorists who want to impose Islamic rule.

The International Crisis Group (ICG) in a report in 2016 said the group was led by Rohingya people living in Saudi Arabia. The ICG says ARSA's leader is Ata Ullah, who was born in Pakistan and raised in Saudi Arabia.

Although there are confusions about the location of Ataullah, Rohingyas believe that he lives in

## Greece car chase kills 7 migrants: police

AFP, Thessaloniki

Seven migrants were killed and eight injured in northern Greece after their car overturned as they tried to evade a police roadblock near the Turkish border, police said yesterday.

The six men and one woman were killed in the incident that occurred just after midnight on the highway between Greece's second city of Thessaloniki and the Turkish border.

The driver of the vehicle -- a Moldovan who was allegedly the smuggler and among the injured -- tried to evade a police control on the highway, sparking a chase with police. During the pursuit, the migrant car crashed through the highway guard rails and turned over, police said.

The nationalities of the people killed were not yet clear, but the injured were all men -- four from Pakistan, two Afghans and one Nepali, they said.

## A public univ

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tests of five banks and those of preliminary and written recruitment exams for different government jobs.

Besides Delowar, the DB on Wednesday arrested Parvez Miah, a suspended lab assistant at AUST, and Rabiul Awal, a binder at Ahsania Press and Publication in Ashulia. All three of them made confessional statements under Section 164 of the CrPC.

Officers earlier arrested Muktaruzzaman Royal, a suspended technician of the private university.

In his confession, Delowar said the gang got the question paper of five banks' preliminary exams from Rabiul two days before the test on November 6.

Delowar said he worked as an office attendant of the treasurer of AUST in 2016. He learnt that AUST gets the tasks of moderating questions of various recruitment tests of banks and other institutions. As the treasurer was a member of the exam committee, Delowar got a chance to be involved in the printing job and he regularly visited Ahsania Mission's printing press in Ashulia.

He added that security was lax at the printing press and he took its advantage. He handed the questions of four or five recruitment tests to Muktaruzzaman and Parvez in exchange of Tk 50,000 for each.

But this time, Delowar couldn't get involved in the printing process. So, he asked binder Rabiul to do his bidding. He then made a Tk 1 lakh deal with Muktaruzzaman and Parvez and handed them the question paper on November 4.

Contacted, AUST Vice-Chancellor Prof Muhammad Fazli Ilahi said the professor was not part of any committee for the November 6 exams. But he was involved in several technical tasks like preparing the stickers used at exam halls.

"What the arrestee said in the statement, might be of earlier incidents when the professor was in the exam committees and tender procedures," said the VC.

Arakan and he keeps regular contact with his followers from there.

Former foreign secretary Touhid Hossain said, "My opinion is that ARSA has been working for the Myanmar military all along. I have also expressed this on a number of occasions. I think Bangladesh should take this line rather than deny what is obvious. It should take the bull by the horns."

Prof Shahab Enam Khan of Jahangirnagar University's Department of International Relations said ARSA is a dubious outfit that fits more within a criminal profile than an ideology-oriented entity.

"It has morphed itself as a Rohingya brand with the backing of external forces not supportive of repatriation of the Rohingyas. One newly emerged entity can't be a reason for Tatmadaw to embark on terminal cleaning of the Rohingyas that resulted in the expulsion of nearly a million Burmese people to Bangladesh. It's common sense."

Prof Khan, who works on the Rohingya issue, said the Myanmar narrative continues to label this dubious group as an extremist entity. Many fall into this narrative trap and find ARSA as an ideological representative of the Rohingyas, he added.

"The Tatmadaw discourse then aims to create an Islamophobic narrative which has its own appeal among vested interest groups. Hence, the ARSA actors that the Rohingyas see in the camps are multiple groups of thugs competing for resources under an ideological branding, more like using a franchise model of business, and therefore, serving the purpose against national and regional security and stability."

The IR professor said a very small segment of Rohingyas may endorse ARSA activities out of ignorance, but it should not be seen as a generalised phenomenon.