

BANGLADESH UPDATE



1,274
New cases in 24hrs



3,88,569
Total cases



5,660
Deaths



3,03,972
Recoveries



GLOBAL UPDATE

1,116,539
Deaths



40,125,633
Total cases



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina unveils the cover of a book titled "Sheikh Russell Amader Abeg, Amader Valobasha" at a programme marking the birth anniversary of her youngest brother Sheikh Russell. The premier joined the event from the Gono Bhaban through a video conference.

'We want such incidents never to happen again'

Says PM remembering her youngest brother brutally killed on August 15, 1975

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the government didn't want any recurrence of brutality like that of the killing of her youngest brother Sheikh Russell.

"Sheikh Russell was brutally killed. We want such incidents never to happen again," she said while addressing a function marking the birth anniversary of Sheikh Russell.

The PM joined the event from the Gono Bhaban through videoconferencing.

Hasina said her government has been working tirelessly to achieve a target of giving the children a beautiful life as they would become guardians of the country after being well-educated.

"We want each of our children will be patriots, good human beings and worthy citizens of the country after getting modern education and thus serve the people. And for achieving that particular target, my government has been working tirelessly."

Mentioning that Sheikh Russell was born on October 18 in 1964, the premier said, "Today is Russell's birthday. But he had to go forever after being hit by bullets from the assassins on August 15 in 1975 and thus a bud dropped before it could bloom."

She prayed for the salvation of the

departed souls of Sheikh Russell and other martyrs, including Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Sheikh Russell Jatiya Shishu Kishore Parishad organised the programme at the capital's Bangabandhu International Conference Centre (BICC). Participants were virtually connected to the event from Sheikh Russell Roller Skating Complex and University Laboratory School and College.

Earlier, Hasina inaugurated the screening of "Bubur Desh" (animated documentary on Sheikh Russell), and unveiled the cover of a book titled "Sheikh Russell Amader Abeg, Amader Valobasha" (book on the life of Sheikh Russell).

She also unveiled the mural of Sheikh Russell and inaugurated "Shaheed Sheikh Russell" building at University Laboratory School and College.

The premier witnessed a video on the activities of Sheikh Russell and unveiled the cover of another book titled "Smriti Patay Sheikh Russell".

State Minister for ICT Zunaid Ahmed Palak, on behalf of the PM, distributed awards and gave away stipends among students at the BICC.

PM's Principal Secretary Ahmad Kaikaus moderated the function from the Gono Bhaban.

All set to take in Rohingyas

FROM PAGE 1

Two playgrounds are ready for the Rohingya children. Extra space for playing is also available in every cluster house. There are places for prayers, burials, and markets. Accommodations have also been made available for officials of the government, the UN and different NGOs.

The project, funded with public money, was taken after some 750,000 Rohingyas fled a brutal military campaign in Myanmar's Rakhine and took shelter in Cox's Bazar in the months following August 2017. They joined some 300,000 other Rohingyas, who had fled previous waves of violence in Rakhine.

Compared to the cramped conditions the refugees are in now, the housing project appears to be a much better option for them. Currently, a family of six to eight people lives within a space that is barely 400 square feet.

In Bhasan Char, which appeared only in 2006, the rooms have steel beds and ceiling fans. Each cluster of buildings has access to a rain harvesting pond that provides for an alternative water source.

Each of the township's 120 plots comes with their own cyclone shelters which are capable of accommodating 1,000 people and 200 cattle. With solar powered street lights and constant CCTV coverage, Bhasan Char will be able to house 100,000 people and ease the pressure at the congested camps in Ukhiya and Teknaf, said project officials, adding that the island now has 43km of street, said project officials.

Four community clinics, two 20-

bed hospitals along with two schools and three mosques are expected to cater for the needs of the residents. There are markets along with four warehouses for storing food and other goods, said the officials.

Besides, there are two big lakes on the island. A large number of trees that are common in Bangladesh's coastal regions and known to increase natural defence against disasters, including lemon, coconut and kewra, have been planted.

The total area of the Bhasan char is around 13,000 acres and out of this, around 6,427 acres are usable. The total project area is 1,702 acres, but cluster houses were constructed on around 432 acres.

From Sandwip, Bhasan Char is 4.5 nautical miles away and it's only a one hour trip by boat. It is 13.2 nautical miles away from Hatiya, 21 nautical miles from Noakhali and 28 nautical miles from Patenga of Chattogram.

For any emergency communication, there are two helipads on the island.

Md Riaz Uddin, a grocery shopkeeper in Bhasan Char, said he along with a hundred other small traders came to the island around two years ago. "This is not an island. It is a town. If Rohingyas come here then it will be a big city. We are waiting for their arrival as it will boost our trade."

Mamun, director of the Ashrayan-3 Project (the official title of the Bhasan Char Project), meanwhile, has warned that the infrastructure might turn into ruins if the relocation did not take place in a year and a half.

The project was approved in November 2017. The authorities have

been implementing the project under the directives of the prime minister. Principal secretary to the PMO regularly monitored the progress of the project.

The Bangladesh Navy was given the responsibility to implement the project. Two British companies worked as consultants for onshore and offshore activities, he added.

Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen on Sunday said there was a pressure on the government by international NGOs, including UNHCR, against Bhasan Char relocation though some Rohingyas were "willing to go there to enjoy the wonderful facilities".

Rohingya leaders, who went on a "go-and-visit" to the Bhasan Char housing project, said they were happy with the facilities there and that those were far better than their current living conditions in Teknaf and Ukhiya camps.

The UN and aid agencies argue that the island was isolated, flood-prone and would be hazardous for Rohingyas because of cyclones and tidal surges. The UN refugee agency, meanwhile, submitted its terms of reference to the government seeking a technical assessment and is still awaiting response. The agency also says any Rohingya relocation must be voluntary.

The Bhasan Char lighthouse, a 90-metre tower, also called the Beacon of Hope, is perhaps the most indicative of the government's belief in this settlement despite the apprehension and opposition from some national and international quarters.



The 90-metre tall lighthouse named "Beacon of Hope", left, is perhaps the most indicative structure that showcases the government's belief in the Bhasan Char settlement despite the apprehension and opposition from national and international quarters. The Bay of Bengal seen from the island, top right, and establishments of the project surrounded by greenery, bottom right.

PHOTO: STAR

Modi to join celebrations

FROM PAGE 1

the Victory Day celebrations in Bangladesh.

The minister also praised the new Indian envoy, saying he knows very well all the crucial issues related to Bangladesh.

Doraiswami, who arrived in Dhaka through Akhaura on October 5, has been meeting ministers and top officials as part of renewed efforts to sort out all the existing issues, including an air bubble agreement.

"HC Sh. Vikram Doraiswami (@VDoraiswami) called on Hon'ble Minister of Foreign Affairs, Govt of Bangladesh, H.E. Dr. AKA Momen, today, 18/10/2020. Reaffirming the strength of ever growing bilateral relations, Hon'ble FM wished HC a successful tenure," the Indian High Commission tweeted yesterday afternoon.

Momen said it is rare in the world that Muslim-majority countries solve issues through dialogue. Bangladesh, from that perspective, is a rare example, but this is not widely recognised.

"Bangladesh is becoming a leader in the world in solving issues through dialogue."

The minister said he and Doraiswami discussed a wide range of issues, including the follow-up of the Joint Consultative Commission meeting held on September 29.

They agreed that the projects involving the Indian Line of Credit should be implemented smoothly.

China beefs up laws to handle epidemics

AFP, Beijing

China has passed a new law to improve its handling of disease outbreaks -- including protecting whistleblowers -- following a cascade of criticism over its coronavirus response and accusations of an early cover-up.

The new biosecurity law, approved by lawmakers on Saturday, flags the right to report "acts that endanger biosecurity" and calls for risk prevention systems, ranging from active monitoring to emergency plans. It takes effect from April 15 next

year.

"Any work unit or individual has the right to report acts that endanger biosecurity," the regulation said.

"When a report is required according to the law, no work unit or individual shall conceal (it)... or hinder others from making a report," it added on infectious diseases and epidemics.

China's approval of the law comes in the face of Western criticism on the coronavirus, over accusations that it covered up the initial outbreak and silenced early whistleblowers.

Child marriage risks skyrocket

FROM PAGE 1

young and was attending school with her friends. "All my dreams were shattered at that moment," she said. "My message to all girls my age would be to delay your marriage and do whatever it takes to fulfil your dreams."

According to Inger Ashing, CEO of Save the Children International, the pandemic means more families are being pushed into poverty, forcing many girls to work to support their families, to go without food, to become the main caregivers for sick family members, and to drop out of school -- with far less of a chance than boys of ever returning.

"A growing risk of violence and sexual exploitation combined with growing food and economic insecurity -- especially in humanitarian

emergencies -- also means many parents feel they have little alternative but to force their girls to marry men who are often much older. These marriages violate girls' rights and leave them at increased risk of depression, lifelong violence, disabilities, and even death -- including from childbirth, given their bodies simply aren't ready to bear children" she said.

"Every year, around 12 million girls are married off, two million [of them] before their 15th birthday. Half a million more girls are now at risk of this gender-based violence this year alone -- and these are only the ones we know about. We believe this is the tip of the iceberg," she added.

As world leaders prepare to meet at the UN General Assembly in New York today to make commitments to speed

up progress for gender inequality on the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Women's Conference -- which, in 1995, led all governments to commit to a "Platform for Action" to achieve equality for women and girls --, Save the Children is calling on them to raise girls' voices by supporting their right to safe and meaningful participation in all public decision-making processes during the Covid-19 response, recovery and beyond.

It also recommends actions to address immediate and on-going risks of gender-based violence, end child marriage and support girls who are already married to realise their rights, invest in girls with new and not repackaged investments and count every one of them with improved data collection.

New hurdle for fresh migrants

FROM PAGE 1

labour migration for poor workers.

Many workers invested money, which are significantly large amounts considering their economic condition, but largely remained unemployed in the past seven to eight months, he said.

"If they have to pay additional money now, this will make them economically more vulnerable."

Shameem Ahmed Chowdhury Noman, secretary general of Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (BAIRA), said prior to the pandemic, they had about 80 percent of 86,000 new employment visas and visa advice copies for jobs in Saudi Arabia, which mostly expired.

The member agencies of BAIRA, the country's apex trade body in the labour migration sector, recently started submitting the expired visas to the Saudi Embassy in Dhaka, so that those can be cancelled and reissued, he told The Daily Star by phone on October 7.

The agencies started doing so following a verbal instruction from the Saudi Embassy, Noman said, adding a stamped Saudi employment visa remains valid for three months. Visa stamping is the process of

endorsing a visa in the passport.

On September 30, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen told reporters that Saudi Arabia has agreed to reissue about 25,000 new visas.

The same day, Expatriates' Welfare Minister Imran Ahmad said the Saudi Embassy will cancel and reissue the visas which were obtained by potential migrants in March but could not be used.

Both ministers made their remarks after a meeting with mission officials of some labour-receiving countries, including Saudi Arabia, in Dhaka. This year, Saudi employers hired about 1.33 lakh workers from Bangladesh till March, according to data of Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET).

Bangladesh's labour migration process stopped in mid-March amid the pandemic.

BAIRA Secretary General Noman said the aspiring workers will not be able to go to Saudi Arabia if Saudi employers do not renew documents.

He said for visa reissuance, the documents provided by Saudi employers will be "a kind of power of attorney".

Before the pandemic, the employers placed demand letters to Bangladeshi

recruiting agencies for hiring workers in certain projects. Now the same employers will have the jurisdiction to decide how capable the agencies are to recruit workers in the same projects, he added.

Contacted, Shamsul Alam, director general of BMET, said they have issued smart cards (BMET emigration clearance cards) to aspiring migrant workers upon taking fingerprints.

"The smart cards will remain effective," he said, adding such smart card holders do not have to do anything new at BMET.

VISA ADVICE COPIES ALSO EXPIRED

According to BAIRA, the 86,000 new employment visas and visa advice copies of different countries were at stamping and pre-stamping stages in March when the pandemic halted the process.

Noman said a visa advice copy which is sent along with a demand letter remains valid for one year.

However, recruiting agencies in Bangladesh usually get the visa advice copy five to six months since its date of issuance by the concerned Saudi authorities.

So, the visa advice copies that recruiting agencies had in March mostly expired, he added.

3 'sleeping on rail lines' run over by train

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Three youths, including two siblings, were killed after being run over by a train in Netrakona's Barhatta upazila early yesterday.

The dead -- Ripon Miah, 24, his brother Swapan Miah, 22, and their cousin Mokhles Miah, 24, -- were residents of Dashedal area where the incident took place.

Mazharul Haque, officer-in-charge of Mymensingh Government Railway Police, said the three were crushed under the wheels of Haor Express around 3:30am. The train was bound for Mohonganj of Netrakona from Dhaka.

The victims were running a shallow machine to pump water out of a pond near the railway track in Dashedal area, the OC told The Daily Star.

Police suspected that they fell asleep on the track sometime on Saturday night and could not hear the train coming due to the sound of the machine.

Police later recovered the bodies and sent those to Netrakona General Hospital morgue for autopsies.



PHOTO: STAR

Nixon seeks

FROM PAGE 1

Daily Star.

The HC bench of Justice Sheikh Md Zakir Hossain and Justice KM Zahid Sarwar will hold a hearing on the bail petition tomorrow, he mentioned.

The lawyer refused to disclose the grounds on which his client prayed for anticipatory bail.

The EC filed the case with Charbhadraran Police Station on October 15 against Nixon for violating the electoral code of conduct during the October 10 by-election for the post of Charbhadraran upazila chairman.

According to the case statement, Nixon, 42, called Atul Sarkar, deputy commissioner of Faridpur, over mobile phone around 8:00am on October 9 and expressed his displeasure over the appointment of magistrates.

On the election day, the assistant commissioner (land) of Bhanga ordered the arrest of one of Nixon's followers for violating the electoral code of conduct. Nixon then used abusive language in a phone conversation with Charbhadraran Upazila Nirbahi Officer Jasmin Sultana.

Nixon also violated the electoral code of conduct by participating in a victory rally after the announcement of the by-polls results, said the case statement.

BAN ON GATHERING
Bhanga UNO Rakibur Rahman Khan wrote to the district administration and law enforcement agencies, saying section-144 would be imposed in the Upazila Health Complex and adjoining areas from 10:00am to 5:00pm yesterday as there was a possibility of violation of law and order if any meeting or rally was held there.

14 more die

FROM PAGE 1

number of cases.

The nation's position is one step behind Italy and one step ahead of Indonesia, according to worldometers. info.

Among the 14 dead, 12 were men and two women. One was between 31-40 years old, three within 51-60 and 10 others were above 60 years old, added the release.