

BANGLADESH UPDATE



1,275
New cases in 24hrs



359,148
Total cases



5,161
Deaths



2,70,491
Recoveries



GLOBAL UPDATE



1,000,360
Deaths



33,183,342
Total cases

PM for better co-op with neighbours

Says it's needed for regional development as outgoing Indian envoy makes farewell call

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday stressed the need for better cooperation with neighbouring countries for the development of the people of this region.

"We always think that better cooperation is needed with the neighbouring countries firstly for the development of the people of the region as our foreign policy is 'friendship to all and malice towards none'," she said.

The PM made the remarks while outgoing Indian High Commissioner Riva Ganguly Das called on her at the Gono Bhaban.

After the meeting, PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim briefed reporters.

Hasina added that the neighbouring countries can use Chattogram, Sylhet and Saidpur airports for their convenience.

Ihsanul said the PM and the high commissioner discussed bilateral issues.

The Covid-19 situation and the Rohingya crisis also came up during the talks, he said.

Riva said the two countries are working together to combat the virus.

She also appreciated the steps Bangladesh has taken under the leadership of Hasina to contain the spread of coronavirus.

The high commissioner lauded Bangladesh's economic development under the PM's leadership amid the pandemic.

Hasina said people of all classes and professions are working together during this crisis.

She mentioned that large-scale programmes had been taken on the occasion of the "Mujib Barsho". "But we couldn't celebrate many programmes due to the coronavirus outbreak," she said.

The PM said alongside the government's tree plantation campaign, her party has taken a programme to plant 10 million trees across the country during the "Mujib Barsho".

The high commissioner handed over a letter from Indian PM Narendra Modi in which he greeted Hasina on the occasion of her 74th birthday.

The high commissioner also wished Hasina on the occasion of her birthday. Hasina thanked Modi and Riva for greeting her, the press secretary said.

She recalled India's contributions to Bangladesh's Liberation War in 1971.

Hasina said the people of India and its political parties extended overwhelming support to Bangladesh's Liberation War and in the same way they supported the historic land boundary agreement with Bangladesh.

The Indian high commissioner informed the prime minister that the foreign ministers of the two countries are likely to hold talks virtually on Tuesday.

PM's Principal Secretary Ahmad Kaikaus and Indian Deputy High Commissioner in Dhaka Bishwadip Dey were present on the occasion.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina handing gifts to outgoing Indian High Commissioner Riva Ganguly Das when the latter called on Hasina at the Gono Bhaban yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

Crimes thrive on factional politics

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former BCL leaders and activists that the two main BCL factions in Tilagarh are allegedly led by two friends -- Advocate Ranjit Sarkar, former youth and sports secretary of Sylhet district AL and Azadur Rahman Azad, a councillor of the city corporation and former education affairs secretary of the Sylhet city AL.

Shafiqul Alam Chowdhury Nadel, organising secretary of Bangladesh Awami League central unit, said, "Even though there is visible conflict between them, they are united. In the last Eid-ul-Adha, they were united when it came to securing the lease of Animal Haat at MC College field."

All the accused of the rape at the Murari Chand College hostel last Friday were supporters of advocate Ranjit Sarkar, local BCL activists and leaders said.

Contacted, Ranjit Sarkar told The Daily Star, "It's been 20 years since I left Chhatra League and entered the legal profession. All I am involved with is the politics of Awami League."

"The conflict between me and Azad is media created. We have been good friends for decades. Whenever anything happens in Tilagarh, everyone brings our name to the forefront. How could we be close to activists who are the age of our children?"

When asked about photographs of him with the rapists on their social media profiles, Ranjit said, "Anyone can take photographs and claim my acquaintance; that doesn't prove the claim."

Ranjit, also a lawyer practising in Sylhet Court, said, "The problem is there are no BCL committees, which

means there is no guidance."

2 ACCUSED RAPISTS ARRESTED

Saifur Rahman, the prime accused, was arrested in Chhatak upazila in Sunamganj while Arjun Lasker, fourth accused, was arrested in Madhabpur upazila in Habiganj, said Jyotirmoy Sarker, additional deputy commissioner (media) of Sylhet Metropolitan Police.

The other accused, Shah Mahbubur Rahman Roni, 25, of Habigaj town, Mahfuzur Rahman Masum, 25, of Sylhet's Kanaighat, Tarek Ahmed, 28, of Sunamganj town, and Rabul Islam, 25, of Sunamganj's Derai upazila are on the run.

VICTIM'S TESTIMONY RECORDED

The victim's testimony was recorded in a closed court yesterday afternoon.

The victim was taken to the court where Sharmin Khanam Nila, metropolitan magistrate, recorded the testimony in a closed court, said Amulya Bhushan Chowdhury, assistant commissioner (prosecution) of Sylhet Metropolitan Police.

PROTEST CONTINUES

Sylhet City Mayor Ariful Haque Chowdhury and councillors of the corporation protested the heinous crime and demanded justice yesterday afternoon.

They walked from the city hall to the SMP commissioner's office after a meeting where they decided to keep protesting such crimes and vowed to make a safer city for women.

Meanwhile, around 4:00pm, cultural activists of Sylhet protested the rape in a demonstration in front of the hostel, jointly organised by Sammilita Sangskritik Jote and Sammilita Natya Parishad in Sylhet.

68pc lost jobs in

FROM PAGE 1

were imposed early. Around 90 percent of the Bangladeshis living in the district reported being employed during a coronavirus-driven lockdown.

According to the World Bank report, the income losses were widespread across the three areas. In Dhaka and Chattogram, about 80 percent of wage earners and 94 percent of business owners said their earnings were lower than usual.

Median wages for salaried and daily workers declined by about 37 percent compared to usual earnings immediately before the Covid-19 struck. The decline was higher in Dhaka -- 42 percent -- and in Chattogram, it was 33 percent.

Among waged workers, daily and weekly wage labourers faced much higher losses in income (49 percent) compared to salaried workers.

Given the low rates of female labour force participation, women appear to be disproportionately affected by the pandemic and have experienced relatively higher job losses, the report said.

To cope with the income losses, 69 percent household reduced their food consumption; the same number of people took help from their friends.

Thirty-eight percent household surveyed received government help while 42 percent used their savings, according to the World Bank data.

This is mentionable there is a widespread uncertainty among participants in Dhaka and Chattogram about keeping jobs and business running. Only 58 percent of active workers surveyed thought they would be able to keep their job or activity running in the coming months. In Chattogram, it was 69 percent.

In the meantime, high levels of uncertainty in the job market are generating stress and anxiety that may further exacerbate health impacts associated with the pandemic, notably in mental health, the report said.

In poor areas of Dhaka and Chattogram, eight in 10 adults reported experiencing stress or anxiety that affected their ability to carry out their day-to-day activities.

"Reductions in wages among salaried and daily workers were significantly higher for women, consistent with their high engagement in the garment sector and housemaid services, both of which have been severely impacted by the pandemic."

Among those who lost jobs, cleaning workers or housemaid received the biggest blow because 54 percent job losses were reported in these arenas. Second highest job loss was reported in the garments sector with 19 percent.

About the pre-pandemic situation regarding poverty, the report said a large share of the population -- eight in 10 Bangladeshis -- were poor or vulnerable to falling into poverty before the pandemic.

About 25 percent of population was living in poverty and another 54 percent could be considered vulnerable as they had consumption levels very close to the poverty line, according to the Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2016-17.

That indicates income losses related to Covid-19 are likely to push a large share of the population into poverty. And in most of the cases, the people are from the informal sector.

Incomes of informal workers and in affected sectors are assumed to decline by 50 percent and international remittances are also assumed to fall by half.

Comparing with a scenario without Covid-19, in 2020, average household per capita consumption would decline by an estimated 13 percent with an estimated loss in annual consumption of about \$ 10.7 billion.

The national upper poverty rate is estimated to rise from 23 percent to 35 percent. This represents approximately 2.1 crore additional people falling into poverty in 2020.

DGs run by a driver!

FROM PAGE 1

Malek used to know every move made at the DGHS. A section of the staff members and officers used to give him the information.

Two administrative officers, two personal assistants of top officials and several office assistants joined hands with Malek to lobby for appointments and transfers of officers and other employees at the DGHS, the official said.

Mohammad Shahjahan, personal assistant to the DG, used to inform Malek about every move the DG made at the office, the source added.

An employee of the Institute of Public Health, which operates under the DGHS, said two administrative officers and one store keeper of the institute used to inform Malek about important files and documents.

Malek knew how to capitalise on the information and make money.

Whenever an officer disagreed with Malek, he fed newspapers information against the officer and made sure everyone read the news when it got published.

"This is why officials did not cross him," a source said.

Through lobbying, he not only gained large amounts of money and assets, but also reportedly had 27 of his relatives recruited at the DGHS.

Malek's properties include 24 flats in three multi-storey buildings he owns in the capital and a dairy farm, all of which has a combined value of over Tk 100 crore, according to Rab.

Malek's name was in a list made by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) in early 2019 of 45 grade III and IV health sector employees who were possibly involved in corruption.

THE RISE OF MALEK'S WEALTH

Malek started the job in 1982. He first tasted power in early 2000 when Syed Modasser Ali was the DG. He became a close aide of Modasser and started exercising power.

Sources in law enforcement agencies said the driver started making a fortune in 2009 when he chauffeured around the then DGHS chief Prof Shah Monir Hossain.

Malek successfully lobbied for the appointment of over 100 assistant directors in upazilas and earned over several crores, an officer said, preferring anonymity.

Shah Monir also got financial benefits from Malek's lobbying, he added.

Khondokar Md Shefayetullah replaced Shah Monir in 2010 and worked there until 2015.

MALEK'S PROPERTY

Two seven-storey buildings in Tongi

A 10-storey being constructed in Dhanmondi

A dairy farm on 15 katha of land in Tongi

Shefayetullah opened a canteen for the grade III and IV employees.

Malek took over the canteen soon after it was launched and made it office space, sources said.

In recent years, he was the driver of Dr AHM Enayet Hossain, who was an additional director general at DGHS. Soon after Enayet became the DG of Directorate General of Medical Education, Malek also got transferred and continued to be his chauffeur.

Besides, Malek had always maintained good relations with several leaders of the Bangladesh Medical Association, especially with its president Mustafa Jalal Mohiuddin.

Contacted, Mohiuddin said, "I don't know Malek."

Dr Shah Munir said, "I was the DG and he was my driver. Is it possible for me to have a good relationship with him? I was not aware of his wealth. I just learnt everything from the media."

"He knows how he gained wealth. But why was my name implicated? This is embarrassing."

Contacted, Enayet Hossain said Malek used to drive his official vehicle for around four years.

"I was not involved in any job appointment and procurement during the time he was my driver," he said.

"The relation was very formal and minimal."

The Daily Star could not reach the immediate past DG Prof Azad for comment.

Prof Dr Abul Bashar Mohammad Khurshid Alam, the current DGHS boss, said, "No one will be spared if found engaged in any unlawful activities."

Malek had not accumulated his wealth in a day, he added.

"More people will face the music in the coming days."

ANTI-GRAFT MOVE

A three-member ACC team, headed by a deputy director, was tasked to probe the allegations against Malek and 44 DGHS staff members.

ACC Director Kazi Safiqul Alam said they made the move after the corruption of Abzal Hossain, administration officer

SAUDI RETURNNEES

Arrange more flights for their return to KSA

Momen urges Riyadh

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka has urged Riyadh to increase flight frequency between Bangladesh and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) to facilitate quick return of Bangladeshi migrant workers to their workplaces in the gulf nation.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen made the call during a telephone conversation with Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal Bin Farhan Al-Saud yesterday evening.

Momen welcomed the Saudi Araba's decision of renewing visa and extending iqama (work permit) period of the stranded Bangladeshi migrants.

He also requested his Saudi counterpart to allow Biman Bangladesh Airlines to operate flights between Dhaka and Dammam.

at the Institute of Health Technology of DGHS, came to the fore.

The ACC found over Tk 284 crore in different bank accounts of Abzal and his wife.

Asked about the investigation against Malek and the others, Safiqul said the ACC had filed 17 cases on the basis of enquiries against the 45 suspects.

"When it comes to illegal wealth, we need to do a pre-enquiry to confirm the allegation. That's why it takes time," he added.

Between 70 and 80, mostly grade III and IV, health sector employees are now under the ACC scanner.

The ACC last week filed a case against former DGHS director and principal of the Institute of Health Technology M Aminul Hasan, DGHS Deputy Director Yunus Ali, Assistant Director Dr Shafiqur Rahman and Research Officer Dr Didarul Islam in connection with the Regent Hospital scam.

A top ACC officer said, "Corruption by top officials is more visible and we've recently lodged cases against some of them. But these grade III and IV employees somehow stayed under the radar... We are trying to break their syndicate everywhere."

Heavy fighting

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Later, Azerbaijan's presidency claimed its forces captured from Armenian rebels a strategic mountain that helps control transport communications between Yerevan and the Armenian-held enclave. Azerbaijani forces have taken the 3,000-metre-high "strategic" Murovdag peak in Karabakh, presidency spokesman Hikmet Hajiyev told journalists.

In a televised address to the nation earlier in the day, Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev vowed victory over Armenian forces.

"Our cause is just and we will win," Aliyev said, repeating a famous quote from Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin's address at the outbreak of World War II in Russia.

"Karabakh is Azerbaijan," he said. Both Armenia and the breakaway region of Nagorno Karabakh declared martial law and military mobilisation.

"Get ready to defend our sacred homeland," Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said on Facebook.

"I call on the international community to use all existing levers to prevent Turkey's meddling (in the conflict) which can once and for all destabilise the (Caucasus) region," Pashinyan said in a televised statement.

Many worried despite govt assurances

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could get their expired visas renewed there.

The minister also said their work permits (iqama) would remain valid until October 17.

Shah Alam, a migrant worker from Cumilla's Titas, said he came to Bangladesh with a six-month re-entry visa and was supposed to return to Saudi Arabia's capital Riyadh in April.

He said he checked the validity of his iqama yesterday using a recommended application.

"The app showed my iqama was still 'invalid'," said the migrant worker, who lived in Saudi Arabia for more than two decades.

"I am very worried now," he said, adding that he saw some other workers' iqamas get renewed automatically.

Alam said the app showed his iqama had been invalid for the past two months.

He communicated with his employer in Saudi Arabia who advised him to communicate with Saudi embassy in Bangladesh.

Preferring anonymity, a migrant worker from Cumilla's Homna, said his iqama's validity was expired on Saturday even after automatic renewal by the Saudi government.

The worker, who lived in Dammam, said he came home in March on a two-month vacation and has remained stranded because of flight cancellations.

Md Alam, a worker from Brahmanbaria, said his iqama will remain valid till September 30, which was also automatically extended.

He said he came home 15 days before the Covid-19 outbreak on a two-month vacation and is also stranded now.

Alam, 45, said he first went to Saudi Arabia in 1994. He had a good monthly income of about Tk 2 lakh at a motor shop in the city of Ha'il.

BARRED FROM REACHING EMBASSY

Migrant workers were not allowed to reach the Saudi embassy premises and were stopped yards away by police yesterday.

They were asked to submit their papers to a number of "services offices approved by the embassy" to get their required service.

Asked, Nazmul Hasan Firoz, assistant deputy commissioner (Gulshan) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said the Saudi Arabian embassy has provided a list of the service offices that police distributed among the workers.

Firoz, who was on duty, said those offices will provide the required services to the workers on behalf of the Saudi embassy.

He added that the migrant workers were asked to communicate via those agencies as giving such a large number of people access to the embassy was difficult amid the pandemic situation.

SAUDIA TO OPERATE TWO MORE WEEKLY FLIGHTS

In another development, the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) has given permission to Saudi Arabian Airlines to operate two more weekly flights from Dhaka to the KSA from October 1.

Mahbubey Alam

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the country has left behind his wife, two children and a host of admirers to mourn his death.

President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina expressed profound shock and condolence at the demise of the attorney general.

In his condolence message, Abdul Hamid said Mahbubey Alam had shown extraordinary skills in handling different cases, including the ones filed over Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's murder.

"His death is an irreparable loss to the country," the president said.

PM Hasina in a condolence message said the nation would always remember Mahbubey Alam with gratitude for his contributions to the country's legal arena.

"As an eminent jurist, he played his role with great skills in many legal matters of national importance. He also devoted himself to his profession righteously, which will always remain as a noteworthy example for all," she said.

Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain, Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, Deputy Speaker Fazle Rabbi Miah, deputy leader of the House and Jatiya Party Chairman GM Quader, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader, Law Minister Anisul Huq, Railways Minister Nurul Islam Sujan, Finance Minister AHM Mostafa Kamal, Planning Minister MA Mannan, among others, expressed grief at the attorney general's death.

They prayed for the salvation and eternal peace of the departed soul and expressed deep sympathy for the bereaved family members.

Mahbubey Alam had been receiving treatment at the CMH since September 4 after being infected with Covid-19.

He was taken to the ICU on September 18 after his health condition suddenly deteriorated.

Mahbubey Alam was born in Mouchamandra village under Louhajong upazila in Munshiganj on February 17, 1949.

He completed his honours degree in political science from Dhaka University in 1968 and obtained a master's degree in public administration from the same university in 1969.

Later, he obtained an LLB degree from Dhaka University in 1972.

Mahbubey Alam attained a certificate from Bangladesh Bar Council, the statutory body that gives licences to lawyers for practising law in courts, in 1973.

He became a member of the Dhaka Bar Association in the same year.

He got permission to practise law in the High Court Division of the Supreme Court in 1975 and he got permission to practise law in the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court in 1980.

Mahbubey Alam was enrolled as a senior lawyer of the Appellate Division in 1998.

He achieved a diploma degree on constitutional law and parliamentary law from the Institute of Constitutional and Parliamentary Studies in New Delhi in India in 1979.

He served as the additional attorney general of the state since November 15, 1998 to October 4, 2001.

He served as an elected executive member of Bangladesh Bar Council from 2004 to 2007.

Advocate Mahbubey Alam was appointed as the attorney general of the state on January 13, 2009. At the same time, he also performed as the ex-officio chairman of Bangladesh Bar Council.

He placed arguments before the Appellate and High Court Divisions on many important cases including Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's assassination case, and the cases regarding the constitution's fifth, seventh, 13th and 16th amendments.

Besides, Mahbubey Alam had placed arguments before the apex court to ensure punishment of war criminals Matiur Rahman Nizami, Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed, Muhhammad Kamaruzzaman, Abdul Quader Mollah, Mir Quasem Ali, Salah Uddin Quader Chowdhury, Delwar Hossain Sayeede and ATM Azharul Islam for their crimes against humanity and war crimes during the Liberation War of the country in 1971.

All 9 rapists

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23, Abdul Halim, 28, Shahin Mia, 19, Antor, 20, Abdur Rashid, and Iqbal Hossen, read a press release of Khagrachhari police.

They were arrested from Chattogram and different areas of Khagrachhari district, it read.

The nine accused allegedly broke into the victim's house with sharp weapons, tied up her mother and stepfather, and raped her on Thursday early hours in Belpaiye Adam area of Khagrachhari Sadar upazila.