

**BANGLADESH  
UPDATE**

**1,557**  
New cases in 24hrs

**3,52,178**  
Total cases

**5,007**  
Deaths

**2,60,790**  
Recoveries

**GLOBAL  
UPDATE**

**970,705**  
Deaths

**31,562,218**  
Total cases

## Over 5k have died

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deaths – 64 – in a single day.

According to Johns Hopkins University, Bangladesh is 29th in the list of countries with the highest number of deaths, followed by China, where the virus first erupted in late December, with 4,737 deaths.

Philippines – an archipelagic country in Southeast Asia is ahead of Bangladesh with 5,049 deaths as of yesterday.

Among other South Asian nations, India is third with 73,697 deaths and Pakistan is 24th with 6,327 deaths.

The United States is at the top of the list with 1,99,890 deaths – accounting for more than one in five deaths globally. Latin American country Brazil is second with 1,37,272 deaths.

According to the DGHS, the death rate due to Covid-19 was 1.42 percent in the 24 hours till yesterday morning.

In the same period, 1,557 people tested positive for coronavirus – almost

11 percent (10.99) of all the 14,164 individuals' samples tested.

The total number confirmed cases rose to 3,52,178, which is slightly more than 19 (19.05) percent of all tested samples so far, according to the press release.

Meanwhile, 2,073 patients have recovered, taking the total number of recoveries to 2,60,790.

The recovery rate now stands at 74.05 percent, said the press release.

Of the yesterday's deaths, 17 were of males and the rest 11 were females. All of them died in hospitals and their ages varied from 10 to over 60.

So far, more than half of the dead were aged over 60, according to the DGHS.

Eighteen of them were from Dhaka division, three from Khulna, four from Chattogram, and one each was from Rangpur, Sylhet and Rajshahi divisions.

## People with conditions

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advisory committee on coronavirus, colder climates. The virus finds it easier to spread in cooler weather conditions, experts have said.

In Bangladesh, it is more likely to find a hospitable environment and claim more victims as moisture and humidity will plummet, people will remain indoors with little outside ventilation and the cold will make them prone to other infections as well.

"During winter, people who have COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease) problems and allergies, will be in great danger as coronavirus is highly risky for them," epidemiologist and IEDCR adviser Mushtuq Hussain told The Daily Star yesterday.

He also said that the Chinese city of Wuhan – the epicentre of Covid-19 – saw the virus spread during winter and Chinese experts are fearing a second wave.

South China Morning Post reported that a second wave in China during winter was "inevitable" and until a vaccine was available, there could be further outbreaks.

The number of acute respiratory infections increases during this season and that is what the novel coronavirus targets primarily.

According to the Directorate General of Health Services, a total of 1,11,737 patients suffered from acute respiratory infections from November to March 15 this year and 22 died. Many are saying the situation could worsen this year due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Muzaherul Haque, former WHO consultant for the South East Asia region, said while there is no scientific evidence that the coronavirus situation will deteriorate during winter, there is still a danger.

"Poor people will become vulnerable due to a lack of protection. If people who have respiratory diseases and lung diseases get infected with coronavirus, the risk of death will be huge and the number of deaths could be on the rise," he said.

BBC ran a report at the end of last month that said, "A leaked government report suggests a 'reasonable worst case scenario' of 85,000 deaths across the UK this winter due to Covid-19."

Prof Dr Mohammad Shahidullah, chairman of the national technical

advisory committee on coronavirus, said some viruses spread more during winter, like the flu in the USA and Europe.

"During winter, humidity falls and dust is added, making for less dense air which aids in the virus travelling farther and so spreading more. The greater the coughing and sneezing, the greater the spread. And as respiratory infections increase during winter, coronavirus may take a huge toll on us," he added.

Bangladesh has already witnessed 3.5 lakh coronavirus cases since March 8 and more than 5,000 deaths since March 18.

The country's Covid-19 test positivity rate was now over 19 per cent but the rate has dropped to 12 per cent in recent days.

The death rate now ranges between 1.8 per cent and just above 2 per cent, which was a little above 1 per cent a few weeks ago.

Bangladesh reopened offices and businesses, except educational institutions, on May 31 after a complete shutdown of over two months.

"We have risks. From the experiences of various countries, we saw that the coronavirus [pandemic] took a deadly turn during winter. Although it is not definite, but there is a risk," Dr ABM Abdullah, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's personal physician, said.

Also a noted medicine specialist, he said not only Bangladesh, but almost all countries are fearing the worst case scenario in winter.

"Our air gets polluted during winter and various [kinds of] flu spreads during this time. In winter, we see the rise of fever and coughing, so it may be difficult to distinguish between Covid-19 and normal flu," he said.

Researchers at Johns Hopkins University are coming out with new research that suggests rising temperatures do moderate the spread of the virus – and a big new wave of cases could be coming with the cooler fall air.

Another paper published in the Journal of the American Medical Association found the virus "acted in a way consistent with the behaviour of a seasonal respiratory virus spreading along with temperature and humidity levels".

## 156 nations join

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building over time to 20 percent of each country's most vulnerable population.

Ultimately the scheme aims to deliver 2bn doses of safe, effective vaccines around the world by the end of 2021.

Sixty-four higher income economies have already joined Covax, which includes commitments from 35 economies as well as the European commission, which will procure doses on behalf of the 27 EU member states plus Norway and Iceland, with 38 more expected to join in the coming days.

Asked to elaborate on nations' delay in joining the vaccine plan, WHO spokeswoman Margaret Harris yesterday said some were due to paperwork and the need for parliamentary approval.

She declined to comment on specific countries and said discussions were ongoing.

Other countries, however, appear to have no intention of signing up. A Russian government source told Reuters there was no need for his country to take part in the programme since it was developing and producing its own vaccine.

US President Donald Trump's government has already secured future supplies through bilateral deals, prompting accusations of selfish behaviour to the detriment of poor countries.

China, where the coronavirus began, was also missing on the list of 64 rich nations. But alliance officials said dialogue continued with Beijing.

More than 150 potential vaccines are being developed and tested globally, with 38 in human trials. Covid-19 has infected more than 31 million people globally and killed nearly 1 million so far.

With some wealthier nations reticent over Covax, the plan has highlighted the challenge of distributing vaccines equitably around a world of haves and

have-nots.

The WHO has said some \$38 billion is needed for its overall ACT-Accelerator programme, which includes Covax, but also global collaboration towards developing and ensuring equitable access to tests and treatments for Covid-19, and strengthening health systems.

But so far it has received just \$3.0 billion of that.

Particularly, Covax has received commitments for \$1.4 billion towards vaccine research and development, but a further \$700 million-\$800 million was urgently needed, the alliance said.

The alliance did not say which countries were providing funding while not planning to take supply of vaccines from the scheme. France and Germany have said they will only source potential shots via the European joint procurement scheme.

However, WHO chief voiced optimism that so many countries had agreed to participate in the mechanism. "Covid-19 is an unprecedented global crisis that demands an unprecedented global response," he said in a statement, warning countries against scrambling to acquire vaccine stocks for their populations alone.

He said that the scheme would ensure vaccines for "some people in all countries and not all people in some countries".

"Vaccine nationalism will only perpetuate the disease and prolong the global recovery," he added.

"This is not charity," he told journalists. "It's in every country's best interest. We sink or we swim together." Gavi welcomed that Covax was "now in business".

Dr Richard Hatchett, CEO of Cepi, said: "This is a landmark moment in the history of public health with the international community coming together to tackle this pandemic."



**Refugees and migrants, from the destroyed Moria camp, walk near a new temporary camp, on the island of Lesbos, Greece, yesterday. Germany's Angela Merkel embarks this week on her third bold attempt to reshape European migration, but she faces an uphill task convincing other EU leaders to host refugees, even if her plan contains generous incentives.**

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Thankless as always

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All reported difficulties in creating a work-family balance, which resulted in psychological distress and a deteriorating relationship with their spouses – sometimes even leading to domestic violence.

Those who have formal jobs mentioned they are forced to prioritise unpaid care work at home over their office duties, which resulted in added psychological stress as they worried about their reduced productivity.

Their fears are real, especially at a time, when the global job market has been shaken up and some of their colleagues have already been laid off at their respective workplaces.

Sharmin says she wakes up at 5:30am and needs to finish cleaning, preparing and serving breakfast for five, wash dishes, feed her toddler, and get her eight-year-old daughter ready for online classes by 10:00am.

After that she starts her own work but also needs to help her daughter with her classes, as well as prepare and serve lunch for the family in between. She herself is rarely able to eat until after five when her "official" working hours are over.

After doing the rest of the day's household work – washing clothes, taking care of her elderly mother-in-law, helping her older daughter with homework, preparing evening snacks and dinner, she hardly gets any time for herself.

If you think of the value of Sharmin's daily unpaid work, it amounts to no less than the remuneration she receives for her paid work.

She would have to pay around Tk 7,000 for full time domestic help, around Tk 7,000 for a home tutor for her daughter, Tk 15,000 for a full-time nurse for her mother-in-law, and Tk 10,000 for daycare for her two children.

An online clothing seller, Sabina Khandaker (not her real name) spoke about how she was tired of pulling the weight of both her business and family. She can only give around three hours of her time to her business while doing household chores and childcare for around eight hours.

When she raised the issue of taking care of the baby during certain periods such as when she goes live on Facebook to show her wares to viewers, her husband told her to stop ranting all the time about her duties, which led to their relationship deteriorating significantly.

"This June, for the first time in six years of marriage, I was physically abused by my husband after a heated argument on this," said Sabina.

Although Sabina left the house immediately, a week later she received a phone call from her mother-in-law (who did not live with them and was in her village home), who yelled at her about having the audacity to leave her son alone at home, who had apparently become sick from work and having to cook for himself.

"I had to return immediately to nurse him and I'm back to doing the bulk of the work alone."

A recent study of Brac Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD), Brac University, which surveyed 122 female entrepreneurs found that women spent an average of 7.5 hours

on unpaid care work and household chores every day, up from 5.4 hours before the pandemic hit.

However, even despite the pandemic, the trend over the years shows just how disparate men and women's unpaid care work is.

A survey conducted by ActionAid Bangladesh found that women spent 7.78 hours, 7.56 hours, and 5.76 hours in 2016, 2017, and 2018 on unpaid care work daily, whereas men spent only 1.32, 2.37, and 1.92 hours respectively.

The data shows the huge discrimination of a gendered phenomenon.

Women's rights activist Khushi Kabir of Nijera Kori believes redistribution of unpaid work is the key solution to this discrimination and the idea of redistribution must be rooted in our minds from childhood, through family and school education so that children learn to respect these activities and are inspired to share the work evenly.

"For the older generation, there must be enough awareness programmes to change their mindset about this unappreciated work, and both social and mass media can play a great role here by writing, discussing and debating about men's role in household and care work," she said.

Dr Abul Hossain, project director of Multi-Sectoral Programme on Violence against Women, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, informed this correspondent that currently the ministry has no programme or initiative to address the agenda of redistribution of unpaid care work and ensuring men's participation in the process.

## Central bank now 'ineffective'

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money a borrower can take from the entire banking sector.

The TIB noted that since 2009, the BB allowed 14 new lenders to run banking operation, which is excessive and unnecessary given the country's business volume. Ministers, parliament members, and leaders and activists of the ruling party and student organisations were the sponsors of the new banks.

There have been allegations that black money was invested in the paid-up capital for setting up the new banks. Besides, a large business conglomerate now controls nine banks and it bought 28 percent shares of a lender in favour of its 14 companies, said the TIB.

The finance ministry is now controlling the state-run banks, weakening the BB's autonomy. Managing directors now get appointed in these banks on political consideration, and the ministry, in some cases, ignores the BB's recommendations.

For instance, the BB recently objected to the tenure of a managing director in a state-run bank as it received allegations against the person. But the ministry rejected the recommendation and extended the tenure, said the TIB.

Directors of private banks have taken loans of Tk 171,616 crore from 55 banks on mutual understanding.

A large portion of such loans often becomes defaulted and then the directors regularise the loans by way of using the relaxed rescheduling and restructuring facility. This creates a burden of defaulted loans on the banking sector, the TIB mentioned.

The BB had earlier tried to take action against the delinquent borrowers, but its efforts proved futile due to political pressure.

As per the best global practice, the government can appoint only one official to the central bank board but that policy is not followed in Bangladesh.

Three government officials and two former bureaucrats are now serving as BB directors, which has helped the government hold sway over the central bank.

Besides, there are no specific rules for recruiting the BB governor or deputy governors. The government appoints persons of its choice as the governor and deputy governors so that there is no opposition to its policy.

There have also been allegations that some influential business groups play a big role in the appointment of deputy governors. A good number of directors

of banks are directly involved with the ruling party, and this helps them avoid facing action despite their involvement in corruption, mentioned the TIB.

The quality of BB inspection has been on the decline as the inspection teams are not allowed to take action against the scammers. But in the past, they had the authority to do so.

They now have to take prior approval from a deputy governor to take any measures.

Moreover, the number of BB inspections is decreasing. BB teams carried out 1,917 inspections in fiscal year 2017 against 2,783 in 2015.

In some cases, the important parts of the inspection reports are removed to protect influential borrowers as they have strong links with the BB policymakers, noted the TIB.

A section of the BB high-ups doesn't take adequate measures to implement the recommendations in the inspection reports as part of efforts to maintain a good relationship with the influential quarters. They hope such activities will help them get suitable jobs in government institutions after retirement.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The TIB has recommended forming a banking commission comprised of experts to protect the banking sector from defaulted loans.

Articles of 46 and 47 of the Bank Companies Act should be discarded so that the BB can supervise state-run banks. And the government should formulate regulations on appointment and withdrawal of the BB governor and deputy governors.

The BB should be allowed to appoint more directors from the private sector to its board, and bring down the number of government officials in it.

A search committee should be set up for appointing directors – both for state-run and private banks – and persons involved in politics should be barred from holding such posts.

TIB Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman said the depositors would face dire consequences if the policy makers do not take necessary measures right now to protect the banking sector.

"The existing rules and regulations to ensure good governance in banks are not effective as these have a lot of loopholes. All stakeholders must come forward to protect the banking sector," he noted.

## DU student

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"false" cases.

Talking to The Daily Star, she said she is a rape victim and that she wanted justice.

The charges in both cases are similar. In the first case, the complainant mentioned Hasan Al Mamun, convener of the parishad, as the prime accused, alleging that he raped her in his Lalbagh residence on January 3.

She also claimed that she had a love affair with Mamun and that he promised to marry her.

In the second case, Nazmul Hasan Sohag, joint convener of the parishad, was made the prime accused.

According to the case statement, Nazmul took her to Chandpur on February 9, saying he would patch things up between her and Mamun.

As she did not find Mamun there, she requested him to take her back to Dhaka. On their way back, Nazmul raped her in the launch cabin.

The case was filed under the Women and Children Repression and Prevention Act and the Digital Security Act, said Mizanur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Kotwali Police Station.

Mamun and Nazmul could not be contacted for comment.

In both cases, the complainant alleged that Nur in the name of arbitration over the matter "threatened her of character assassination through posts on social media".

The three other accused in the cases are Saiful Islam, joint convener of the platform, Nazmul Huda, vice president of the organisation's Dhaka University unit, and Abdullah Hil Baki, a student of the university and an activist of the organisation.

Meanwhile, the last two days were full of drama centring the incident. Police detained Nur and six others from Matsya Bhaban while they were staging a demonstration on Monday evening against the case filed with Lalbagh Police Station.

Law enforcers have changed their stance from time to time after the detention of the parishad leaders on Monday. A deputy commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police said they were detained for assaulting on-duty police personnel and unlawful gathering and that Nur will be automatically arrested in the rape case.

But less than an hour later, DMP's joint commissioner (DB) Mahbub Alam said all detainees, including Nur, were released.

But later, Nur was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital under DB custody. After treatment, he was taken back to DB office on Minto road. Police said they took him to "complete formalities".

Nur was finally released around 12:30am yesterday.

Meanwhile, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan yesterday said action would be taken against Nur as per the law.

Cases were filed against Nur and police are investigating, he told reporters at a city programme yesterday.

### YESTERDAY'S PROTEST

The parishad activists yesterday brought out a procession from Doyal Chatter around 11:00am, protesting the cases against their leaders.

The procession, attended by 120 to 150 people, ended at the National Museum.

Nur was not present at the demo. Former Ducus Social Service Affairs secretary Akhtar Hossain said this is not the first case of assault. It happened many times before.

Meanwhile, Patuakhali district unit Students and Youth Council formed a human chain and rallied in front of the district press club, protesting the attack and harassment of Nur. They demanded the withdrawal of the cases. Nur hails from Patuakhali's Galachipa upazila.

Tangail district unit of Bangladesh Chhatra Odhikar Parishad and Bangladesh Jubo Odhikar Parishad formed a human chain in front of Tangail Press with the same demand around 11:00am.

At one stage, a group of seven to eight youths led by Motinuzzaman Sukhon, general secretary of Tangail Swechchasebak League, and Tanvirul Islam Himel, senior joint convener of district unit of BCL, attacked the students and beat them up with sticks, witnesses said.

BCL leader Himel said Nur's supporters delivered objectionable speeches tarnishing the image of the government, which is why BCL men drove them away from the spot.

No incident of assault took place, he added.

## Don't let geo-

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and practical roadmap for delivering on commitments and responding decisively to global challenges," she said.

Noting that the UN's 75th anniversary celebration is a momentous occasion for all, Hasina said the commemoration bears special significance in Bangladesh as it coincides with the birth centenary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

She mentioned that Bangabandhu at the UN assembly in 1974 had said, "... the United Nations remains the focus of man's hope for the future."

"We have seen moments in history that made us re-group to change the course of human civilization. UN@75 presents another such moment. Let us seize this moment," the PM said.

She said Bangladesh owes a lot to the UN as it has benefitted from UN-led efforts for its development.

Referring to Bangladesh's contribution to the UN peacekeeping missions, Hasina said Bangladesh is contributing to the UN in fulfilling its mandates.

"We are committed to upholding peace across the world. Currently, Bangladesh is the leading troops and police contributing country in all peace operations," she said, adding that some 150 Bangladeshi peacekeepers sacrificed their lives to secure peace in conflict-ravaged countries.

The premier lauded the UN secretary-general for keeping the flag of multilateralism high.