



ECONOMY SOLDIERS ON
Agriculture, export and remittance helping Bangladesh pull through amid Covid-19
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2 die as cop ploughs bus thru crowd

ASI not authorised to drive forced driver off seized vehicle



SHAHEEN MOLLAH and MUNTAKIM SAAD

A police officer not authorised to drive took the steering of a bus and ploughed through a crowd, killing two men and injuring at least three others in the capital's Gullistan yesterday afternoon.

Following an argument with the bus driver, Assistant Sub-Inspector Emadul Haque asked him to get off and then began to drive the otherwise empty bus, witnesses said.

After going about 100 metres on Gullistan Road around 2:45pm, he violently swerved the bus to the left, ploughing through a crowd and damaging motorcycles and rickshaws. He then steered to the right and hit the guard rail of a footpath, they added.

Police officers are not supposed to drive seized vehicles;
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PRIDE AND TEARS ... Holding a photo of her son Mainuddin Islam, Rashida Begum cries her heart out after his SSC results came out yesterday. Mainuddin was killed by a recklessly driven bus in the capital's Rampura on November 29, just two days after the exams ended. His results show he scored GPA 4.7.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

SSC, EQUIVALENT EXAMS Stellar results on curtailed syllabus

Pass rate highest in 30 years

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR and ASIFUR RAHMAN

Taking tests on three optional subjects and for fewer marks, this year's SSC candidates have achieved outstanding results, pushing up the pass rate and number of GPA-5 achievers in nine general education boards.

Female examinees have outperformed their male counterparts in terms of both pass rate and achieving the highest Grade Point Average.

According to the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and equivalent exams' results published yesterday, there have been improvements in other areas as well.

Unveiling the results at a press conference, Education Minister Dipu Moni said various government initiatives have brought about positive changes in this year's results.

Dipu Moni and Professor Gazi Hasan Kamal, chairman of Mymensingh Education
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COVID TREATMENT

Eskayef rolls out Pfizer's oral drug

Gets emergency nod to launch the promising antiviral pill



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eskayef Pharmaceuticals yesterday rolled out the world's first generic version of Pfizer's Covid pill Paxlovid, offering a highly effective defence against severe illness from the coronavirus in Bangladesh, where the majority of the population remain unvaccinated.

Called Paxovir, the oral treatment, which received the Directorate General of Drug Administration's (DGDA) emergency use authorisation yesterday, can be prescribed to Covid patients aged 12 and over.

The treatment, which can be administered to both vaccinated and unvaccinated people, consists of 30 pills taken over five days.

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ECONOMY 2021

Back on track from ravages of pandemic

Inflationary pressure hovers over 2022

REJAUUL KARIM BYRON

Most operators are back behind the machines, so are the small traders, private service holders, vendors and domestic helps.

The public vehicles are running at full capacity, ports are struggling to handle the influx of containers, tourists' spots are abuzz with visitors and Dhaka's two most popular middle-class destinations -- Gausia and New Market -- are packed to the rafters.

In short, it was business-as-usual for the economy in 2021, after dousing the fires caused by the coronavirus for the best part of last year.

And the return to form for the high-flying Bangladesh economy is thanks partly to the accelerated vaccination campaign, which gave people the confidence to venture out of their homes with confidence, and the government's massive fiscal stimulus to absorb the economic shock from the pandemic.

"Despite being hit by multiple waves of the COVID-19 pandemic, quick and decisive actions by the authorities, supported by the external environment, led to a much quicker rebound than Bangladesh's regional peers," said the International Monetary Fund in a report on December 12.

The report was prepared following a visit by an IMF team to Dhaka.

However, despite the strong recovery in

all economic sectors, the spiralling inflation has put the policymakers on the back foot.

"The recovery process is much stronger than in earlier periods. The economy is on its way back to the normal process. But the inflation pressure and food price hike are going to be the biggest challenge for people who are returning to work," said Selim Raihan, executive director of the South Asian Network on Economic Modelling (SANEM).

The government's decision to increase diesel and kerosene prices to offset the hike in fuel price in the global market was ill-advised.

"When there is already an inflation pressure in the economy, the government should have thought twice before increasing the diesel price. The twin effect will create a big challenge for those who are trying to come out of poverty."

It is still premature to say that those who fell into poverty due to the pandemic have recovered, said Raihan, a professor at the University of Dhaka's economics department.

SANEM, a non-profit research organisation, conducted a survey in November and December of last year and found about 42 percent of the country's population were below the poverty line.

There is no current study to suggest that poverty has returned to the pre-pandemic level of about 22 percent, Raihan said.

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DSA could be amended

Says law minister; reiterates that it is being abused

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Anisul Huq yesterday said the government, if necessary, would amend some sections of the Digital Security Act as the law was being abused in certain cases.

He said a six-member team has already been formed to work on addressing some discontent centring the law. The team comprises representatives from relevant ministries, including law, information and communications technology, and home. It was formed after December last year after the minister contacted the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to inquire about best practices over such laws.

The team has been engaged with a similar team formed by the UN body to find whether enforcement of DSA led to violations of human rights in any way, Anisul said, adding, "If they find any such violation, we will take necessary steps to correct it."

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Hasan Foez Siddique new CJ

Senior-most judge Imman Ali goes on long leave

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Justice Hasan Foez Siddique, a senior judge of the Appellate Division, was appointed the 23rd chief justice yesterday.

President Abdul Hamid made the appointment in line with Article 95(1) of the constitution as outgoing chief justice Syed Mahmud Hossain retired on the day.

Article 95(1) of the constitution reads, "The chief justice shall be appointed by the president, and the other judges shall be appointed by the president after consultation with the chief justice."

Md Joynal Abedin, press secretary to the president, said the president would administer the oath at the Bangabhaban at 4:00pm today.

Justice Muhammad Imman Ali, the senior-most judge of the Supreme Court's Appellate Division, was superseded in this appointment of the new CJ.

Slated to retire on December 31, 2022, Justice Imman Ali went on a long leave yesterday, said sources close to his office. The sources, however, did not elaborate on the matter.

Contacted, Saifur Rahman, spokesperson for the SC, and Badrul Alam Bhuiyan, registrar of the Appellate Division, could not say anything about his leave.

SC Registrar General Mohammad Ali Akbar could not be reached over the phone despite multiple attempts.

In a gazette notification yesterday, the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs said the appointment would come into effect on the day the new chief justice takes the oath.

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World braces for Omicron tsunami

Billions to welcome New Year amid strict restrictions

AGENCIES

Millions around the world yesterday braced for drastically curtailed New Year celebrations as record coronavirus cases fuelled by the Omicron variant saw the WHO warn a Covid "tsunami" threatens to overwhelm healthcare systems.

Coronavirus, first detected two years ago and declared a global pandemic in March 2020, has killed more than 5.4 million people, triggered economic crises and seen societies ricochet in and out of lockdowns.

The latest variant, Omicron, while tentatively considered to cause milder illness, has pushed infection levels to record levels in recent days in the United States, Britain, France and other European countries, forcing governments to reimpose restrictions.

The number of daily new Covid cases worldwide crossed one million for the first time, according to an AFP tally yesterday, with more than 7.3 million in the last seven days.

From Greece to Mexico, from Barcelona to Bali and across swathes of Europe, authorities have cancelled or curtailed public gatherings, either closing or imposed curfews on nightclubs.

In India, authorities yesterday started to impose stringent rules to prevent mass gatherings at new year's parties and public venues to combat a spike in Covid-19 infections, even as top leaders led large political rallies.

Night curfews have been imposed in all major cities and restaurants ordered to limit customers.

However, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah presided over public rallies in northern states with footage from the events showing thousands of people gathered in open grounds to hear their speeches.

Last week an Indian court urged Modi's government to suspend political rallies and election campaigns in poll-bound states amid the rising number of Omicron cases.

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Radhuni
Holding the CROWN for a DECADE

Thank you for your love and support that made Radhuni the 'Most Loved Brand' in Spice category for 10 consecutive years. This award is identified through a nationwide survey conducted jointly by Bangladesh Brand Forum and Nielsen. Radhuni also earned the third position among all local and global brands.

May this trust and love continue and keep Radhuni forever in the hearts of consumers and well-wishers.

SQUARE Food & Beverage Ltd.