



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her sister Sheikh Rehana pose for a photo on the under-construction Padma Bridge yesterday morning. They took a stroll on the bridge while visiting the project site to see the progress of the work, which is nearing completion.

PHOTO: FACEBOOK PAGE OF SAJEEB WAZED

HURDLES PAST

Now target double-dose vaccine for all by June

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Amid the Covid-19 pandemic raging throughout the best part of 2021, Bangladesh had to tackle myriad challenges to ensure vaccines for its citizens.

So far, over half the population received the first dose, and the government aims to administer a double dose for all eligible persons by June and a booster dose by the end of this year.

Government officials say they have now overcome the initial challenges, including smooth vaccine supply.

The government is also working to set up a vaccine plant to cut dependency on other countries, although progress has been slow.

"We are hopeful about setting up a vaccine plant next year for our own vaccine production," Health Minister Zahid Maleque told The Daily Star recently.

He said initially there were challenges but health workers did a fantastic job inoculating around eight crore people with the first

dose.

Alongside jabbing the adults, the government is now vaccinating children aged 12 and above, and has launched a booster dose campaign on a limited scale.

The booster dose coverage will soon be widened -- targeting vulnerable groups like the elderly and frontline workers, including medical professionals.

Currently, around 13 lakh doses are being

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administered every day, thanks to the supply from China's Sinopharm and other sources.

But it was not as smooth when the mass inoculation was launched on February 7 last year mainly due to "vaccine nationalism", misinformation and skepticism.

The government began the

campaign with contract for three crore doses of AstraZeneca vaccines procured from Serum Institute of India, and commitments of 6.8 crore doses from Covax, a global initiative, by 2021.

But the campaign had to be postponed for around a month due to a sudden suspension of vaccine supply from Serum.

Serum stopped supply of the purchased vaccine after sending only 70 lakh doses in two consignments following the Indian government's embargo on export in April 2021.

Covax's pledge to supply vaccines to low-income countries also suffered a blow due to vaccine nationalism, a popular phrase used during the pandemic as a reference to wealthy governments signing agreements with manufacturers to secure supply for their own populations.

The Serum suspension forced the government to explore other sources. The campaign resumed after 1.5 crore doses of Sinopharm vaccine were purchased from China in June. The government procured

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VACCINATION BEGINS

PILOT:

January 28, 2021

MASS CAMPAIGN:

Feb 7, 2021



INOCULATED

First dose **7,37,86,623**

Second dose **5,18,01,052**

REGISTRATION TREND

Aug - 2.2 crore Sept - 1.1 crore Oct - 97 lakh

Nov - 1.3 crore Dec - 45 lakh

DOSES RECEIVED

ASTRAZENECA
2.81 crore

SINOPHARM
9.28 crore

PFIZER
1.14 crore

MODERNA
79 lakh

SINOVAC
88 lakh

TOTAL

14.91 crore

Some semblance of normalcy

Now Omicron fear looms

EDUCATION
2021

"We need data on the learning loss and remaining challenges. Then we will make plans to mitigate those. To implement the plans, we need adequate investment."

RASHEDA K CHOUDHURY,
executive director of
CAMPE

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After a difficult 2020, the county's education sector returned to some degree of normalcy last year.

For students, it had been a tough year, as they could not return to their classrooms until September because of Covid restrictions that began way back in March, 2020.

Students in general suffered learning loss and those lacking access to digital devices were deprived of remote learning.

However, the reopening of classrooms on a limited scale in September was a relief. But the emergence of the Omicron variant of the coronavirus has put a fully-

fledged reopening of schools into uncertainty.

"Every sector was affected by the pandemic. Education probably is the worst-affected sector because of the prolonged closure," eminent educationist Rashed K Choudhury told The Daily Star.

Girl students suffered the most. Many girls dropped out and were married off, she said.

A study by Power and Participation Research Centre and Brac Institute of Governance and Development on October 19 said 3.96 million primary and 3.9 million secondary students were at the risk of learning loss.

A report published in December

last year by the World Bank, Unesco and Unicef projected the impacts of the pandemic-related school closure, saying a generation of students risks losing \$17 trillion in lifetime earnings in present value, or about 14 percent of the global GDP.

During the 18 months of closure, many schools, especially the privately run ones in cities and urban areas quickly adapted to online education. But school in rural areas found it difficult.

CHANGES IN EXAM SYSTEM

The SSC and HSC exams were held on a curtailed syllabus after a nine-month delay. The SSC exams

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The Daily Star

WISHES ITS
VALUED
READERS,
PATRONS,
ADVERTISERS
AND WELL-
WISHERS
A VERY
HAPPY
2022

Happy New Year

The Daily Star wishes its readers, patrons, advertisers and well-wishers a very Happy New Year. We wish prosperity and happiness for each and every one of our readers and citizens.

We begin the new year as we began the last with the pandemic raising its ugly head and once again upsetting our lives and our livelihoods. But it is a far more experienced and confident Bangladesh that will face the new realities. From all points of view we have handled the Covid challenges better than we originally thought ourselves capable of doing. Compared to many countries, some far more resourceful than ourselves, we have done better both in terms of providing health services to the people and salvaging the economy.

As a newspaper we also faced tremendous difficulties both in terms of losing circulation and business. But as are the country and its people, so are we better prepared to face the future and serve our readers better.

In 2022, we will strive to publish more investigative stories, stories of struggles and strife of our readers and non-readers and

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A stroll on her dream coming true

Hasina visits
Padma Bridge

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday visited the under-construction Padma Bridge to see the progress of the work.

The long-cherished project, financed entirely from the nation's own resources, is finally nearing completion to connect the capital to the southern and western parts of the country.

Accompanied by her sister Sheikh Rehana, the PM reached the construction site around 7:20am on a sudden visit. They had tea at a cottage designated to the PM at the Mawa end of the bridge.

The two sisters got off a car on the bridge at the Mawa end. They took a stroll soaking in the beauty of the mighty Padma on the foggy winter morning.

They walked a distance of about two kilometres (from pier no-7 to 18), a project official said wishing not to be named.

The siblings crossed the remainder of the 6.15km bridge on car and had their breakfast at another cottage at the Janjira end before returning to the capital using the bridge around 10:00am, the official added.

Cabinet Secretary
Khandker Anwarul Islam
and Munshiganj Deputy

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