

BANGLADESH
UPDATE



1,442
New cases in 24hrs



3,70,132
Total cases



5,375
Deaths



2,83,182
Recoveries



1,043,205
Deaths



35,508,984
Total cases

Malaysian PM quarantines after minister tests Covid positive

REUTERS, Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia's Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin yesterday said he will self quarantine for 14 days after a minister who attended a high-level government meeting to discuss coronavirus developments on Saturday tested positive for Covid-19.

The Southeast Asian country has seen a steady climb in cases in the past week in the aftermath of an election in the state of Sabah in Borneo on Sept 26.

Authorities in Malaysia have warned that coronavirus restrictions may have to be reimposed if the trend continues, amid popular anger towards politicians who have been blamed for the spike.

In a statement, Muhyiddin confirmed that Religious Affairs Minister Zulkifli Mohamad Al-Bakri had tested positive, and that those identified as close contacts at Saturday's National Security Council meeting to discuss Covid-19 had been issued a 14-day home surveillance order starting October 3.

"Pursuant to that, I will undergo self-quarantine at my home for 14 days as advised by the health ministry," Muhyiddin said.

"However, this will not interrupt government business. I will continue to work from home and use video conferencing to conduct meetings as necessary."

Decision on HSC tests

FROM PAGE 1

also in touch with the advisory committee on Covid-19 and experts, they added.

On September 30, Dipu Moni said the government was working on different options regarding the HSC exams.

"We are working on a range of possibilities -- how the exams can be held within the shortest possible time, on how many subjects, and on how many marks," she said.

She added that preparing HSC result based on examinees' JSC and SSC results is another option in their consideration. "Some people want evaluation without any exams [HSC] ... the option remains open. We are keeping a range of options open."

Why isn't this illegal?

FROM PAGE 1

The Wasa can increase water tariff by only 5 percent in consultation with the government as per section 22 of the Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority Act, 1996, the writ petitioner added.

Following the same writ petition, the HC bench of Justice M Enayetur Rahim on June 22 had issued an injunction till August 10 on Dhaka Wasa's decision.

The Wasa then filed a petition with the Appellate Division of the SC seeking a stay order on the HC's injunction order.

Chamber Judge Justice Md Nuruzzaman of the Appellate Division stayed the HC order on June 30.

Yesterday, lawyer Tanvir moved the same writ petition before the HC.

Talking to this newspaper, he said

there was no legal bar on collection of bills by Dhaka Wasa as per the hiked water tariff as the SC's stay order was still in force.

"Dhaka Wasa was supposed to file a leave to appeal petition with the Supreme Court against the High Court's June 22 injunction order. But I don't know whether Wasa has filed the leave to appeal petition. If they move the leave to appeal petition before the Appellate Division, we will place arguments opposing it," Tanvir said.

He said the HC would deliver a verdict on the matter after holding hearing on the rule issued yesterday.

Deputy Attorney General Noor-Ur Sadik represented the state while lawyer Saifuzzaman Tuhin appeared for Dhaka Wasa.

PM for prompt action

FROM PAGE 1

Recalling the brutal attacks of August 15, 1975 when Sheikh Russel, along with other children, was also killed during the assassination of the Father of the Nation and his family members, she said death of any children shocks her seriously. "No matter whether it happens in our country or abroad, in the Bay of Bengal or on the beach of the Mediterranean Sea, every incident hurts me."

She said she wants this world to be a reliable, livable and peaceful place for the children where each of them will have a bright future.

Reiterating that children are the future of the nation, she said they need to be built as worthy citizens of the country.

"We have to give them the scope for flourishing their talent, knowledge and intelligence. And that's possible through creating an appropriate environment for their studies and good health. This will ensure a better life for them which will make a prosperous future for them."

Hasina said children are passing miserable days due to the Covid-19 pandemic as schools are closed. "This is very much painful for them. What will they do sitting at home?"

She urged the parents and guardians to take children outside of

their homes to any nearby park or any other place where they could play at least for an hour. "This is very much needed for their mental and physical health, and we all have to maintain their health hygiene and safety."

The PM said the government has arranged classes for the students on TV and online so that their academic activities could be continued during this pandemic.

Hasina said there may be some problems in leading life and all will have to move forward resolving those issues.

She also briefly described various government initiatives taken for the children, including distribution of free textbooks, stipends and different kinds of incentives during normal time and pandemic situation.

State Minister for Women and Children Affairs Fazilatun Nessa Indira presided over the programme.

The premier at the inaugural function unveiled the covers of a series of children's books -- "Amra Ekechi 100 Mujib", a book published with selected pictures drawn by children, and "Amra Likhechi 100 Mujib", another book published with writings of children, -- written on the life and works of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on the occasion of the "Mujib Year".

Mental health

FROM PAGE 1

WHO's survey found that 30 percent of countries reported some disruption in emergency mental health provision and medication supplies for people with disorders.

Prevention services were sharply affected while travel restrictions hindered patient access to health facilities.

However, countries are learning to respond with innovative solutions such as telemedicine and teletherapy interventions.

The WHO also said more data was needed on Covid-19's effect on brain health, with fewer than one in 10 countries conducting research.

The WHO said that estimates before the coronavirus pandemic showed that nearly \$1.0 trillion in economic productivity was lost annually from

depression and anxiety alone.

However, studies showed that every dollar spent on evidence-based care for depression and anxiety returned \$5.00.

On Saturday, the WHO is hosting on social media "The Big Event for Mental Health", calling for increased investment.

Those taking part include Queen Mathilde of the Belgians; footballer Alisson Becker, the Brazil and Liverpool goalkeeper; and pop star Lady Gaga's mother Cynthia Germanotta.

Also involved are the widow of Chester Bennington, the Linkin Park singer who committed suicide in 2017, and Klas Bergling, the father of the Swedish superstar DJ Avicii, who was found dead two years ago aged 28.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

Residents of Bhabadaha in Abhaynagar upazila of Jashore form a human chain in the stagnant water to mark the Bhabadaha Day yesterday. People of the region have been suffering waterlogging for years with no end in sight.

Indifference drowned cries for justice

FROM PAGE 1

action against the officials of Begumganj Police Station, including its officer-in-charge, for their negligence in protecting the victim and taking more prompt action against the perpetrators.

The home secretary, deputy commissioner and superintendent of police in Noakhali, the upazila nirbahi officer of Begumganj and other officials concerned have been made respondents to the rule, Deputy Attorney General Nawroz MR Chowdhury told The Daily Star.

The HC bench issued the directives and rule after Supreme Court lawyers ZI Khan Panna and Abdullah Al Mamun placed newspaper reports on the incident before the bench for necessary directives.

The HC also formed a three-member committee led by the additional deputy commissioner of Noakhali to conduct an inquiry into whether there was any negligence on the part of police in recording statements from the victim over the incident.

The two other members of the committee are the social service officer of Noakhali and the principal of Chaumuhoni Government SA College. The committee has been asked to submit the probe report to this court in 15 days.

The HC bench also ordered the OC of Begumganj Police Station to submit a report on the update of the criminal cases filed by the victim in connection with the incident to this court on October 28, and ordered the superintendent of police of Noakhali to provide all protection to the victim and her family.

Meanwhile, law enforcers have arrested four people, including the

main accused amid widespread outrage.

"We did not even know the incident took place or we would have taken prompt action," said Harunur Rashid Chowdhury, officer-in-charge of Begumganj Police Station.

The arrestees are: main accused Badal, "Delwar Bahini" chief Delwar, Rahmat Ullah and Abdur Rahim.

Rab arrested Badal in Dhaka and Delwar in Narayanganj, recovering weapons from his person, said Lt Col Khandakar Saiful Alam of Rab-11 yesterday.

Rahmat Ullah was arrested in Begumganj upazila yesterday, reports our Noakhali correspondent quoting Shajahan Sheikh, additional superintendent of police of Begumganj Circle.

Abdur Rahim was held on Sunday night soon after the video went viral, confirmed OC Chowdhury.

The survivor, who was in hiding, was sought out and brought to the police station to file cases against the perpetrators. She named nine people, and mentioned that seven or eight unknown people were also present. In addition to those arrested, the others named in the case are Abul Kalam, Israfil Hossain Miah, Shaju, Shamsuddin Sumon, Abdur Rob and Arif.

Two cases were filed, one under the Pornography Control Act and the other addressing her rape and torture under the Women and Children Repression (Prevention) Act, informed our correspondent.

The police, however, booked the men seen in the video under "attempt to rape" charges.

As per the video, the perpetrators did not engage in penile-vaginal intercourse, and instead used their

hands, as well as a large stick as a tool.

In addition, the survivor herself narrated in her first information report that the perpetrators used their hands as instruments in carrying out the act of insertion.

The charge of rape carries a life sentence, whereas "attempt to rape" commits perpetrators between 5 to 10 years.

Lawyers familiar with the incident opined that this was definitely rape. "There is video evidence of what happened. It does not matter if the rape was executed using tools like hands or sticks as long as the rape happened," said Salma Ali, eminent women's rights lawyer.

She said that the video evidence can be used to turn the charges into rape charges. Ali also advised that all stakeholders of the future trial need to be sensitised. "There is video evidence of the rape. This will be played over and over again and scrutinised by lawyers, policemen, judges. That this trial is not a further cause for trauma for the survivor must be ensured."

In its suo moto rule mentioned above, the High Court yesterday also directed the chairman of Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) to immediately remove the video footage from social media. The HC also asked the BTRC chairman to record the copy of the video footage in a compact disk (CD) or USB drive before removing it from social media.

The court heard opinions from lawyers including Supreme Court Bar Association President AM Amin Uddin, its Secretary Md Ruhul Quddus Kazal, Jyotirmoy Barua, Yadia Zaman, Jamil Haque Faisal, Rashida Chowdhury Nilu and Tanjim Al Islam before passing the orders.

Shocked, enraged

FROM PAGE 1

As many as 975 women and children were raped in the first nine months of this year. Of them, 208 were gang-raped, according to Ain o Salish Kendra, a rights organisation.

In the capital, several hundred protesters staged demonstrations in Shahbagh and Uttara areas, carrying placards and shouting slogans.

Left-leaning activists under the banners of "Shahbagh Against Oppression" and "Bondi Somoyer Chitkar" started demonstrating in front of the National Museum around 11:15am. They staged a sit-in at the Shahbagh intersection at yesterday noon, slowing down vehicular movement in the area.

"Today, the entire Bangladesh has been raped... One rape after another is happening across the country from hill tracts to plain land," Liton Nandi, former general secretary of Chhatra Union, said at the sit-in.

Such incidents are recurring because of the culture of impunity, and the ruling party men are mostly involved in those, he said, calling for resignation of the home minister.

In the afternoon, the protesters brought out an anti-rape stick procession, chanting slogans on Dhaka streets. In slogans, the protesters said they want "Azadi" [freedom] from rape and abuse.

Bangladesh Chhatra Odhikar Parishad under the banner of "Students- People Against Rape and Abuse" held a protest rally in front of the National Museum.

The Parishad leaders said the government was responsible for the rise in rape incidents across the country, and alleged that it is sheltering the ruling party men involved in such incidents.

"No one is safe... Isn't a wife being taken away from her husband and getting raped? Aren't innocent people

becoming victims in crossfire?" said Nurul Haque Nur, former vice president of Dhaka University Central Students' Union (DUCSU), and joint convener of the Parishad.

Demanding resignation of the home minister, he said, "What is our home minister doing? They are the ones who promote people like OC Pradeep."

Several hundred people brought out a protest procession from the House Building area in the capital's Uttara, demanding exemplary punishment to the culprits.

ActionAid Bangladesh and the National Women's Violence Prevention Forum formed a human chain in front of Shyamoli Square.

In Narayanganj, Farhana Manik Muna, a final year student of the management department of the Tolaram College, staged a sit-in at the Central Shaheed Minar in Chashara area from 9:00am to 7:00pm.

Similar protest programmes were held in at least 24 districts, including Noakhali, Kushtia, Kurigram, Jamalpur, Faridpur, Naogaon, Bagerhat, Nilphamari, Satkhira, Pirojpur, Meherpur, Jashore, Netrakona, Narasingdi, Natore, protesting the recent incidents of rape.

'SHOCKED, ANGRY, FRUSTRATED' Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF), the ASK, Naripokkho, Breaking the Silence, Pragrosor, Centre for Women and Children Studies (CWCS) and WeCan expressed grave concern, shock and anger over the gang-rape incident in Begumganj.

In a statement yesterday, MJF Executive Director Shaheen Anam said, "We are shocked and deeply saddened by this incident. Such incidents are on the rise now because of the culture of impunity for the criminals. Women rarely get justice for oppression on them."

"Horrific incidents like rape and

said.

"Validity of my iqama was not extended. I had to contact my sponsor personally and had to pay Tk 45,000 [2,000 Saudi riyal] for the extension," he added.

Liaquat Hossainj, of Keraniganj, who came to the country on February 3, said, "I had to pay Tk 67,000 [3,000 Saudi riyal] for extending my iqama

until October 18 after it expired on September 30."

Asked, Borhan Uddin, director general (West Asia) of the foreign ministry, yesterday said very few migrant workers were facing difficulties regarding their return to Saudi Arabia.

This is happening because their sponsors do not want them to return, he said.

SC keeps trial of cases against Dr Yunus stayed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday upheld the High Court orders that stayed trial proceedings of five separate cases filed against Nobel Laureate Dr Muhammad Yunus over sacking five employees of Grameen Communications.

The Appellate Division of the SC, however, asked the HC to hear and dispose of the rules issued questioning the trial proceedings of the cases as early as possible.

A three-member apex court bench headed by Justice Muhammad Imman Ali issued the orders after disposing of five separate leave to appeal petitions filed by the state challenging the HC orders of stay.

Deputy Attorney General Amit Dasgupta moved the state's leave to appeal petitions, saying that the petitions upon which the HC has stayed the trial proceedings of the cases against Prof Muhammad are not acceptable.

Mustafizur Rahman Khan, a defence lawyer for Prof Muhammad Yunus, told The Daily Star that the five employees used to work for Grameen Communications on a contract basis.

"As their contracts were not renewed, they filed five separate cases with a lower court in July last year against the company's Chairman Prof Muhammad Yunus and a few others," he said, adding that the former employees claimed that they were terminated as they wanted to form a trade union.

Following five separate petitions filed by Dr Muhammad Yunus, the HC in March this year stayed the trial proceedings of the cases and issued rules asking the state to explain why the proceedings of the cases should not be scrapped.

The petitions filed with the HC said only the directorate of labour could file such cases under the labour act and no individual could file such cases against his client, Mustafizur Rahman said.

The lawyer said as the Appellate Division has not interfered in the HC's stay orders and the trial proceedings against Dr Yunus will remain halted.

Prof Muhammad Yunus is on bail in all cases against him, the lawyer added.

Couple killed in Chuadanga

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A couple was found dead at their house in Gobindapur village of Chuadanga's Damurhuda on Sunday evening.

The victims are: Yar Ali and his wife Rozina Khatun. Their throats were slit, police said.

Quoting locals, Abdul Khalek, officer-in-charge of Damurhuda Police Station, said Yar and Rozina were last seen Saturday evening.

As nobody had seen then since Sunday morning, neighbours became worried.

Through a window, a neighbour saw the couple's bodies inside the house around 7:00pm on Sunday, the OC said.

On information, police recovered the bodies.

Police suspected that criminals killed the two on Saturday night.

They said Yar, who had two wives, had a feud with his second wife over property.

A case was filed against five unknown people with Damurhuda Police Station.

Police detained five people, including the second wife of Yar and her two brothers, for interrogation.

Turkey pledges 'full solidarity' with Libya unity govt

AFP, Istanbul

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Sunday expressed "full solidarity" with Libya's UN-recognised Government of National Accord (GNA) during a meeting in Istanbul, his office said.

Erdogan met with the head of the Tripoli-based government, Fayez al-Sarraj, who last month announced plans to step down within six weeks as part of efforts to broker a peace agreement.

Saudia to operate

FROM PAGE 1

Biman Bangladesh Airlines has permission to operate nine chartered flights to three cities in Saudi Arabia a week. The Bangladesh government has said it will allow Saudi to operate as many flights it wants.

Alowaidi said they are operating 10 weekly flights on an average and every day they are trying to increase the number of special flights to carry more passengers.

"We are likely to operate 50 to 60 flights including scheduled and special ones in October," he added.

"We are doing our best and I am sure you are aware of this. Our ticket-selling office is open even on Friday and Saturday until late hours.

"We are hopeful of carrying all the passengers to Saudi Arabia if they have visas. We are giving priority to the Bangladeshis who have a valid visa and return ticket."