15,85,027

Total cases



28,070

Deaths



**283,402,425** Total cases

Studio Morpho-

Bangladeshi architectural firm Studio

MorphoGenesis Ltd has won the

prestigious ARCASIA AWARD-2021

for its project "The Statesman" in

224 projects that were submitted to

Architects Regional Council Asia for

the award. A total 25 projects in Asia

received the award for their excellent

awarded with honorary mention

in the category of "Multi-Family Residential Complex" at an event held

in Shanghai in October. The firm this

MorphoGenesis

The Statesman stood out among

Genesis wins

ARCASIA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Gulshan, Dhaka.

Studio

design and completion.

Award 2021

# Special vaccine drive begins tomorrow

**BANGLADESH** UPDATE 509 New cases in 24hrs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

government will launch a The countrywide special campaign up to ward level tomorrow to inoculate around three crore people with Covid-19 vaccines.

"We have planned to continue the special campaign initially throughJanuary," Prof Abul Bashar Mohammad Khurshid Alam, director general of the Directorate General of Health Services, told The Daily Star yesterday.

The development comes at a time when the transmission of novel coronavirus is on the rise and seven cases of Omicron variant has been logged.

Earlier in the day, Dr Shamsul Haque, line director of DGHS and also the head of the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI), said the campaign will be held in each EPI centre across the country.

The government on December 28 introduced booster doses of Covid-19 vaccine in the country

of the country's population against the

target of 80 percent SEVEN MORE DIE

Yesterday, the DGHS reported seven more deaths from Covid-19 in 24 hours preceding 8:00am, up from one the previous day.

With this, the total number of Covid deaths in the country rose to 28,070. The death rate stands at 1.77 percent.

At least 509 new infections were recorded during the 24-hour period, taking the total number of confirmed coronavirus cases to 15,85,027, said a DGHS press release.

Against a total of 22,667 tests, the positivity rate was 2.25 percent. The overall positivity rate stood at 13.82 percent.

At least 395 Covid patients recovered during the same period. With this, the total number of recoveries reached 15,48,811 and the recovery rate was 97.72 percent.

Of the seven dead, four were males and three females. One of them was aged between 41 and 50, and two each were between 51 and 60, between 61 It has so far inoculated 29.15 percent and 70, and between 71 and 80, added the release.



Officials at an event on Eskayef launching the world's first generic version of Nirmatrelvir, co-packaged with Ritonavir, at its Banani office yesterday evening. PHOTO: COLLECTED

## Eskayef rolls out Pfizer's oral drug

FROM PAGE 1

Paxlovid is a combination of two drugs, one called nirmatrelvir that was designed to interfere with an enzyme the coronavirus uses to make copies of itself. The other drug, ritonavir, is an antiviral that slows down the body's metabolism of the other medication.

Pfizer said its antiviral pill was found to reduce the risk of hospitalisation and death by 88 percent when given to unvaccinated people at high risk of severe Covid within five days of the onset of symptoms.

Its laboratory studies indicated that Paxlovid is likely to work against the Omicron variant, which is tearing through the globe at present.

This is the second oral anti-Covid drug rolled out by Eskayef, which last

Paxovir would be manufactured at Eskayef's state-of-the-art plant approved by the UK's Medicine and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency and Australia's Therapeutic Goods Administration and has the EU's Goods Manufacturing Practice certification.

"Ensuring every possible treatment option against Covid-19 is core to our purpose of serving humanity during this darkest era of the century," she said.

Last year, Eskayef was among the first drug makers in the world to roll out antiviral remdesivir, a drug that had generated intense interest as a treatment for Covid-19.

The Transcom Group subsidiary, which exports to 65 countries, had

15,48,811

Recoveries

An inside view of "The Statesman", a project by architectural firm Studio MorphoGenesis Ltd. The firm has won the prestigious ARCASIA Award-2021 for the work in the capital's Gulshan. PHOTO: COLLECTED

# 2 die as cop ploughs bus thru crowd

#### FROM PAGE 1

they are supposed to get the vehicles towed, said multiple traffic police officers.

Paltan police detained Emadul after the incident.

This correspondent talked to over two dozen individuals present at the time on the road, one of the most crowded in the capital. All of them gave similar accounts of the event.

They said the police officer in uniform stopped a bus of Sraban Transport near Kaptan Bazar Complex and forced the driver to get off the vehicle. There was no passenger on the vehicle at the time.

They added that the officer said he was going to drive the bus to Sergeant Ahad Police Box. However, several policemen of the facility The Daily star had contacted said they would not comment on the matter.

Abdul Ahad, deputy commissioner at Motijheel Division of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said a case was being filed against the errant officer.

Before the incident, the actual driver Zahidul Islam told reporters. of the vehicle caused an accident in assistant fled the scene abandoning the vehicle.

ASI Emadul tried to drive the bus to a safer place, but he lost control of the vehicle, the DC added.

One of the victims, Shukkur country two and a half months ago after living in the USA for 34 years. He was a US citizen, grieving family members said.

He came to the capital from his home in Narayanganj yesterday morning, the victim's elder brother Golam Mostafa told reporters.

Shukkur was pronounced dead when taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

The other victim, Raisul Kabir Tusher, 35, died at the hospital around accessories company, his colleague vehicle."

Tusher was returning to his office the area, injuring a policeman, the DC in Paltan from Sadarghat when he was said, adding that the driver and his crushed by the vehicle, Zahidul added. He was a resident of Dakkhin Jurain.

> Sixty-year-old Ramzan Ali, a rickshaw puller, said he was injured and his rickshaw was badly damaged.

He was seen standing for over an Mahmud, 58, came back to the hour with his broken rickshaw in front of Sergeant Ahad Police Box, which is quite close to where the incident took place.

He said he demanded compensation, but no one responded to him.

The other injured are Anwar Hossain, 33, and Abdur Rashid, 65.

An officer-in-charge of a police station in the capital, requesting anonymity, said, "The rule is that police officers will call for a tow truck and tow the vehicle to a safer place. 5:30pm. He was an employee of Even if an officer has a driving licence, Dream Plus International, a garments they are not allowed to drive a seized

#### month also received a commendation award from the Institute of Architects, Bangladesh for the same project. The design team for The Statesman, a state-of-the-art project, was led by architects Shahla Karim Kabir and Suvro Sovon Chowdhury.

The team also included architects Saiqa Iqbal Meghna, Minhaz bin Gaffar, Shahriar Mannan and Sumaya Chowdhury.

The ARCASIA, a platform of architects, serves to connect various architectural institutes of its member countries, including China, Japan, India, South Korea, Singapore, Thailand, and acts as an extension of their regional programme and relations.

The Statesman was designed with the objective to break the norms in the typology of residential apartment buildings in Bangladesh, Studio MorphoGenesis said in a release.

Another Bangladeshi project named Sabuj Pata was also awarded with honorary mention in the category of "Single Family Residential Projects" at the event.

### Hasan Foez Siddique

### FROM PAGE 1

CJ Hasan Foez Siddique will retire on September 25, 2023.

Contacted, Law Minister Anisul Huq said he hoped the "newly appointed chief justice would establish justice".

"I am a representative of the people and therefore I expect the chief justice to ensure justice for the people," he told The Daily Star.

Earlier on the day, the law minister told the media that there was nothing in the name of supersession of judge as there was no law in this regard.

Justice Hasan Foez Siddique was a member of the seven-member bench of the Appellate Division that scrapped the controversial 16th amendment to the constitution that had empowered the parliament to remove SC judges for incapacity or misconduct. Besides, he delivered judgements in several important cases including that of the tenure of life imprisonment. Justice Hasan Foez Siddique got enrolled as an advocate of the District Court, the High Court Division and the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court on August 21, 1981, on September 4, 1983, and on May 27, 1999, respectively. He previously served Khulna City Corporation, Kushtia municipality, and Jalalabad Gas Transmission Company as legal adviser. He was also the chief law adviser of the home ministry

major reasons behind the successful outcome of the exams **OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE** This year, 17,92,312 students took the

### Stellar results on curtailed syllabus SSC RESULT YEAR WISE Board, said shortened syllabuses and fewer number of subjects were

Total students Pass Year appeared rate 2021 17,92,312 94.08 all boards in terms of pass rate, while Dhaka and Rajshahi boards were toppers in terms of GPA-5 achievers. GIRLS LEAD AGAIN

Once again, the girls outshone the boys in both passing and getting GPA-5.

month brought out the antiviral pill Molnupiravir developed by Merck.

Paxlovid though appears to be substantially more effective than molupiravir, which reduced the risk of hospitalisation and death for highrisk patients by 30 percent.

"When the entire world is waiting for an oral anti-Covid medicine with a higher success rate, we are pleased to launch Paxovir as the world's first generic Nirmatrelvir and Ritonavir combination for the people of Bangladesh and across the world," said Simeen Rahman, managing director and chief executive officer of Eskavef Pharmaceuticals.

Eskayef got the formulation for the paxlovid from Medicines Patent Pool, a United Nations-backed non-profit that works to make medical treatment and technologies globally accessible.

Following concerns that poor countries could be shut out of access to the medicine, much as they have been for vaccines, Pfizer in November granted a royalty-free licence for the pill to Medicines Patent Pool

The Medicines Patent Pool has deep experience in working with a network of global drugmakers that can meet high-quality standards, including those required for the World Health Organisation prequalification.

The deal allows the drug to be made and sold cheaply in 95 developing nations, with no fee required from the sublicensing company.

shipped its version of remdesivir called Remivir to 43 countries.

"This promising new treatment option is definitely a significant step in fighting the battle against Covid-19," she added.

Health officials and doctors welcomed the launch of Paxovir as it would ease the burden on hospitals in Bangladesh as Omicron looms.

"This is good news -- we have been waiting for a new antiviral drug that is effective for a long time," said ABM Abdullah, noted medicine specialist and personal physician of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

He suggested that the price of the medicine should be affordable and accessible in remote parts of the country so that all can access the pill.

"It is a great success of the country's pharmaceuticals industry," said Nazmul Islam, director of Communicable Diseases Control at the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

The oral medicine was badly needed for Bangladesh, said Robed Amin, spokesperson of DGHS.

Paxovir will strengthen the ongoing battle against Covid, said Faruk Ahmed, director of Sheikh Russel Gastro Liver Institute and Hospital.

Meanwhile, the DGDA yesterday issued emergency usage authorisation for the same drug to Beximco Pharmaceuticals.

C exams between November 14 30, after a nine-month-long delay due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

FROM PAGE 1

Of them, 94.08 percent passed, which is significantly higher than last year's 83.75 percent, while 1,63,840 students got GPA-5 -- much higher than last year's 1,23,497.

Taking into account the Dakhil exams under the madrasa board and SSC vocational tests under the technical board, the combined pass rate was 93.58 -- a big jump from last year's 82.87.

According to Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics, the pass rate in SSC exams this year was the highest since 1991. In 2014, it crossed 90 percent for the first time after that.

Due to the pandemic, examinees sat for tests in only three optional subjects, apart from compulsory subjects like Bangla, English and with shortened Mathematics, syllabuses. The total marks for the exams were also lessened.

The results of the three optional subjects and the GPAs of the students' previous public examinations, including Junior School Certificate, were taken into consideration while preparing the final results.

FROM PAGE 1

2020	16,31,308	83./3
2019	16,94,652	82.80
2018	16,24,423	79.40
2017	14,22, 379	81.21
2016	13,00, 284	88.70
2015	11,80,683	86.72
2014	10,87,870	92.67
2013	9,93,313	89.72
2012	10,48,144	86.32
2011	9,86,650	82.16

Professor Gazi Hasan Kamal said that as subjects were fewer, syllabuses shortened, and schools also closed for a long period, examinees had enough time to prepare themselves.

During the exams, they also had more choices in terms of questions to answer, which was another reason for the good results.

Kamal added that usually English and mathematics are the two vital subjects to determine the pass rate and the number of GPA-5 achievers. "But this year, exams were not held on these subjects and that's why we are seeing positive results."

took first and second place among exams, of whom 398 passed.

#### They look the lead in terms of pass rate for the fifth year in a row with 94.88 -- 1.63 percentage points higher than that of boys

As GPA-5 achievers, the number of girls was 92,915, surpassing the number of boys -- 70,925 -- for the fourth consecutive year.

Around educational 5,494 institutions saw a 100 percent pass rate this year, against 3,032 in 2020. Around 18 institutions had zero percent pass rate, while last year the number was 104.

Dipu Moni said that government will look into the matter of zero percent pass rates. "We don't want any institution to have no student passing."

This year, 93.22 percent of some 2.92 lakh Dakhil examinees under the madrasa board passed, while last year it was 83.75 percent.

Meanwhile, 88.49 percent of some 1.56 lakh candidates of SSC (vocational) and Dakhil (vocational) exams passed. Last year, the rate was 72.7 percent.

A total of 14,313 madrasa students and 5,178 technical students got GPA-5 this year.

In nine foreign exam centres, The Mymensigh and Sylhet boards 416 Bangladeshi students sat for the

Besides, he worked as an additional attornev general for Bangladesh.

He got elevated as a judge of the High Court Division in 2001.

He was one of the 10 judges who had been dropped from confirmation as regular High Court judges by the BNP-led four-party alliance government that was in power between 2001 and 2006.

The judges were reappointed as HC judges on March 24, 2009, in line with an Appellate Division verdict.

He became a judge of the Appellate Division on March 31, 2013.

He has been acting as the chairman of Bangladesh Judicial Service Commission since April 30, 2015.

Justice Hasan Foez Siddique participated in the conference of South Asian Judges Regional Forum on Economic and Financial Crime held in Sri Lanka in 2011; South Asian Conference on Environmental Justice in Pakistan in 2012; International Conference on Environment held in New Delhi, India in 2015; and 17th International Conference of Chief Justices of the World held in Lucknow, India in 2016, sources at the Supreme Court said.

Meanwhile, outgoing chief justice Syed Mahmud Hossain yesterday said he wanted to spend a quiet retirement.

"I want to spend a quiet retirement away from crowds and I will not give any interview with any media," he said after inaugurating Liberation War Corner on the ground floor of the main building of the Supreme Court.

Judges of the Appellate Division and High Court Division were present there.

## Back on track from

#### FROM PAGE 1

"Some people might have bounced past the poverty line as economic activities are getting back to normal. But unfortunately, the government has not recognised the new poor in the country due to the pandemic. If you don't acknowledge the reality, then how do you take measures to solve the problem?"

Stimulus is useful but not a solution, which was quite evident in the disparity of distribution and dogged with some irregularities, he said

"We are yet to be free from the pandemic," he said, adding that both health and education are equally important for bringing the economy back on track.

Furthermore, how fast the governments around the world can contain the spread of Omicron, the most virulent variant of the coronavirus yet that is running amok

all over, would also determine how the economy fares in 2022.

Exports, one of the pillars of the economy, might take a hit once again. Remittance, another pillar of the economy that has already started decelerating, would be impacted, too, if Omicron enforces the lockdowns seen in the earlier parts of the pandemic.

Growth is expected to pick up to 6.6 percent in fiscal 2021-22 as the impact of the pandemic abates and policies remain accommodative, the IMF report said.

The government projected the GDP growth in fiscal 2021-22 to be 7.2 percent, which is 1.7 percentage higher than in fiscal 2020-21.

The IMF projected growth in fiscal 2022-23 to be 7.1 percent considering an improved external environment and progress of the domestic vaccination programme.

In France, wearing masks outdoors will be compulsory while walking the streets of Paris from today for everyone over the age of 11. Nightclubs have been closed until well into January.

In Spain, public festivities have been cancelled across most regions and in the biggest cities except Madrid, where a stripped-down gathering is scheduled with the crowd limited to 7,000 people compared to 18,000 in 2019 before the pandemic swept Europe

Britain's National Yesterday, Health Service announced that it would start opening temporary field hospitals to contain a possible overspill of inpatients in England, where the government stopped short of mandating curbs on New Year festivities.

"Given the high level of COVID-19 infections and increasing hospital admissions, the NHS is now on a war footing," National Medical Director

Stephen Powis said.

Indonesia, which has reported more than 4.2 million confirmed cases, warned that foreign travellers may be deported from the resort island of Bali if they are caught violating Covid health rules during

"Get ready to be kicked out," Bali immigration office head Jamaruli Manihuruk told AFP. Bali has barred carnivals, fireworks and gatherings of more than 50 people over the Christmas and New Year period.

Mexico City has also cancelled its massive New Year's Eve celebrations as a preventative measure after a rise in Covid cases.

In Saudi Arabia, authorities reimposed social distancing measures at the Grand Mosque in the Muslim holy city of Mecca, after recording the highest number of infections in months.

"I am highly concerned that Omicron, being more transmissible,

World braces for Omicron tsunami circulating at the same time as Delta, is leading to a tsunami of cases," said WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

"This is and will continue to put immense pressure on exhausted health workers, and health systems on the brink of collapse.

Omicron has already started to overwhelm some hospitals in the United States, the hardest-hit country, where the seven-day average of new cases has hit 265,427, according to a Johns Hopkins University tracker.

Harvard epidemiologist and immunologist Michael Mina tweeted that the count was likely just the "tip of the iceberg" with the true number likely far higher because of a shortage of tests

In China, residents in the city of Xi'an, where 13 million people are under lockdown, said they were struggling to find enough food, despite Beijing insisting that there were adequate supplies.

New Year.