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MEASLES VACCINATION Special drive in four cities from Apr 12

Emergency campaign
underway in 30 upazilas

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The special measles vaccination campaign will be launched in four city corporations on April 12, while the drive in the remaining districts and upazilas will begin on May 3, said Health Minister Sardar Md Sakhawat Hossain.

The comment came yesterday at the inauguration of the emergency measles and rubella vaccination drive at Nababganj Upazila Health Complex.

The emergency drive kicked off in 30 upazilas across 18 districts where infection rates are relatively high, aiming to bring more than 13 lakh children aged six months to under five years under coverage.

A special vaccination campaign will be carried out in Dhaka North and South City, Barishal and Mymensingh City Corporations from April 12. From May 3, the vaccination campaign will

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Students of Dhaka University's Faculty of Fine Arts are crafting large masks and vibrant folk art for next week's Pahela Baishakh procession, which is central to the celebration of the Bangla New Year. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Bangladesh not bound by any US energy deal

Khalilur says after US envoy meets PM



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has no binding obligation regarding energy imports, Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman said yesterday, dismissing speculation about any secret agreement with the United States.

"There is no secret agreement with the United States; whatever agreements exist have already been made public," Khalilur told reporters at the Secretariat after US Ambassador to Bangladesh Brent T Christensen paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Tarique Rahman at his Cabinet Division office at the Secretariat.

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EC weighing fate of EVMs

1,599 units missing; storage costs continue to mount

AHMED DEEPTO and DIPAN NANDY

The Election Commission is weighing options for the fate of around 1.5 lakh electronic voting machines (EVMs), which are now lying idle amid rising storage costs, missing units, and growing uncertainty over their final disposal.

Election Commissioner Abdur Rahman Masud yesterday said the EC is set to take a decision based on a report from a committee formed with experts from Buet to assess the condition of the machines.

"What we're doing is determining how many EVMs are there, where they are, in what condition and whether they are usable based on expert opinion."

The expert committee will classify the machines into three categories – fully usable, partly usable, and completely unusable – and then submit a comprehensive report to the commission. "Action will be taken based on that report."

Masud added that the issue would be placed before the EC at a meeting to be chaired by CEC AMM Nasir Uddin today.

Insiders said the commission is currently under pressure to settle the future of the machines, which have remained unused. The issue, they said, has remained unresolved even after the current EC dropped plans to use EVMs in the February national election.

Speaking to The Daily Star recently, EC Secretary Akhtar Ahmed said, "These EVMs are lying around, taking up space, and have become a burden for us. Why would we get into more trouble by buying new ones? ... The decision on EVMs is that we will not use them. Full stop."

According to EC sources, among the 1.5 lakh EVMs purchased under a Tk 3,825.34 crore project, there are 148,401 in its inventory, while 1,599 cannot be traced. With each costing around Tk 2.35 lakh, the missing machines are worth about Tk 37.5 crore.

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ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE

Ordinance flawed, there will be a stronger bill

Says law minister in JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Enforced Disappearance Prevention and Redress Ordinance, 2025 will be reintroduced to the parliament as one that is "more contemporary, more welfare-oriented and more effective in ensuring justice", said Law Minister Md Asaduzzaman yesterday.

The bill will be brought later in the session after consultations with stakeholders to ensure that offenders "cannot escape accountability under any circumstances", he said while speaking on a point of order in the parliament, following protests from Jamaat MP Mir Ahmad Bin Qasem.

Ahmad expressed shock that the special parliamentary committee had recommended dropping the ordinance and not ratifying it as a bill.

Fighting back emotion, Ahmad, who himself was a victim of enforced disappearance for about eight years, said he had lived in constant fear of death throughout that time and was now dismayed that the ordinance was being allowed to lapse.

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Global oil shock turning into everything crisis

Rising costs of plastic, rubber, polyester hit Asian markets

CNN ONLINE

One month into the war in Iran, a growing shortage of crude oil is threatening to morph into something worse: a shortage of nearly everything.

The conflict in the Middle East has crimped oil and natural gas flows through the Strait of Hormuz, reducing global supply by about one-fifth. The disruption has not only sent fuel prices soaring, but has squeezed supplies of petrochemicals needed to make everyday items like shoes, clothing and plastic bags.

That strain is now spreading into every corner of the consumer market as prices rise for materials like plastic, rubber and polyester. The impact is so far most evident in Asia, which accounts for more than half of the world's manufacturing and is heavily reliant on imports for oil and other commodities.

In South Korea, where people have been panic-buying trash bags, the government has encouraged event organizers to minimize use of disposable items. Taiwan has started a hotline for manufacturers that have run out of plastic, and its rice farmers told local media they may hike prices because they can't get vacuum-sealed bags.

In Japan, the oil crisis has sparked fears that patients with chronic kidney failure won't be able to get treatment due to a lack of plastic medical tubes used in hemodialysis. Malaysian glove manufacturers say a dearth of a petroleum byproduct needed to make

rubber latex is threatening global supplies of medical gloves.

"This spills into everything very, very quickly: beer, noodles, chips, toys, cosmetics," said Dan Martin, co-head of business intelligence at Dezan Shira & Associates, an advisory firm that helps international businesses expand in Asia.



That's because plastic caps, crates, snack bags and containers are becoming more difficult to procure. Petroleum derivatives are also needed to make adhesives for footwear and furniture, industrial lubricants for machinery and solvents for paints and cleaning processes, Martin added.

"It's very fast transmission from oil and shipping disruption into petrochemicals and consumer goods," he said.

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Govt to act on pay scale after review by committee

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will take the next steps on implementing the new pay structure for its employees based on the recommendations of a review committee, Prof Rashed Al Mahmud Titumir, PM's finance and planning adviser, said yesterday.

The adviser made the remarks while speaking to reporters at the finance ministry after a meeting between Prime Minister Tarique Rahman and Finance and Planning Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury.

The finance minister met the PM to seek direction on implementing the pay commission's recommendations, according to finance ministry officials.

Besides Titumir, Cabinet Secretary Nasimul Ghani and Finance Secretary Md Khairuzzaman Mozumder were present at the meeting.

The interim government formed a 23-member pay commission, led by former finance secretary Zakir

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House ratifies ordinances on govt job age, conduct

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Parliament yesterday passed two bills ratifying two ordinances – one determining a maximum age limit of 32 years for entry into government service and the other introducing special provisions concerning the conduct and penalties of government employees.

State Minister for Public Administration Abdul Bari placed the bills: the Government Service (Amendment) Bill and the Bill to Fix the Maximum Age Limit for Direct Recruitment in Government and Autonomous, Statutory Authorities, Public Non-Financial Corporations, and Self-Governed Institutions.

Both were passed by voice vote without discussion, as no amendment proposals were raised.

It took about eight minutes for the bills to be passed. During the voice vote, opposition members were not heard saying either "yes" or "no".

The Jatiya Sangsad began passing bills to ratify ordinances from yesterday.

Regarding the two bills, the parliamentary special committee tasked with scrutinising 133 ordinances issued by the interim government recommended that the ordinances be approved exactly as they are. With the passage of the bills, four ordinances have now been ratified.

Through the supplementary agenda, members of parliament were informed about the introduction of the two bills. Standing on a point of order, Opposition Leader Shafiqul Rahman said some bills had been brought under the supplementary agenda.

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Law enforcement and mobile court teams maintained a strong presence at filling stations across Rajshahi city yesterday. Motorcycles and other vehicles queued in an orderly manner to collect petrol, octane, and diesel. The photo was taken at Gul Gafur petrol pump in the city.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

KERANIGANJ FIRE Factory was sealed-off after a previous fire

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The gas lighter manufacturing factory in Keraniganj, where a devastating fire killed at least six people on Saturday, had been operating illegally, police said.

Mohammad Mossaraf Hossain, inspector (investigation) of Keraniganj Police Station, told The Daily Star that the factory was sealed off after catching fire about one and a half years ago.

However, the owners later resumed operations, allegedly with the support of a local influential – Md Iman Ullah, 50.

Police arrested Iman in connection with Saturday's incident. A 10 day remand has been sought, and a hearing on the petition is scheduled for today.

Sub-Inspector Jewel Rana filed a case with South Keraniganj Police Station, accusing factory

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