

**BANGLADESH
UPDATE**



1,520
New cases in 24hrs



3,73,151
Total cases



5,440
Deaths



2,86,631
Recoveries

**GLOBAL
UPDATE**



1,056,419
Deaths



36,161,849
Total cases

UN expresses grave concern

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“While UN stands with the public and civil society groups in calling for justice, we recognise that these are not isolated incidents. We promote a systematic approach to strengthen protection of women’s rights,” the statement reads.

The UN strongly recommended an urgent reform of the criminal justice system to support and protect victims and witnesses, and to speed up the slow trial process.

PROTESTS CONTINUE

Meanwhile, students and rights activists took to the streets across the country for the third consecutive day yesterday, protesting rape and sexual abuse of women and children, including the recent gang-rape of a Noakhali woman.

They demanded the authorities amend the law and bring rapists to justice through speedy trial tribunals, introduce dedicated courts for trial of rape cases and ensure capital punishment for rapists.

The protesters also demanded resignation of Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan for failing to prevent rapes across the country.

In the capital, different leftist students’ platforms, non-profit organisations, Bangladesh Chhatra Adhikar Parishad and Nirapad Sarak Andolon staged protests in Shahbagh, Central Shaheed Minar, Dhanmondi and Uttara areas.

The agitators blocked different roads and intersections since morning, causing traffic gridlocks in some parts of the city, including Airport Road, Badda Link Road, and Shahbagh areas.

Nirapad Sarak Andolon held a rally in Central Shaheed Minar area around 11:00am. Protesters from the platform later began a march towards the Prime Minister’s Office. Law enforcers intercepted them in Sonargaon intersection area.

Later, a five-member representative team of the organisation went to the PMO and submitted a memorandum with seven-point demand.

The demands include passing of a new law with a provision for capital punishment of rapists, holding trials of rape cases at speedy trial tribunals, introducing a hotline to provide prompt service to the victims, tasking a female police officer at each police station with recording rape cases, tasking female cops with the investigation of rape cases, and taking steps against officials involved in helping criminals.

Bangladesh Chhatra Odhikar Parishad under the banner of “Students-People against Rape and Abuse”, led by former Ducus VP Nurul Haque Nur, brought out a procession from Shahbagh intersection.

Carrying black flags, the protesters marched towards the home ministry, demanding resignation of the home minister. Police obstructed the procession at Zero Point in the city’s

Gulistan area around 1:00pm.

Nur said the anti-rape protests should be turned into mass movements and social movements. He demanded the authorities amend the existing laws, if necessary, and bring rapists to justice under the speedy trial law.

He alleged that police were backing the rapists. “And here, the home minister is leading them. He has failed to provide security to the country’s citizens. The minister must step down immediately.”

Muhammad Rashed Khan, another leader of the platform, said the home minister’s recent comment on rape has angered the people of the country.

“We don’t want a home minister who can’t ensure security of our mothers and sisters,” he said.

The organisation called for a mass protest in Shahbagh at 4:00pm on Friday.

Supporters of Save Our Women - Bangladesh, a non-profit organisation, formed a human chain in front of the National Museum in Shahbagh. They demanded dedicated courts for trial of rape incidents and death penalty for rapists.

Sanjida Khan, president of the platform, said so many rape incidents were taking place in the country and many of them remained unreported. She said they want to raise awareness among families as many conceal rape incidents.

She urged all families to ensure moral lessons for their male children.

In Uttara, students gathered in groups in front of BNS Centre since morning. They formed a human chain there around 11:00pm. The human chain later turned into a protest rally.

At one stage, the agitating students blocked a part of the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway from 11:00am to 2:00pm.

In the afternoon, students and common people held a protest rally on Dhanmondi Road -27.

Bangladesh National Women Lawyers’ Association yesterday formed a human chain in the capital. Expressing deep concern over the rise in rape incidents, the organisation demanded arrest of the culprits.

Similar protests were held in other districts, including Brahmanbaria, Bogura, Chandpur, Chapainawabganj, Manikganj and Narayanganj.

Several hundred students from different schools and colleges staged demonstrations in Narayanganj city, blocking Gangabandhu Road in front of the Bijoy Stomvo in Chashara from 10:00am to 2:00pm.

In Bogura, about 350 students from different educational institutions organised a protest rally and sit-in in the district town’s Satmatha area.

The protesters urged lawyers not to defend rapists in courts and called upon the government to complete the trial of each rape case within three months after the occurrence of an incident.

Ensure \$100b for developing

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billion a year are available to developing countries for mitigation, adaptation and disaster response and recovery,” she told the event titled “Midnight Survival Deadline for the Climate” while presiding over it as the current Chair of Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF).

In this connection, the prime minister put forth four-point proposal to save the planet from the adverse impact of the climate change through “robust international partnership”.

“Strict implementation of the Paris Agreement is the only way to slow down the current rate of damage caused by climate change,” she said in her first proposal.

In the second proposal, she said the governments should not only honour their national contributions under the Paris Agreement, they also need to substantially increase their ambitions. “The idea of climate justice must be established for the sake of climate and the planet,” she said.

Sheikh Hasina in her third proposal said that more vigorous provision of finance must be ensured by the major economies, Multilateral Development Bank (MDBs), and International Financial Institutions (IFIs) along with access to technology.

“Take bold actions to address and mainstream the issue of loss and damage,” she said in her fourth proposal.

Stressing the need for prompt actions to address the climate change issue, the premier said, “In our war against nature, we will only lose. All our measures manifest that we are consciously destroying the very support systems that are keeping us alive. So, the time to take action to save the planet is not tomorrow, but today.”

Sheikh Hasina said, “Today we are at the most important crossroad of human history facing the gravest global challenges of our time. Adverse impacts of climate change are harming our civilization, destroying our planet and threatening our very existence.”

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, Global Center on Adaptation (GCA) Chair Ban Ki-moon, and heads of state and government of the CVF countries joined the event.

Sheikh Hasina said, “We, the CVF leaders and our partners, call everyone

to take urgent and strong global actions to address climate emergency before the 2020 NDC Enhancement deadline.”

Mentioning that Bangladesh is honoured to be chosen to lead the Climate Vulnerable Forum for the second time, she said that the CVF represents over one billion people of the world’s most vulnerable countries.

She also said that the CVF countries suffer the most despite their insignificant contribution to the global carbon emission.

The premier said, “As president, our focus would be galvanizing support for the goal to keep the global temperature-increase up to 1.5 degrees, accelerating financing mechanisms and highlighting the narratives of climate resilience, and ‘loss and damage’ issue.”

She went on saying, “We will also put emphasis on appointing a UN Special Rapporteur on Climate Change and creating a CVF and V20 Joint Multi-Donor Fund.”

The premier said that Bangladesh launched the South Asian regional office for Global Center of Adaptation in Dhaka on September 8.

“I’ll act as the Secretariat for Bangladesh presidency and facilitate, support and develop appropriate actions in South Asia to enhance climate resiliency in the region,” she said.

UN refugee chief tests positive for Covid-19

AFP, Geneva

The UN refugee chief said Wednesday that he had tested positive for Covid-19, after leading the first two days of the agency’s main annual meeting in person.

Filippo Grandi, who kicked off UNHCR’s week-long Executive Committee meeting in Geneva Monday, told participants via video-link that he would need to continue following the event from home.

“I am engaging with UNHCR’s Executive Committee from home as I have to isolate after testing positive to #COVID19,” he said in a tweet.



Hundreds gather in front of the National Press Club to protest the Noakhali gang-rape that came to light recently, and the general epidemic of sexual crime in the country. The protest was organised by the BNP. The photo was taken around noon yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

HSC grading based on SSC, JSC marks

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consideration that some examinees or their parents could get infected.

She said many countries, including India, China, South Africa and some in the Caribbean, also cancelled their public and others important exams this year.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The education minister said an advisory committee would be formed to chalk out how students who had changed education groups after SSC would be evaluated.

The committee, led by an education ministry additional secretary with Dhaka education board chairman as its member secretary, would also decide how JSC and SSC grades would be used for evaluating the candidates.

Dhaka board chairman Prof Ziaul Haque said they would sit with officials of all boards and their system analysts to prepare the process.

“JSC and SSC are different exams and they will give different weight to the results.”

Dipu Moni said universities could hold admission test in January, subject to the coronavirus situation. She said there would be discussions with universities about their test procedures.

MIXED REACTION

Educationist and Campaign for Popular Education Executive Director Rasheda K Choudhury praised the government

decision and said it was needed to end the worries of students.

“Evaluation based on two previous public exams is far better than giving auto promotions,” she said.

She said the government could still use marks of test exams held at schools and colleges alongside board exam results to evaluate the candidates.

Prof Mazharul Hannan, president of Bangladesh Principals’ Association, said this kind of evaluation would deprive many students who otherwise would have gotten a chance to improve.

However, the minister said, “Many things can happen, a good result holder of JSC and SSC, can have an unexpected result ... some cannot finish the exams ... we cannot take all the issues into consideration.”

Former director of the Institute of Education and Research at Dhaka University Prof Siddiqui Rahman said the HSC is an important exam before students go for higher education.

“... A student does not develop that much analytical abilities at JSC exam level ... I will urge government to review its decision.”

“I think the government can take HSC exams by doubling exam centres and strictly maintaining health guidelines,” he said.

Sharif Ahmed, a parent of a candidate from Mirpur area, said the decision to

evaluate students based on previous grades was not wise. “It would have been better if the students spent their time in studies until the admission tests for universities.”

Ekrum Hossain, another parent, welcomed the decision. “We are all free from worries now. I don’t have the words to express how relieved I am.”

HSC examinee Mahfuz Ahmed said he was relieved after hearing the news. He said hundreds of candidates who are members of Facebook group “No HSC during coronavirus” expressed satisfaction.

This is the first time HSC exams have been cancelled since the introduction in 1964, claimed Mazharul Hannan, a teachers’ leader.

Dhaka board chairman Ziaul said no HSC exams were cancelled since the country was liberated. He could not say then and there when the exams were introduced.

The closure of schools for over six months has led to the cancellation of exams and left academic calendars in disarray. Educational activities of about four crore students are being hampered due to the pandemic.

This year’s Primary Education Completion and its equivalent exams and Junior School Certificate and its equivalent exams were also cancelled due to the pandemic.

Local politicians behind his rise

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the incident happened in Noakhali and those torturing the women were Delwar’s accomplices.

Before joining the AL youth wing’s politics, Delwar used to be a follower of BNP-leaning criminal “Khalashi” Sumon, local politicians claimed. Sumon has 36 criminal cases against him, they added.

“That is when he stopped driving the CNG [auto-rickshaw] and started earning through harassment and extortion,” Saidur said.

Locals sources said Delwar and other members of the Sumon’s gang had “blessings” from several local BNP leaders.

All people, from several villages in the upazila, interviewed by our correspondent attested to the fact that “Delwar Bahini” used to be the bone in their throat, to the point where they were scared of him.

A 70-year-old man from Joykrishnapur village said on condition of anonymity that Delwar used to recruit youths of the village into his “Bahini” using drugs.

“Nobody complained to the police because he was truly someone to be afraid of. And so he became this person with impunity,” said the man.

Locals of Eklaspur, Anantapur and Joykrishnapur villages said Delwar took photos with local parliamentarian from Noakhali-3 constituency, Mamunur Rashid Kiron, as well as upazila-level AL leaders, and then printed them onto posters and banners and distributed them across the villages. Even though he held no positions in Jubo League, he was known as a Jubo League leader.

During the 2015 Union Parishad elections, he threatened voters inside voting centres with his gun, intimidating them into voting for the local Krishak League representative Alo.

Delwar’s Facebook profile is a testament to his current political leanings – his whole profile is plastered with photos with local AL leaders as well as photos of AL symbols and imagery.

Contacted, Eklashpur Union Jubo League’s Coordinator Naimuddin Rasel said Delwar used the ruling party’s “signboard” to extort rickshaw-pullers and CNG drivers in the area, grab land and rob fisheries. “In March 2018, he was made the prime accused in a double murder case, as well as in the murder of an individual named Shariful Hasan. But in spite of being a murder suspect, he was never arrested and he used to move about freely in the village,” said Rasel.

The double murder happened on March 10, 2018, around 10:00pm. Delwar and other followers of “Khalashi” Sumon allegedly went to the house of two of the followers of an opposing gang called “Shamrat Bahini” and shot them dead, said local sources.

The sources said by that Sumon had already leaned towards AL politicians, leaving the company of BNP leaders.

Contacted, Begumganj circle’s Additional Superintendent of Police Shahjahan Sheikh said, “Delwar is a wanted criminal in three cases, two for murder and one for possessing illegal arms.” When asked why he was never arrested, the police official said, “He was never in the village, always in hiding.”

This statement, however, differs vastly from that of the locals who described his presence in the village as omnipotent.

“So afraid are the villagers of him that when the police’s deputy inspector general [DIG] of Chittagong range came to the village to investigate yesterday, this person whose fishery was robbed by Delwar, lied and told the DIG that he does not know who took his fish,” said Rasel.

Begumganj Upazila AL President and Chairperson of Noakhali Zila Parishad

paid to some officials, he claimed.

He added they reissue tickets through a section of officials of respective airlines.

Biman Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer Mokabbir Hossain recently told the media they were reissuing tickets to those who have return tickets for flights to Saudi Arabia. He said no agency was given permission to reissue Biman tickets.

Any passenger can avail the facility free of cost from Biman’s sales centres, said Mokabbir, adding if someone does this in exchange for money, it is completely illegal.

“We will identify them and take legal actions against them,” he added.

Currently, only Biman and Saudia, the national flag carrier of Saudi Arabia, are operating direct flights to Saudi Arabia from Bangladesh.

Biman is operating nine and Saudia

Dr ABM Jafar Ullah also confirmed that Delwar was a criminal on the rise.

“I do not agree that he was aided or abetted by the ruling party. He used to take photos with the party members and used it to spread propaganda about himself,” he said.

Eklaspur Union’s Krishak League Chairperson Alamgir Kabir Alo said he did not help Delwar join the ruling party politics. “My competitors are spreading misinformation about me, I don’t have any relationship with Delwar,” he said.

AL President of Ward-4 Zahir could not be reached for comments.

Meanwhile, police arrested two more people in connection with the incident of the gang-rape and torture of the woman in Begumganj upazila of Noakhali.

The arrestees are: Noor Hosen Rasel, 30, and Sohag, 21, reports our correspondent, quoting Officer-in-Charge of Begumganj Model Police Station Harunur Rashid Chowdhury.

Begumganj police arrested the duo during a drive in Eklashpur village last night, the OC said.

Rasel and Sohag are not mentioned in the case statement, said Md Alamgir Hosen, superintendent of police (SP) in Noakhali.

“But we found their involvement in the incident during the investigation,” the SP said, adding that their names would be included in the case.

The duo will be produced before the court following interrogation by police, OC Harunur Rashid Chowdhury said.

In addition, the gang-rape survivor filed a rape case against Delwar, chief of “Delwar Bahini”, and his second-in-command Abul Kalam, last night with Begumganj Model Police Station.

Delwar, who is already in police custody, will be shown arrested in the rape case, the OC said, adding that police were trying to arrest Abul Kalam.

Three held over murder of woman in Dinajpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Police yesterday arrested three youths in connection with the murder of woman in Dinajpur’s Parbatipur upazila.

The arrestees are Anisur Rahman, 24, Atiquzzaman, 25, and Raj, 25, of Rangpur’s Badarganj upazila.

The victim Rukhia Rout, 23, daughter of Dinesh Rout, of Adivasi Palli Missionpara in Badarganj, was an honours final year student at Carmichael College in Rangpur.

According to the victim’s father, she went out of home Monday afternoon saying she was about to stay out at night at her college mate’s place.

Around 5:30pm on Monday, the victim’s mother called her over phone but an unknown male voice responded. Then, the phone was switched off.

Govt hopes to

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The cabinet yesterday also declared March 7 as “Historic Day” instead of the “National Historic Day” in a bid to observe the day nationally and internationally, commemorating the historic March 7 speech of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Talking about Covid-19 vaccine, Anwarul said different countries across the world were in a race to develop vaccines since the outbreak of the virus. “Right from the beginning, we have been maintaining contacts regularly with all those who are in the race to produce it.”

He said Bangladesh would not allow any vaccine without having recognition of the World Health Organisation (WHO).

Following the WHO recognition as the baseline, the health ministry, the departments concerned and some local pharmaceuticals are also in touch with those who are trying to develop the vaccine.

He said the government has kept aside Tk 600 crore under a project to procure Covid-19 vaccine.

“So, there will be no lack of funds to procure the vaccine. Bangladesh will collect it from wherever it will be available,” the cabinet secretary added.

The Health Service Division briefed the cabinet about the latest update over the Covid-19 vaccine.

He said the PM in a video speech to the Global Vaccine Summit 2020, held in the UK on June 4, sought support from the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunizations (GAVI) in fighting the pandemic with new vaccines. “It [proposal] was accepted. So, Bangladesh is also recognised as an eligible country to get vaccine under GAVI,” said Anwarul.

He said some people claimed that Bangladesh has missed the opportunity to get free Covid vaccines. “I think there is no scope for getting the vaccine free of cost. It’s also unlikely that the vaccine would be developed before April next year.”

‘HISTORIC DAY’

Talking about Historic Day, the cabinet secretary said, “The cabinet approved a proposal placed by the cultural affairs ministry for declaring March 7 as the ‘Historic Day’ to observe the day nationally and internationally, commemorating the historic March 7 speech of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.”

But the day would not be a public holiday, he added.

Earlier on July 13, the cabinet had declared the March 7 as the “National Historic Day” in a bid to observe the day nationally.

About the decision, Anwarul said Bangabandhu’s historic March 7 speech was actually the source of inspiration for the country’s independence and the 1971 Liberation War. Later, the country’s people spontaneously joined the war in the line with the guidelines given in the historic speech, he added.

He said the historic day also has importance in the international arena as Unesco included the March 7 speech of Bangabandhu in the Memory of the World Register.

35 more die

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according to worldometer.info.

At least 1,798 Covid-19 patients have recovered in the same 24 hours, which took the total number of recoveries to 286,631, while the overall recovery rate stood at 79 percent.

Among the latest deceased, 25 were males and 10 females.

One of them died at home while the other 34 died in hospitals, according to the press release.

One each was from Mymensingh, Rangpur and Sylhet divisions, two each were from Barisal and Rajshahi, three were from Khulna, six from Chattogram and the highest 19 were from Dhaka division.

One of the deceased was aged under 10, one between 11 and 20, one between 21 and 30, two were between 41 and 50, eight between 51 and 60 while the rest 22 were above 60.

So far, more than half of the deceased (51.27 percent) were above 60 years old.

On March 8, the DGHS reported the first three confirmed cases in the country while the first death was reported on March 18.