

BANGLADESH UPDATE

260
New cases in 24hrs

15,81,343
Total cases

28,050
Deaths

15,45,807
Recoveries

GLOBAL UPDATE

5,373,012
Deaths

275,162,398
Total cases

Omicron raging through world

Warns Fauci, says traveling increases risk of infection among vaccinated people

AGENCIES

Top US pandemic advisor Anthony Fauci on Sunday warned of a bleak winter ahead as the Omicron coronavirus variant spurs a new wave of infections globally, sparking restrictions and concerns over hospital capacity.



Anthony Fauci

were experiencing mild symptoms.

Neither indicated whether they had been infected with Omicron.

Fauci urged unvaccinated Americans to get a shot and the vaccinated to get boosters, which have been shown to re-up protection. **TOUGH FEW WEEKS**

TO MONTHS

"One thing that's very clear... is (Omicron's) extraordinary capability of spreading," Fauci told NBC News. "It is just... raging through the world." Traveling will increase the risk of infection even among vaccinated people, he said.

Since it was first reported in South Africa in November, Omicron has been identified in dozens of countries, prompting many to reimpose travel restrictions and other measures.

Despite indications it is not more severe than the Delta variant -- currently still the dominant strain -- the heavily mutated Omicron has been shown in early data to have a worrying resistance to vaccines and higher transmissibility.

Fauci also cautioned against too much optimism over Omicron's severity, noting that in South Africa, while the hospitalization-to-case ratio is lower than with Delta, this could be due to underlying immunity from widespread previous infections.

"No matter how you look at it," he said, "when you have so many, many infections, even if it is less severe, that overcomes this slight to moderate diminution in severity."

"Our hospitals, if things look like they're looking now in the next week or two, are going to be very stressed," particularly in areas of the country with low levels of vaccination, Fauci said.

On Sunday, US Senators Elizabeth Warren and Cory Booker each said separately on Twitter that they had tested positive for Covid-19 despite being vaccinated and boosted, and

The administration of President Joe Biden, who is due to address the nation on pandemic developments today, has been campaigning hard for vaccination.

While a little more than 70 percent of the US population has had at least one shot, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, another 50 million eligible people remain unprotected, Fauci said.

"With Omicron... it is going to be a tough few weeks to months as we get deeper into the winter," he added.

Omicron now accounts for around three percent of cases in the United States, a figure that is expected to rise rapidly as has been seen in other countries.

On Saturday, New York state announced a record number of daily cases for the second day in a row, with almost 22,000 positive results.

Meanwhile, Europe's medicines watchdog yesterday approved a Covid jab by US-based Novavax, which uses a more conventional technology that the biotech firm hopes will reduce vaccine hesitancy.

The protein-based vaccine of the kind used around the world to protect against many childhood illnesses is the fifth coronavirus shot authorised for use in the European Union.

"EMA has recommended granting a conditional marketing authorisation for Novavax's Covid-19 vaccine Nuvaxovid to prevent Covid-19 in people from 18 years of age," the European Medicines Agency said in a statement.

Three held over rape

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the victim and arrested the trio.

Yesterday, the victim filed a case with Bandar Police Station accusing the three, said Dipok Chandra Saha, officer-in-charge of the police station.

The victim was sent to a local hospital for medical examinations.

Later in the day, police produced the arrestees before a Narayanganj court. The court placed the driver on a three-day remand and sent the two others to Tongji Juvenile Development Centre in Gazipur, said Md Asaduzzaman, inspector of Narayanganj court police.

In Kushtia, the muzzelin of a mosque was sued on Saturday night for raping a hearing and speech impaired woman in Bheramara upazila.

Accused Shah Jamal, 55, is a resident of Koigaripara village in the same upazila.

Victim's family members said the 18-year-old woman went to a sugarcane field around 3:30pm on Saturday. As she was alone, Jamal forcibly took her inside the field and raped her.

Hearing her screams, some locals

rushed to the spot and rescued her. They caught Jamal, but he later managed to flee.

The victim's mother filed the case with Bheramara Police Station. She was sent to a local hospital for medical tests, said Mojibur Rahman, OC of the police station.

In Tangail, a youth was booked yesterday on charges of raping an 11-year-old child in Mirzapur upazila.

The accused, Anik, 18, is from Postkamuri Dakshinpara village in the same upazila.

Police said the victim and the accused are neighbours. Anik entered the victim's house on Saturday evening and raped her when she was alone.

The child shared the incident with her parents when they returned home. Rizaul Haque Dipu, OC of Mirzapur Police Station, said the victim's mother lodged a rape case yesterday accusing Anik.

The victim was sent to a local hospital for medical examinations.

Our correspondents in Narayanganj, Kushtia and Tangail contributed to this report.

Friendly ties with all

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relationship between Bangladesh and their respective countries to new heights," she added.

The foreign ministry awarded them with the Bangabandhu Medal in recognition of their excellent contributions to the diplomatic field.

Khurshid Alam played a significant role in the peaceful solution to maritime disputes with neighbouring India and Myanmar, while Mohammad Al Muhari played an important role in strengthening the Bangladesh-UAE bilateral ties.

The PM said Bangladesh resolved the maritime demarcation disputes with India and Myanmar maintaining friendly relations with them. "This is our diplomatic success."

Hasina said her government has relentlessly been working for the overall development of the country.

"We're following the policy formulated by the Father of the Nation. We won't let poor people remain poor anymore. The people of this country will be hunger- and poverty-free and will get developed and prosperous lives."

The premier said the government has been implementing massive programmes in order to attain the ideology and objectives of the Liberation War.

"The benefits of the victory achieved in the Liberation War will reach every house of Bangladesh. Every individual

will get food, education, medical treatment and a better life, which were the goals of Father of the Nation," she said, adding that her government has already gone far in attaining the goals.

She renewed her firm conviction to fulfil the dream of Bangabandhu ignoring all sorts of possible difficulties and barriers.

"I've nothing to win and nothing to lose as I've lost my parents, brothers and everything. But I made a decision that the dream, for what my father made this country independent, would have to be fulfilled, no matter how many difficulties, attacks and barriers come in my way," she said.

There will be nothing called "poverty" and "Monga" (seasonal food crisis) in Bangladesh, the PM said, adding that her objective is that every individual would live a decent life in the country.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Md Shariar Alam announced the names of the award recipients.

Mohammad Al Muhari dedicated the medal to the people of the UAE and Bangladesh.

At the function, a book titled "Sheikh Hasina: Bimugdho Bishwa", highlighting the 40-year leadership of Hasina since 1981, was launched.

Awami League lawmakers Amir Hossain Amu, Abul Hasanat Abdullah and Matia Chowdhury also spoke on the occasion. Foreign diplomats stationed in Dhaka were present.



A Jatiya Party delegation, led by its Chairman GM Quader, with President Abdul Hamid at the Bangabhaban yesterday -- the first day of talks over the formation of a new Election Commission.

PHOTO: PID

Plastic menace worsening

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growth, the report said.

While Bangladesh has taken steps in curbing plastic pollution over the years, the outcomes were varied.

For instance, in 2002, Bangladesh was the world's first country to ban plastic shopping bags.

However, after some time, plastic pollution increased again.

The Jute Packaging Act 2010 for six essential items (paddy, rice, wheat, maize, fertiliser, sugar) promoted an alternative to plastic packaging.

In 2020, a High Court directed concerned authorities to ban single-use plastic in coastal areas and all hotels and motels across the country.

And yet, plastic pollution prevails. The National Action Plan for Sustainable Plastic Management has set a target of recycling 50 percent of plastics by 2025, phasing out targeted single-use plastic by 90 percent by 2026, and reducing plastic waste generation by 30 percent by 2030

from 2020/21 baseline.

The plan, which is aligned with the eighth five-year plan, focuses on the circular use of plastic based on the 3R strategy: reduce, reuse and recycle.

A circular economy will help create new value chains, green skills, employment, and innovative products while addressing social and environmental challenges, the report concluded.

To implement the National Action Plan, commitment from all stakeholders, including citizens, the government, private sector, development partners and citizens will be important, said Eun Joo Allison Yi, senior environment specialist at the WB, and co-author of the report.

To implement the action plan, the report identified policy reforms, technologies, infrastructure, investment and institutional capacity-building needs.

The report, which was prepared in collaboration with the Department of

Environment and ProBlue, a multi-donor trust fund, provided a blueprint for managing plastic pollution over the short-term (2022-2023), medium-term (2024-2026) and the long-term (2027-2030).

"Going forward, sustainable plastic management -- from designing a product to minimising plastic use, to recycling -- will be critical to ensure green growth for the country. We commend the government's commitment to implement a National Action Plan to beat plastic pollution," Chen said.

Speaking as chief guest, Md. Shahab Uddin, minister of forest, environment and climate change, stressed the enforcement of the law to reduce plastic pollution.

"The government wants to implement the 3R strategy through social inclusion. We have to encourage people to reduce the use of plastics," he said.

JP names 1 for EC, 4 for search panel

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form the new EC.

The next EC will oversee the 12th national election to be held between November 2023 and January 2024.

If it is not possible to enact laws and issue ordinances in that time, JP proposed that the next EC be formed through a search committee acceptable to all, party leaders said.

For the search committee, the party proposed names of an Appellate Division judge, a High Court judge, Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of Bangladesh Mohammad Muslim Chowdhury and Public Service Commission (PSC) Chairman Sohorab Hossain, said the JP insider.

JP Chairman GM Quader declined to comment on the nomination of Roksana's name.

"The president in reply assured that he would consider the proposal and send it to relevant authorities," GM Quader, JP chairman and deputy leader of the opposition, told reporters emerging from the dialogue held at the Bangabhaban.

Chunnu said the president assured them that he will form a search committee comprising persons acceptable to all.

Hamid also hoped that formation of an acceptable EC would be possible

through the opinions and advice of political parties.

"The president said the new election commission will be able to hold all elections in free and fair manner and neutrally. He also sought cooperation from all political parties and civil society regarding the matter," said a Bangabhaban statement.

The eight-member JP delegation, led by GM Quader, engaged with the president for about an hour and a half from 4:00pm.

The other members of the delegation were JP MPs Anisul Islam Mahmud, Kazi Firoz Rashid, Moshir Rahman Ranga, Syed Abu Hossain Babla, Salma Islam, and Ruhul Amin Hawlader.

The party said according to Article 118 of the constitution, there should be a law to appoint the chief election commissioner and election commissioners, but no law has been enacted till date.

"We think a law should be enacted in line with constitutions before appointing the upcoming EC," said JP's written proposal, a copy of which was obtained by The Daily Star.

The party said as per Article 126 of the constitution, it shall be the duty of all executive authorities to assist the EC in discharging its functions.

Bangladesh buying 2cr

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Of the amount, the finance ministry used \$741 to buy 105 million vaccine doses from two Chinese drugmakers under the global arrangement -- Covid-19 Vaccines Global Access (Covax) facility.

"Now we have around \$153 million in hand. We will be spending money from the remaining funds to buy the vaccines under the bilateral arrangements," said a top finance ministry official, preferring anonymity, adding that the cost of the vaccine doses cannot be disclosed.

Including the new 20 million doses, the government is procuring around 77 million vaccine shots from China under bilateral arrangements.

Although the country is supposed to get 105 million doses by December, as promised by Covax, the schedule was revised further.

"We are already getting vaccines [under the Covax facility] and hope to get all the doses by the end of January," the official said.

As of now, the government has administered the first dose to over 8.7 crore people while around 4.4 crore people got both doses.

So far, 25.89 percent of the country's population have been inoculated with double doses. The target is to vaccinate 80 percent.

Along with adult and vulnerable groups, the government is now administering vaccines on children aged 12 years and above as well.

On Sunday, it started administering booster doses to

health workers on a trial basis in Dhaka.

Bangladesh started the mass vaccination programme on February 7 this year for people aged 65 and above with 70 lakh Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccines, produced by Serum Institute of India.

However, the country suffered frequent hiccups in its mass inoculation campaigns mainly due to a shortage of doses caused by a gap between supply commitments and actual delivery. The dearth in supply led to the suspension in administering the first dose on April 26.

The situation, however, improved as supplies started coming in from the US, China and Japan, prompting the government to resume administering the first dose on June 19 on a limited scale, and then gradually expand.

At present, the government has a stock of some 4.45 crore doses, while two crore more will arrive next month, said Health Minister Zahid Maleque on Saturday.

"There is no shortage of Covid-19 vaccines right now," he said.

Meanwhile, the government has sought funds from ADB for turning Essential Drugs Company Limited in Gopalganj into an international vaccine institute.

The move came after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's gave instructions to equip the lone state-owned medicine manufacturer with modern facilities.

The regional lender, however, primarily agreed to lend around \$400 million budgetary support in this regard, said finance ministry officials.

Hasina asks AL men to work together for Ivy's win

BSS, Dhaka

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina has directed party leaders and activists to work in unison to make AL candidate Selina Hayat Ivy winner in Narayanganj City Corporation polls.

She came up with the directive while talking to Jahangir Kabir Nanak, party coordinator to the NCC election and an AL presidium member, over phone yesterday afternoon.

At the time, Nanak was holding a meeting with AL Narayanganj district and city leaders at the AL president's political office in the city's Dhanmondi.

The AL president joined the meeting virtually and exchanged views with the AL leaders. She directed the AL men to work together to ensure the AL candidate's victory.

She said, "There are many candidates, but one has to be nominated. So we gave nomination to Ivy. Ivy is the candidate of boat symbol. Everyone will work for the victory of boat and that's what I want."

During the meeting, Sheikh Rehana, the younger sister of Hasina, greeted the AL leaders and workers and urged them to use masks to prevent coronavirus.

US declares \$5m

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including those yet to be arrested, were responsible for the attack on Avijit and Bonya.

The Anti-Terrorism Special Tribunal in Dhaka on February 16 this year handed down death sentences to five militants and life imprisonment to another for killing Avijit.

Those handed the death sentence are Syed Mohammad Ziaul Haque alias Major (sacked) Zia, Akram Hossain, Abu Siddique Sohel, Mozammel Hossain, and Arafat Rahman.

Life imprisonment was given to Shafiqur Rahman Farabi.

Major Zia and Akram are still on the run while the rest are behind bars. Bonya, however, thinks prosecuting a few foot soldiers while ignoring the rise and roots of extremism does not deliver justice for Avijit's killing.

The US State Department said, "This investigation remains open and we are seeking information that will assist law enforcement agencies in bringing to justice the perpetrators of this heinous terrorist attack."

Contacted, Md Asaduzzaman, chief of the Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, last night said most of those who took part in the attack were arrested and that the efforts to arrest Major Zia was on.

As per police intelligence, Zia is in Bangladesh, he said.

"The US' offering of reward could be a reflection of their strong policy against terrorism. We are also going strong against terrorists," he said.

শুভ জন্মদিন

১৫০ তম

জামালী শাখা
নেয়াত শ্রুক্রিয়া শপিং কমপ্লেক্স
জামালী বাজার, পজারিয়া
মুগিগঞ্জ

এবার যাত্রা
ঐতিহ্যবাহী শিল্পাঞ্চল মুগিগঞ্জে

গ্রাহক সন্তুষ্টি নিশ্চিত করার লক্ষ্যে আধুনিক ব্যাংকিং সেবা নিয়ে আজ ২০ ডিসেম্বর ২০২১, মহল্লাবাব যমুনা ব্যাংক লিমিটেড এর ১৫০ তম শাখা যাত্রা শুরু করছে মুগিগঞ্জ জেলায় পজারিয়া উপজেলার জামালী বাজারে।

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