

**BANGLADESH
UPDATE**



1,106
New cases in 24hrs



3,57,873
Total cases



5,129
Deaths



2,68,777
Recoveries



**GLOBAL
UPDATE**



994,834
Deaths



32,841,697
Total cases

Ensure vaccine for all countries

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Hasina said if Bangladesh is provided with the technical know-how and patents, the country's pharmaceutical industry has the capacity to go for vaccine production on a mass scale.

She said the pandemic is a stark reminder that the fate of the human being is interconnected and that "no one is secured until everyone is secured."

The premier also said efforts to contain the pandemic and achieve Agenda 2030 have to go hand-in-hand. "Bangladesh's second voluntary national review [VNR] presented this year shows that we're well on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals."

She mentioned that the pandemic to a large extent kept all confined to their homes. Consequently, economic activities were greatly hampered along with the healthcare system.

Bangladesh achieved a GDP growth rate of 8.2 percent in 2018-2019 fiscal year. But the Covid-19 pandemic has impeded its economic progress, the PM added.

Hasina said the Bangladesh government announced a 31-point directive soon after the detection of the first Covid-19 cases in the country. It launched vigorous awareness campaigns and distributed personal protective kits aiming to contain the spread of the virus. These resulted in containment of seasonal diseases which are otherwise common in the country.

She said the government quickly identified the impending challenges of Bangladesh's financial sector and announced 21 stimulus packages.

Special arrangements have been made for keeping the industries running and for proper marketing of agricultural products and industrial outputs in full compliance with health guidelines, the PM said. "Consequently, our health sector and economy are still comparatively in better shape."

Despite the Covid-induced stagnation in global industrial outputs, Bangladesh's GDP has registered a growth rate of 5.24 percent which is expected to be 7 percent in the next fiscal year.

ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION

Hasina said the government is trying hard to transform Bangladesh into a middle-income country by 2021, attain the SDGs by 2030, a developed country by 2041 and a prosperous Delta by 2100.

It is also crucial that graduating LDCs and recently graduated ones are accorded scaled-up international support and incentive packages in the transition and post-transition phases to minimise the pandemic-triggered impediments, she observed.

Regarding migrant workers, the PM said they are the frontline contributors to the economies of their host and home countries alike. Many of them have lost their jobs during the pandemic while many have been sent back home.

"We've allocated \$361 million for the returnee migrant workers. It is critical to help them regain employment in the post-Covid job market. I urge the international community and migrant-receiving countries to treat migrant workers fairly and with empathy," she said.

COMMITMENT TO PEACE

Hasina said Bangladesh is the world's largest troops and police contributing country to the UN peacekeeping missions. "Our peacekeepers are putting their lives on the line to secure and sustain peace in conflict-ravaged countries. International community must ensure their safety

and security."

She also said this year all are celebrating the 20th Anniversary of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. "As one of its original proponents, we call for due recognition of women's role in peace and security. We've already formulated a national action plan in this regard."

Bangladesh's unflinching commitment to peace has resulted in the adoption of a zero-tolerance policy towards terrorism and violent extremism. National efforts have to be complemented by international cooperation to curb this menace, she added.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Talking about climate-vulnerable countries, Hasina said the pandemic is worsening the pre-existing vulnerabilities of these countries.

She said, "We are dealing with the dual impact of recent floods and the Cyclone Amphan even during the pandemic. As the current president of the CVF and the V-20 Group of Ministers of Finance, Bangladesh would lead the Forum to map out a sustainable and climate-resilient pathway out of the crisis. We also stand ready to contribute to securing a constructive and productive outcome in the Glasgow COP."

GENDER EQUALITY

The premier said the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action has helped the international community come a long way to ensure gender equality. "As we are celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the Declaration, we need to strengthen our resolve and mutual cooperation to address all the critical areas of concern."

In Bangladesh, she said, the government has closed 72.6 percent of the overall gender gap. Women's contribution remains at the core of its national development. They are also at the forefront of pandemic response and recovery efforts.

Talking about genocide, Hasina said Bangladesh's painful experience and the worst form of genocide and crimes against humanity that the nation had to endure during its struggle for independence motivated it to support the legitimate cause of the Palestinian people.

ROHINGYA ISSUE

The premier said Bangladesh provided temporary shelter to over 1.1 million forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals. More than three years have elapsed. Regrettably, not a single Rohingya could be repatriated. "The problem was created by Myanmar and its solution must be found in Myanmar. I request the international community to play a more effective role for a solution to the crisis."

Hasina said the Covid-19 pandemic has indeed aggravated existing global challenges. It has also reinforced the indispensability of multilateralism.

She also said on the 75th anniversary of the UN, the commitment to multilateralism as embodied in the UN Charter remains unflinching.

"At the national level, despite numerous challenges, we're committed to upholding the values of multilateralism and working towards building a 'Shonar Bangla' free of poverty and exploitation based on democratic principles with full enjoyment of human rights, as envisioned by the Father of our Nation. On the birth centenary of our Father of the Nation, this is our pledge to our nation and to the world," she said.

2m deaths 'likely'

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widespread distribution.

Without a vaccine or effective treatment, social distancing and lockdowns remain among the few options for governments to curb the spread of the virus, making large gatherings like spectator sports and music concerts highly risky.

The 2020 Tokyo Olympics, postponed for a year, were the biggest such casualty, and Japan's new leader vowed to hold them in 2021.

"In the summer of next year, Japan is determined to host the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games as proof that humanity has defeated the pandemic," Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga told the United Nations General Assembly in a video message.

But with continued spikes worldwide, there are concerns about whether the event will be possible even next year if the pandemic is not under control.

Many European nations, meanwhile, are struggling with new waves of infections.

Spain expanded a lockdown in and around the capital Madrid to cover one million people from Monday.

In Britain, authorities announced restrictions now extending to a quarter of the population, while two supermarket chains said they were rationing purchases of certain goods to clamp down on panic buying.

Moscow, meanwhile, ordered vulnerable residents of the Russian capital to avoid infection by staying at home, while Israel tightened its lockdown by stopping people from

taking flights out of the country.

Russia's daily tally of new coronavirus cases hit its highest level yesterday since June 22 at 7,523, bringing its total to 1,143,571, the country's coronavirus task force reported.

France reported record figures -- daily cases soared past 16,000 for the first time on Thursday. But moves by the authorities to contain the virus are not popular with many because of their painful economic toll.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani yesterday authorised the country's provinces to impose lockdowns wherever necessary to stem a rapid rise in coronavirus cases.

Iran's death toll from the coronavirus rose by 172 yesterday to 25,394, and identified cases by 3,204 to 443,086, health ministry spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari told state TV.

Meanwhile, an interim results published on Friday claimed that a single dose of Johnson & Johnson's experimental Covid-19 vaccine had produced a strong immune response against the novel coronavirus in an early-to-mid stage clinical trial.

The vaccine, called AD26.COV2.S, was equally well-tolerated at two different doses, the results showed. A single shot, versus a rival two-dose approach being tested by Moderna Inc and Pfizer Inc, could simplify distribution of the vaccine.

However, it is unclear whether elderly people, one of the populations most at risk from the virus, will be protected to the same degree as younger people with the J&J vaccine.



Rows of floating seedbeds used by farmers in Mugar Jhor area of Pirojpur's Najirpur upazila. The method is a blessing for farmers in the area which is mostly marshland.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

6 accused BCL men moved with impunity



Saifur Rahman



Roni



Arjun Lasker



Mahfuzur Rahman



Rabiul Islam



Tarek

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present address is the bungalow of the hostel superintendent.

THE HOSTEL WAS THEIR DEN

Several former and present BCL activists of the college told this correspondent that their fellow men have been controlling the hostel since 2012.

After a new block was added to the hostel in 2014, a feud started between two BCL groups over taking its control.

The hostel remained closed for weeks multiple times because of the clashes between the groups, students said. Many of the rooms in the block where the rape took place was occupied by BCL activists.

Seeking anonymity, a BCL activist said, "The group [accused of raping] often engaged in extortion and harassed women on campus. We tried to stop them many times."

Abdul Kaiyum, officer-in-charge of Shahporan Police Station, said, "Since the prime accused used to live in the bungalow of the hostel superintendent, we raided it."

College principal Saleh Ahmed said, "The bungalow is damaged and not liveable. The hostel superintendent chose not to live there. They occupied the bungalow and we evicted them several times. We even snapped the electricity lines. But they managed to get an illegal electricity connection.

"They took over the bungalow after the last Eid. As the college is closed for the pandemic, the monitoring was not that strict."

Although the college has been closed, the authorities allowed some students to stay there.

The hostel superintendent Jamal Uddin yesterday issued a notice asking everyone to leave immediately.

PROBE BODY FORMED

To investigate the rape, the authorities called an emergency academic council meeting yesterday afternoon.

A three-member probe body headed by Professor Anwar Hossain Chowdhury was formed at the meeting, the principal said.

"We suspended two security guards of the hostel and legal steps will be taken as per the probe body's recommendations," he said.

"We are embarrassed and ashamed by the incident. The perpetrators must be punished. If the student of our college is found guilty, we'll ask the National University to suspend his studentship."

DELAYED ARREST

There are allegations that a group of local Awami League leaders tried to settle the issue over discussion which gave the suspects enough time to flee.

Talking to several present and former BCL activists of the college, this correspondent came to know

that all the accused are followers of Advocate Ranjit Sarker, former youth and sports affairs secretary of Sylhet district Awami League.

This correspondent could not contact Ranjit despite repeated attempts.

Police officials denied the allegations.

ACTIVE ON FACEBOOK

Officials of Sylhet Metropolitan Police and Rapid Action Battalion said they would arrest the accused soon.

Two of the accused Rabiul Hasan and Mahfuzur Rahman Masum wrote on Facebook yesterday morning that they were innocent.

PROTESTS FOR JUSTICE

General students along with a faction of BCL activists demonstrated in front of the college gate around 1:00pm.

They torched a tire and blockaded Sylhet-Tamabil Highway for around an hour until the college Principal and Police requested them to withdraw.

Bangladesh Chhatra Adhikar Parishad also demonstrated at Chowhatta Point in the city at around 12:00pm.

Sankhubdho Nagorik Andolon in Sylhet, organised a protest at Sylhet Central Saheed Minar where hundreds of concerned citizens gathered.

Ain O Salish Kendra expressed grave concern over the rape and demanded justice for the victim.

So far, it is Tk 10,200cr

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wealth of illegal casino owners last year.

On January 8 this year, the ACC filed a case against him for amassing property worth around Tk 274.91 crore from unknown sources.

The ACC and the Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU) of BB are now looking into the matter.

The two agencies are trying to unearth how Halder and his men got the money out of the NBFI.

Here are some snippets of information learnt from those linked to the investigation.

P&L International Ltd, owned by Halder, maintains an account with a bank. Investigators claimed to have traced suspicious transaction of over Tk 708 crore through that account.

In order to hoodwink any future investigation, the suspected fraudster used to move his money among multiple financial institutions and accounts.

PK Halder was a deputy managing director of Industrial and Infrastructure Development Finance Company Limited (IIDFC) in 2008. He joined Reliance Finance as its managing director the next year. He became the managing director of NRB Global Bank in July 2015.

Pointing to a Tk 60 crore loan to MTB Marine Ltd sanctioned at a board meeting of ILFSL on January 30, 2017, ACC sources said the money never reached the company's bank account.

It was rather transferred to accounts of different organisations and different people.

About Tk 5.5 crore was transferred to the accounts of Padma Weaving Ltd, Tk 14 crore to Paramount Agro, Tk 3 crore to Ookayama Limited, Tk 1.08 crore to Tasmih Book Binding, Tk 11 crore to JK Trade International and Tk 4 crore to four personal accounts.

The transfer took place between February and July 2017, said ACC sources.

Swapan Kumar Mistri was ILFSL's director while his wife was MTB Marine's chairman. Swapan was also a director of HAL International, owned by PK Halder.

Swapan's brother Uttam Kumar

Mistri is the managing director of Kolasin Limited. Uttam's wife Atoshi Mridha was the chairman of Kolasin, situated in Free School Street in the capital.

Together, they applied for a loan of Tk 79.7 crore as working capital for Kolasin on August 29, 2016. The loan was approved on September 5 the same year.

"It was an organisation only on papers. Showing loan against Kolasin, the money was transferred to the accounts of different people and organisations," one ACC official said, wishing not to be named.

Of the loan money, on December 27, 2016, about Tk 25.97 crore was issued to Nature Enterprise. The money was later transferred to Reliance Finance.

Nature Enterprise was one of the shareholders of ILFSL and two of its directors were board members of the NBFI, ACC sources said.

The money was used to adjust a loan for Nature Enterprise with Reliance Finance.

About Tk 17.4 crore was transferred to EBL Securities Ltd, Tk 6 crore to International Leasing Securities and International Leasing Capital, Tk 6.25 crore to Paramount Spinning Ltd and Paramount Holding Ltd, Tk 4 crore was transferred to JK Trader's account while about Tk 4.9 crore landed in two personal accounts, said investigation sources.

About Tk 50 lakh was transferred to Hal International's account at Bank Asia's Dhanmondi branch.

The ILFSL sanctioned loans of about Tk 83.34 crore to Moon Enterprise, owned by Shangkh Bepari, believed to be an associate of Halder.

Of the money, Tk 21.24 crore was used to adjust loan of Marco Traders with Reliance Finance. Director of ILFSL Nowsher-ul Islam is owner of Marco Traders.

Again, on March 29, 2016, about Tk 3 crore was transferred to PK Halder's personal bank account.

Hal International received Tk 6 crore while Tk 12.6 crore was transferred to Paramount Spinning Ltd's accounts with Mercantile and Meghna and NRB Global Bank Ltd.

Sources said between 2015 and 2019, PK Halder's cousin Amitav Adhikari was the director of People's Leasing and Financial Services and former colleague Uzal Kumar Nandi was its chairman.

Amitav is also the managing director of Anan Chemicals. Its current director and chairman is Uzal and his wife Anita Kar is its director. Although they were at the helm of the organisation, PK Halder was its actual owner, ACC officials said.

ACC sources said that using "name-only" organisations, PK Halder took money from ILFSL and became chairman and director of Peoples' Leasing. Later, he took money from Peoples' Leasing and dragged it down.

Earlier this month, PK Halder said he would come back to the country to return the money and settle the transactions and liabilities with the company if he gets "proper security for his life".

He has recently sent a letter to the ILFSL to this end.

The board of directors of ILFSL discussed the letter at its meeting. The organisation placed it along with an application before the High Court on September 7 through its lawyer Mahfuzur Rahman Milon for necessary orders.

After examining the letter and application, the HC yesterday directed the ILFSL to inform it when PK Halder would return to Bangladesh for settling his transactions and liabilities with the company.

The court said it would pass necessary orders for ensuring legal security of Halder's life on his return to the country and if he specifies his time of visit.

PK Halder will remain in the custody of the court after he returns, the HC bench said.

Board of directors, chairman and managing director of ILFS were also responsible for the scam, found an ACC enquiry.

In another development, Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU) has recently frozen accounts of 83 people and organisations with different banks over suspicious transactions.

Deepika Padukone questioned in drugs probe

AGENCIES

Indian police hauled in Bollywood megastar Deepika Padukone for questioning yesterday in an escalating drugs probe following the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput.



Deepika was among three popular Bollywood actresses who were questioned yesterday in a drug probe that has sent shockwaves through India's film industry, already hurt by Covid-19 lockdowns.

Officials from the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) have been investigating alleged drug use in Bollywood for the last month in connection with the death of Sushant Singh Rajput, a popular actor who was found dead at his residence in June.

The investigation aims at finding whether there is a nexus between the film industry and the drug trade, a law enforcement official told Reuters.

Actresses Deepika Padukone, Shraddha Kapoor and Sara Ali Khan were seen on television walking into the NCB offices in Mumbai questioning.

Padukone, Khan and Kapoor were not immediately available for comment. Officials at NCB's Mumbai offices did not respond to Reuters requests for comments.

Many Saudi

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reports within last night or today morning at the latest as their flights will leave Dhaka at 12:30pm today.

Moinul Ahsan, the civil surgeon of Dhaka, told this correspondent that they were supposed to get 48 hours to prepare the test reports of Saudi-bound passengers and that the time was fixed by the Saudi authorities.

But in some cases, the Saudi Airlines are issuing tickets and setting flight schedules in such a way that the workers are left with less than 24 hours to get tested and have the results, he said.

As a result, some expatriate workers were coming to them with a request to provide test results within eight to 10 hours.

"But we need at least 24 hours to carry out the Covid-19 test," Moinul said.

Talking to this correspondent, several Saudi-bound passengers also blamed Saudi Airlines officials for confirming their flights without giving them the 48 hours.

While visiting the DNCC Market yesterday, this correspondent met a man rushing to the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport after getting his test report around 1:30pm with only four hours remaining in hand to catch his flight.

Asked the Saudi-bound Bangladeshi migrant worker hurriedly said he submitted his sample on Friday night and that his flight was scheduled to leave at 5:30pm.

Moinul Ahsan said they have been testing samples of around 1,500 to 1,700 people every day for the last couple of days.

So far, no Saudi-bound passengers have missed their flights due to delay in getting Covid-19 report from them, he said.

"We have the capacity to carry out more tests. But we need the minimum required time to carry out the tests," he added.

Tarik A Alowardi, manager at Saudi Arabian Airlines in Bangladesh, Nepal and Myanmar, could not be reached for comment.

A top commercial officer of the airline wishing anonymity said they needed to check the matter.

Saudi Airlines is now operating weekly two flights from Dhaka. The airline has applied to the Civil Aviation Authority Bangladesh to increase the number of flights.

Biman is scheduled to resume its regular flight to Saudi from October 1.

The two airlines are scheduled to operate 10 special flights to Saudi between September 23 and September 30 to carry the stranded Bangladeshis workers waiting to return to their workplaces.

32 WORKERS BARRED FROM FLIGHT Meanwhile, 32 Bangladeshi expatriate workers were not allowed by the immigration authorities to travel to Saudi Arabia as they got tested from private hospitals instead of the government-approved test centre at Mohakhali.

The Saudi bound flight SV-3807 left the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport at 6:30pm leaving them behind, said Plaban, an assistant health officer at the airport, told The Daily Star.

"Thirty-two passengers couldn't be issued boarding pass as they had not Covid-19 test report from the government-approved test centre," he also said.

The government initially designated 19 medical institutions and laboratories to carry out Covid-19 tests for overseas passengers following the scam of Regent Hospital and JKG Health Care.

In Dhaka there were three institutions -- National Institute of Laboratory Medicine and Referral Centre, Institute of Public Health and National Institute of Preventive and Social Medicine.

Later, sample collection booths were set up only at Dhaka North City Corporation Market for overseas passengers to carry out Covid-19 tests.