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It serves a purpose
Shajahan Khan on extrajudicial killing



In loving memory
Remembering Kauser Ahmed Chaudhury



'That's wonderful'
Trump praises 'genius' Putin on Ukraine move



Bancassurance roll out
Govt plans insurance coverage through banks

Bedlam over jabs

MOUDUD AHMED SUJAN

The Covid-19 vaccination centres are a hub of chaos now after the government scrapped the mandatory registration for the jab from February 16 and with the window to get the first dose slamming shut on February 26.

"Usually, we vaccinate around 1,500 people every day. But this number has reached around 4,000 in the past few days," said Ayesha Akter, assistant director at 250-Bed TB Hospital in Dhaka's Agargaon.

It is mainly because of the scrapping of registration as well as people's awareness, she said.

On February 16, about 16 lakhs in Bangladesh got their first jabs, according to data from the Directorate General of Health Services. The previous day, only 2.78 lakh took the dose.

"We have assigned additional staffers as we are struggling to finish daily vaccination by 2 pm."

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Hundreds of people, most of whom are garment workers, jostle to get into Savar's Health Management Institute to receive the Covid-19 vaccine shot yesterday afternoon. The rush to get vaccinated increased following the recent decisions by the government to scrap mandatory vaccine registration and to close administration of the first dose on February 26.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

PENSION FOR ALL

Roll-out in a year

Experts doubt if it's possible in such a short time

All citizens, including expatriates, aged 18-50 will be eligible for enrolment in the scheme

Beneficiaries will start to get pension at 61

Initially, employees of govt and autonomous bodies will be out of the scheme

A beneficiary will be eligible for pension after paying instalments for at least 10 consecutive years

A beneficiary after depositing Tk 1,000 in monthly instalment from the age of 18 till 60 will start to get monthly pension of Tk 64,776 at the age of 61

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and JAMIL MAHMUD

The long-awaited universal pension scheme, one of the pledges of the ruling party's 2008 election manifesto, is expected to take off within a year.

"We are expecting that the [scheme's] implementation will start within six months to a year," said Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal while presenting an outline of the scheme at a virtual press conference yesterday.

Any citizen, including expatriate Bangladeshis, aged between 18 and 50 can sign up for the scheme. A beneficiary can receive a

monthly pension of Tk 64,776 after the age of 60 and start to contribute towards the scheme with a monthly instalment of Tk 1,000 from the age of 18.

Experts, however, are sceptical that the scheme would be rolled out in a year.

"It took the government several years to prepare the strategic paper for the universal pension scheme," Zahid Hussain, a former lead economist of the World Bank's Dhaka office, told The Daily Star.

Considering past experiences, it will be difficult for the government to start implementing the scheme within a year by formulating a law and establishing the universal

pension authority, he said.

"Different stakeholders are involved in the process. So, it will be wise to formulate the law after taking opinions from all stakeholders," Hussain added.

While presenting the outline of the scheme, Kamal said everything will be specified in the relevant law, which will be formulated soon incorporating Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's directives.

Hasina has instructed the finance division to enact the law on an urgent basis, according to ministry officials.

Opinions from all stakeholders will be solicited while preparing the

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Bribery hurts the image of govt officials

Says court while jailing Mizanur, Basir for graft

CHAITANYA CHANDRA HALDER and EMRUL HASAN BAPPI

Being senior "government officials", Khandaker Enamul Basir and Mizanur Rahman took and gave bribes, causing serious damage to the image of public servants, a Dhaka court said yesterday while delivering the verdict in a graft case against the duo.

Judge Shaikh Nazmul Alam of the Special Judge's Court-4 of Dhaka made the observation in the judgement of the case against Basir, suspended director of the Anti-Corruption Commission, and Mizanur, suspended deputy inspector general of police.

The court sentenced

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BANGLADESH RAILWAY

Losses and poor show continue

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Bangladesh Railway continues to make huge losses from its operations allegedly due to poor services, corruption, and a lack of proper management of assets.

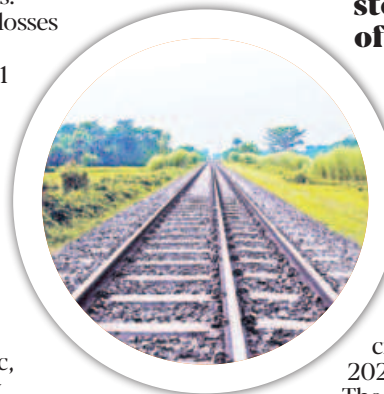
The Tk 1,384 crore losses the state-run agency posted for the 2020-21 fiscal year was less than losses incurred in the previous fiscal, but the amount is more than the Tk 1,202.49 crore cost of the ongoing Faridpur-Magura broad gauge rail line project.

Amid the pandemic, the number of railway passengers decreased by 41.44 percent in the last fiscal year compared to the previous FY. However, the amount of goods carried by freight trains rose by 71.39 percent, shows a railways ministry document.

Banking on the income from freight



"It would be difficult to cut the railway's loss unless corruption and irregularities are stopped, proper use of assets is ensured, and passenger services are improved."



trains, the BR managed to reduce losses by Tk 702.70 crore in 2020-2021 from the Tk 2,086.70 crore it incurred in 2019-2020.

The BR continued the poor show despite the government providing it with increased funding both for operation and development budgets.

The railway now operates 394 passenger and freight trains on its 3,093km network across the country.

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Joy gives way to horror

Five killed in crash on way back from friend's wedding ceremony

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

Five friends were in a cheerful mood as they attended a friend's wedding ceremony, but they could not return home. Their lives were cut short by a road accident in Chandpur early yesterday.

Citing locals and family members, police said they went to Cumilla city to join the wedding programme on Tuesday night. The accident took place when they were going to another friend's house by a car in Cumilla's Monohorganj upazila after the event.

The victims are Shahparan Tushar, 22, Shakil Hossain, 26, Rezaul Karim Shanto, 24, Nayan, 25, and Sagar Hossain, 24, who was driving the car.

Tushar, Shakil and Rezaul were from different villages of Cumilla's Monohorganj, while Nayan was from Jashore and Sagar from Gazipur.

The five were going to Monohorganj for staying the night at Tushar's house. When the vehicle reached Purbo Noreh of Chandpur's Shahrasti upazila, the driver lost control due to over speeding and fell into a roadside pond around 12:50am, said Sahidur Rahman, sub-inspector of Shahrasti Police Station.

"The vehicle sank immediately. As all the doors

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Bangladesh batters Mehedi Hasan Miraz, left, and Afif Hossain are overjoyed after their unbroken 174-run stand for the seventh wicket led the hosts to an unlikely win in the first ODI against Afghanistan at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Afif, Mehedi script epic fightback

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Afif Hossain and Mehedi Hasan Miraz forged a record unbeaten 174-run partnership for the seventh wicket as Bangladesh took a 1-0 lead against Afghanistan in the three-match ODI series with a four-wicket victory at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday.

Chasing a middling target of 216, the home side looked dead and buried at 45 for six, thanks to a four-wicket burst from young pacer Fazalhaq Farooqi.

With only the tail to come, Afif (93 not out) and Miraz (81 not out) stitched together an epic partnership to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat.