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Your Right to Know

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CYCLONE-HIT AREAS IN SOUTH

Gone with the storm

With homes, belongings destroyed, they suffer for scanty relief, shortage of food, drinking water



STAR REPORT

Yusuf Hawlader does not know where he will live now as his homestead has been washed away by onrushing water triggered by Cyclone Amphan. "Everything is gone. The cyclone has taken away everything from us," said the 62-year-old farmer while wiping tears off his cheeks.

Yusuf is a resident of Pankhali village in Dacope upazila of Khulna, a district badly hit by the fierce force of nature, which has left a trail of destruction in the country's coastal areas. More than a dozen people have been killed.

Around 250 families, including that of Yusuf, took refuge at Pankhali Cyclone Centre in the upazila, hours before Amphan made landfall on Wednesday with a wind speed of more than 150km per hour.

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Desperate to go to their village home ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr, people rush to board a ferry at Shimulia Ferry Terminal in Munshiganj around 8:00am yesterday, hours after law enforcers allowed home-goers to leave the capital by cars and other light vehicles amid the Covid-19 shutdown. Police earlier had imposed a ban on leaving the city to contain the spread of the virus. *Bottom*, people get on a pick-up on Dhaka-Aricha highway in Manikganj Bus Stand area to travel to southern districts via Paturia.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN, ZAHANGIR SHAH

BANGLADESH UPDATE



1,694

New cases in 24hrs



30,205

Total cases



432

Deaths



6,190

Recoveries



GLOBAL UPDATE



333,489

Deaths



5,128,492

Total cases

Deaths, new cases climb

24 more die; positive cases top 30,000; many still ignore health safety, distancing in city

MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

While the number of Covid-19 positive cases as well as deaths keep rising every day, with Dhaka worst affected, many are still indifferent to maintaining social distancing and health safety guidelines.

Take, for instance, Azmat Bepari, a jaundice patient. Rubbing hands with quicklime, Azmat leant before a quack who poured some water onto his head. And with his bare hands, he gently massaged Azmat's head.

When the quack, Abdul Alim, aged around 60, was showing his "miracle" in treating jaundice patients in the capital's Jatrabari, 20 people had crowded around to be treated in a similar fashion.

Most of them had no masks and had gathered in such a way that it would be hard to imagine that they were in the midst of a pandemic caused by the highly transmissible Covid-19 virus, which has killed over 3.35 lakh people globally in less than five months.

The country yesterday recorded its highest death toll -- 24 -- in a single day. The overall death toll now stands at 432.

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Friend in need is a friend indeed

Little-known foundation protects about 3,000 drivers of CNG three-wheelers from pandemic



SYED ASHEAQUIL HAQUE

Upside down is their world now: from daily earners to dole-expectants.

'No work, no pay' was the harsh reality for the daily earners, who made up 20 percent of Dhaka's 20-million population before the coronavirus pandemic broke loose in Bangladesh. And, they have been without work for nearly two months since the ongoing lockdown was enforced, slipping gradually along with their families from the poor to extreme poor. They are not begging, yet they are not far from doing it.

About 13,000 drivers of CNG-run three-wheelers in the country are among this vulnerable group. They have mostly remained out of the radar of aid. The government's

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BORO HARVEST, PRICE

Farmers happy, yet experts worry

High paddy price, stockpiling may affect retail market of rice

DWOHA CHOWDHURY and SOHEL PARVEZ

Anticipating an increased demand for food grain, a section of rice millers and wholesalers are exhibiting stockpiling tendencies, pushing up the price of the recently harvested Boro paddy.

Since the coronavirus pandemic led to a countrywide shutdown, people have been buying more rice, feeling insecure about its future availability.

To cash on this behaviour, rice millers and wholesalers are buying Boro paddy in large volumes at Tk 250 to Tk 400 per maund (40 kg) -- more than what they paid last year.

Though high paddy prices are making farmers happy, it may affect the retail price of rice, making the staple unaffordable to millions of low-income people, who lost their income during the pandemic, experts fear.

To keep the rice market under control, economists have urged the government to increase its food grain stock by purchasing more paddy.

WHAT FARMERS SAY

Talking to farmers from districts with higher Boro production, our correspondents reported that the paddy price is ranging between Tk 650 to Tk 800 per maund. Last year, around this time the paddy was selling for an average of Tk 500 per maund.

Farmer Ratiranjana Das from Madhyanagar of Sunamganj's Dharmapasha upazila is seeing good production after several years of bad yield and low prices.

"The price is ranging between Tk 650 to Tk 780 taka per maund in the local bazaar depending on the variety, quality and moisture content of paddy," he informed.

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Thousands leave city amid relaxed travel curbs

Eid-ul-Fitr likely tomorrow

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY and RASHIDUL HASAN

Thousands of people continued to leave Dhaka yesterday as the government apparently relaxed travel restrictions ahead of the Eid.

The authorities at Shimulia-Kathalbari and Paturia-Daulatdia ferry terminals resumed services after three days, allowing people to head for 21 south-western districts.

Although Rab Director General Chowdhury Abdullah Al Mamun yesterday said that only those using personal vehicles will be allowed to travel to their hometowns, many people travelled on pickups and three-wheelers, spending two to three times the usual fare.

The Rab DG told reporters through video conferencing that no public transport could be used for the journey.

Eid-ul-Fitr, the largest religious festival of Muslims, will be celebrated on May 24 or 25, subject to the sighting of the moon.

The cabinet division on May 14 said movement of people will be restricted across the country and no one would be allowed to leave the city where they work from May 17-May 28. This was an additional restriction over the nearly two-month long suspension of public transport aimed at slowing the spread of coronavirus.

Police set up check posts on key highways to enforce the restrictions, but failed to stop the home goers.

In a desperate bid to stop people from travelling, the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation

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Hasina phones Mamata, asks about Amphan damage in WB

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday called West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and enquired about the damages caused by Cyclone Amphan.

"The prime minister phoned the West Bengal chief minister around 11:10am and enquired about the damages due to the cyclone in the state," PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim said.

He said the PM expressed sympathy to Mamata over the loss of life and property caused by the cyclone and hoped they would overcome the loss very soon.

The West Bengal chief minister thanked the Bangladesh PM for expressing sympathy.

Amphan made landfall in India and Bangladesh on Wednesday evening, causing huge damage to West Bengal and coastlines of Bangladesh.



Firefighters spray water on the wreckage of a Pakistan International Airlines aircraft after it crashed at a residential area in Karachi, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Dozens die as Pak plane crashes on houses

40 bodies recovered out of 99 on board; 2 survive; pilot's distress call suggests plane lost both engines

AGENCIES

At least 40 dead bodies have been recovered after a Pakistani plane crashed with nearly 100 people on board in the southern city of Karachi yesterday, according to rescue officials, with dozens more feared dead.

The Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) plane was close to landing when it came down among houses, sparking an explosion and killing several people on the ground.

"We have recovered 40 plus bodies so far," Major Mohammad Mansoor from the Pakistan Rangers, who was overseeing the rescue operation, told AFP.

Faisal Edhi, who heads the charitable Edhi Foundation that was assisting rescuers, gave a slightly higher figure saying at least 42 dead bodies had been recovered from the area.

"As per our estimates there are around 50 more dead bodies under the debris," he said in a live television broadcast.

At least two passengers survived the crash, according to Syed Nasir Hussain Shah, the information minister in Sindh province where Karachi is located.

Plumes of smoke were sent into the air as rescue workers and residents searched the debris for survivors and firefighters tried to extinguish the flames. An AFP reporter witnessed charred bodies being loaded into ambulances.

Seemin Jamali, a director from Jinnah Post Graduate Medical College in the city, said eight dead and 15 injured people had been brought to the facility.

"They were all from the ground, no (plane) passengers have been brought here," she said.

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