

Justice Hasan Foez Siddique sworn in as CJ

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hasan Foez Siddique was sworn in as the 23rd chief justice of Bangladesh yesterday.



President M Abdul Hamid administered the oath at the Darbar Hall of the Bangabhaban at 4:00pm.

According to Md Joynal Abedin, press secretary to the president, the ceremony was attended by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Law Minister Anisul Haq, Agriculture Minister Dr Abdur Razzaque, Education Minister Dr Dipu Moni, outgoing chief justice Syed Mahmud Hossain, judges of the Appellate Division -- Justice Md Nuruzzaman and Justice Obaidul Hassan -- Attorney General AM Amin Uddin, and heads of the three forces among others.

He said the ceremony, conducted by Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam, was held on a limited scale due to the ongoing pandemic.



New Year's Eve fireworks light up the sky over iconic Harbour Bridge and Opera House, left, in Sydney today.

PHOTO: AFP

Three more cases of Omicron infections found

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three more cases of Omicron variant of coronavirus have been detected as the new infections continued to rise for the sixth day yesterday.

With this, the number of confirmed Omicron cases in Bangladesh rose to 10, according to the Global Initiative on Sharing All Influenza Data (GISAI) -- a Germany-based web database.

The new patients with Omicron include two females aged 49 and 65 and a male who is 65, it said. All of them are from Dhaka, according to the data submitted by the Institute for Developing Science and Health Initiatives (ideSHI) in Dhaka.

ideSHI collected swabs from those patients on Monday through active surveillance.

The country's first two Omicron cases were reported on December 9.

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Assistant Sub-Inspector Emadul Haque, who took the steering of a bus and killed two men after ploughing through a crowd, had physically assaulted the driver and helper of the vehicle.

Emadul of Sergeant Ahad Police Box was taken into a two-day remand yesterday in a case, filed by a deceased's father, under the Road Transport Act with Paltan Police Station.

Speaking to The Daily Star yesterday, Ariful Islam Babu, helper of the Sraban Transport bus, said that the vehicle first "slightly touched" a plainclothes man walking down the ramp of Hanif Flyover.

"The man then got onto the bus and introduced himself as a police officer. He started beating me and the driver, alleging that the bus was being driven roughly... Another police officer in uniform [Emadul], who was nearby, came

COP PLOUGHING THROUGH CROWD

ASI 'assaulted' bus driver, helper before taking wheel

to the spot and started beating us too.

"He told the driver to get off and said the bus was seized and would be taken to Paltan Police Station," Ariful said, adding that Emadul then started driving the empty bus.

Abdul Ahad, deputy commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police's Motijheel Division, however, gave a different version. He claimed that the driver and the helper fled the scene, abandoning the bus, and Emadul had to drive the bus as it was causing traffic congestion.

Although the area is under the jurisdiction of DMP's Wari Division, ASI Emadul of Paltan police seized the bus without informing the police station concerned.

Speaking to this paper, many traffic police officers said police officials are not supposed to drive seized vehicles and are instead supposed to get them towed.

Kabir Hossain Howlader, officer-in-charge of Wari Police Station, said the place of occurrence came under their jurisdiction but no one informed them about incident at the time.

"After two people were killed, officials from Paltan Police Station informed us that one policeman was injured in an accident before the bus ploughed through a crowd," he said, adding that no complaint was lodged.

Police said the injured officer took treatment at Sir Salimullah Medical College Hospital.

They claimed Emadul started working in the force as a constable. At that time, he used to drive vehicles of senior police officers. Since then, he had a driving license. He was later promoted to ASI.

Thursday's fatal incident killed two men, including a US expat, and injured at least three others.

A stroll on her dream

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Commissioner Kazi Nahid Rasul accompanied them.

The Tk 30,193-crore structure, which would be the country's largest bridge, is expected to be opened to traffic in June this year.

The double-deck bridge -- road on the upper deck and railway on the lower deck -- will connect 21 south-western districts with Dhaka directly. It is expected to boost the country's gross domestic product by 1.2 percent.

Earlier in October 2018, the PM had visited the project site to see the progress of the fast-track project and inaugurate the construction work of its

rail link project.

Approved in August 2007, the project faced a major setback after the World Bank had cancelled its financing in June 2012.

The following month, Hasina made a bold decision to go ahead with the project with the country's own funds.

The project faced some other difficulties including complexities over design, strong currents in the Padma and Covid-19 pandemic.

But the work progressed overcoming those problems. The authorities reported 95.25 percent progress in the physical work of the main bridge project till November last.

Hurdles past

FROM PAGE 1

another six crore doses of Sinopharm in August.

Besides, the country got around one crore doses of different brands from Covax in phases.

Apart from this, the government started administering Pfizer vaccines, received as donation under Covax arrangements, mostly among students and Middle East-bound migrant workers.

As the supply became smooth, the campaign got some momentum -- the government reduced the age bar from 55 years to 40 and ensured better management. Soon the age bar was lowered from

40 to 18 years in efforts to boost the vaccination rate and open the long-closed education institutions.

To ramp up vaccination, the government also launched several special drives to bring more people under the coverage, especially for people living in rural areas with limited access to online registration. The registration through Surokha app started on January 26.

There were some complaints of irregularities and sufferings in special drives. But apart from that, regular vaccination campaigns through over 1,000 centres across the country were generally

trouble-free.

Experts said tireless efforts from health professionals and a strong setup of Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI) helped a better vaccine management despite the ill-equipped public health facilities overburdened with influx of Covid-19 patients.

Bangladesh, however, failed to make any considerable progress in vaccine production.

The government struck a trilateral agreement for bottling, labelling and dispensing China's Sinopharm vaccine in August. Under the deal, Bangladesh's Incepta

Vaccines Ltd is expected to supply five million doses of Covid vaccines a month from its plant in Savar, but the production is yet to start.

For the last few months, the country has seen a gradual decline in Covid deaths and infections after the Delta variant, detected in May, ravaged the country in June and July.

But the detection of the Omicron variant in late November raised alarm bells. The World Health Organisation has labelled Omicron as a variant of concern.

Experts say vaccination, which curbs hospitalisation and deaths, is key to

tackle coronavirus, along with maintaining health guidelines.

Prof Be-Nazir Ahmed, a public health expert and former director of DGHS, said Bangladesh started well in vaccination but slipped due to dependency on a single source of vaccine.

"But Bangladesh recovered from that slip very well in managing vaccines and in inoculation. But still the vaccination coverage is not at the expected level, especially when we are a champion in vaccinating people."

Dr Shah Ali Akbar Ashrafi, chief of health Information Unit of DGHS, said it was not easy to work with a completely digital vaccine management system as adult education was a challenging process. "We needed to teach statisticians from 492 upazila health complexes and 64 district offices quickly. We needed to hire data assistants right away. We used the online platform Zoom to train many healthcare workers in Surokha. "M a n a g e m e n t Information System had to go through a critical period at the start. All of the officers, data assistants, and support staff were working round the clock to resolve the issues."

Happy New Year

FROM PAGE 1

provide in-depth coverage of the human stories that so inspiringly define the resilience of our people. We hope to continue our elaborate coverage of the environment and basic rights of the people and fight as valiantly as possible for the rights of a free media while upholding its highest traditions of ethics and quality journalism.

As is evident from today's issue we come before you with a dynamic, compelling, attractive layout of the paper with each page bearing its own identity. In the new year we will strive to project Bangladesh's success stories more elaborately while bringing out the innovations and creativity that mark the features

of the new Bangladesh that we are building with special focus on the young "Change makers".

As we said before, while our development curve is shooting up, our democracy curve is following an opposite trajectory. It does not have to be so and that is what we will continue to emphasise.

We promise our readers we will not shy away from speaking truth to power and will uphold "Your Right to Know" with everything we do. We pledge to be a vigorous partner in the country's march forward with a higher level of ethical and courageous journalism.

Thank you all for being with us through our struggles and successes.

- Editor and Publisher

Frightening all year round

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it said. In 2020, the number of rape was 1,627. A total of 1,426 children were raped or sexually assaulted last year, found the body and said 12 women died by suicide after being sexually harassed.

In addition, 372 women

were killed in incidences of domestic violence, while 142 women died by suicide due to domestic violence.

Besides, at least 18 Bangladeshi citizens were killed along the India-Bangladesh border. Sixteen of them were killed by Indian Border Security Force.