5,699

UNHCR calls for solution to Rohingya crisis

BANGLADESH UPDATE 1,380 New cases in 24hrs Aspendence 3,91,586 Total cases

Set to host urgent donor conference tomorrow with the US, UK, EU

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The UN Refugee Agency has called for solidarity, support and solutions for the Rohingya refugees ahead of an urgent donor conference tomorrow amid a shortfall in humanitarian assistance.

Together with the US, the UK and European Union, the UNHCR is co-hosting the virtual conference to meet urgent humanitarian needs of Rohingyas both inside and outside Myanmar. Support for critical services in host communities is also a priority. ongoing humanitarian The

response is facing a dramatic shortfall this year as less than half of the requested \$1 billion funds for Rohingyas have been received so far, said UNHCR in a statement yesterday.

The spread of the Covid-19 pandemic has added layers of new challenges and needs to an already complex and massive refugee emergency, it said.

Currently, 860,000 Rohingya refugees are living in settlements in Cox's Bazar. Most of them, some 750,000, fled a brutal crackdown by Myanmar military in 2017.

Other countries in the region host some 150,000 Rohingya refugees. An estimated 600,000 live in Myanmar's Rakhine state.

Across the entire region, most Rohingyas live on the margins of society and they need to be assured access to basic healthcare, clean drinking water, a reliable food supply, or meaningful work and educational opportunities, the UNHCR said.

The Covid-19 pandemic has worsened their living conditions, made access to services even more challenging, increased the risk of sexual and gender-based violence, and exacerbated the impacts of infectious diseases for displaced Rohingyas living in crowded camps, reads the statement.

The UNHCR stressed that the international community and countries in the region must not only maintain support for refugees and their hosts, but also adapt to critical new needs and expand the search for solutions.

It said the focus of the search for solutions to this crisis must be on the voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable return of Rohingyas to Myanmar.

"The responsibility for creating conditions conducive to the safe and sustainable return of Rohingya rests with Myanmar authorities," the UN Refugee Agency added.

This process will need to open and enhance the dialogue between Myanmar and Rohingyas and take measures that help build confidence and trust. These include lifting restrictions on freedom of movement, enabling displaced Rohingyas to return to their own villages and providing a clear pathway to citizenship.

Funds raised at the virtual donor conference will go to international and non-governmental organisations working to alleviate the crisis on the ground in Myanmar, throughout the region, and towards the UN-led Joint Response Plan in Bangladesh.

Govt raises potato price

FROM PAGE 1

traders did not follow the prices fixed by the government and ultimately hiked the prices up to Tk 50 price per kg at the retail level.

As the government took an initiative to enforce the prices, the businessmen at the cold storages stopped selling, market sources said.

The ground floor of the Karwan Bazar wholesale market used to be crammed with at least thousands of sacks of potatoes. But yesterday the place was found empty and traders spending idle time.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Kawsar Ahmed said over a 1,000 sacks of Muhammad Abdur Razzaque hinted potatoes used to come to their market

facing problems.

Jamaluddin used to earn Tk 300 to Tk 500 unloading potatoes but the amount of money he earned has dropped due to the cut in potato

supply. "[I have] no work....just waiting for trucks," he said.

Yesterday afternoon, traders assured the government that they would sell potatoes at the new rate, a source at the meeting told the correspondent.

"Everyone got the scope to speak and they raised their concerns," he said.

Earlier, Agriculture Minister Dr at fixing a new price for potatoes.



3,07,141 **Recoveries**

GLOBAL

A cloud of dust covers the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway in Tongi's Bata gate area around 12:30pm yesterday. The dust makes it difficult to breathe. Locals said the ongoing development work on the highway is aggravating the problem of air pollution in the area. PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Breathing in poison

FROM PAGE 1

such as dust, pollen, soot, smoke, and liquid droplets.

In Bangladesh, Pakistan and India, 100 percent of the population live in areas where PM2.5 levels are higher than that in the WHO Air Quality Guideline; it is 98 percent in Nepal, according to the report.

In the first-ever comprehensive analysis of air pollution's global impact on newborns, the study found that outdoor and household particulate matter contributed to the deaths of nearly 500,000 infants in their first month of life.

of the "Nearly two-thirds infant deaths are linked to use of household burning of solid fuels, hitting hardest in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa," the report said.

In Bangladesh, 20 percent of all neonatal deaths are linked to air pollution which accounted for the deaths of 10,500 infants. Among the neonatal deaths, 62 percent is attributable to household air pollution.

The major sources of the pollution, as per the study, are household solid fuels, dust from construction, coal power plants, brick production, transportation and diesel-powered equipment, among others.

HÊALTH RISK FAČTOR Air pollution researcher Prof Abdus Salam of Dhaka University said air pollution is increasing in the country and no effective step is

visible to reduce it. expanding further and construction works are being done without appropriate controlling measures.

"The real number of deaths

lung patients has been on the rise for Dr Pallavi Pant of Health Effects over a decade. Asthma is noticeably present in people aged under eight and over 45

"If we fail to improve air quality, sufferings will increase," he warned. "People are exposed more to indoor air pollution as they spend a good amount of time either at home or in the workplace."

The observations of the two experts also corroborate the findings of the global study, which found air pollution has become the second leading health risk factor after high blood pressure in Bangladesh.

The report warned that though the full links between air pollution and Covid-19 are not yet known, there is clear evidence connecting air pollution and increased heart and lung diseases.

There is a growing concern that air pollution exposure, especially in the most polluted regions of South Asia, could significantly worsen the effects of Covid-19, said the report.

The study found that there has been little or no sustained progress over the last decade in the most polluted countries of South Asia and Africa in regards to air quality. WAY OUT?

Prof Salam said in the months of November, December, January and February, people in Bangladesh live with the worst air quality.

"The two city corporations and the Department of Environment should take special measures He said the coal industry is centering these months," he said, adding that an end to garbage burning will reduce air pollution by around 30 percent.

A high official of Department be clearer -- we need urgent and would be much more. If you check of Environment, wishing not to be sustained action to clean up the air the statistics of patients with cancer named, acknowledged that the air need is especially acute in South pollution is on the rise in the country. Asia where mothers and children "The government has taken some are chronically exposed to very measures like stopping operations of high levels of air pollution," said brick kilns and promoting concrete blocks. But it will take a few more Dr Zulfiqar, founding director at years to get the benefits," he said. Aga Khan University's Institute for In an email to The Daily Star, Global Health & Development.

Institute wrote, "Countries in South Asia, including Bangladesh, continue to experience high levels of air pollution which has led to a significant impact on people's health. Recognising this, policymakers are formulating specific policies to improve air quality including the

draft Clean Air Act in Bangladesh." It is crucial that the efforts are continued and expanded with a focus on sources including power plants, industries, brick kilns, waste burning and vehicles over the next few years, said Pallavi, who was involved with the global study.

Dr Sumi Mehta, senior epidemiologist at global public health organisation Vital Strategies, says the trend is clear.

"As air pollution continues to increase across rapidly urbanising areas of Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, it will further exacerbate the epidemic of non-communicable diseases, including chronic respiratory and cardiovascular illness," added Dr Sumi, an independent researcher who is aware of the study.

"The good news is we know how to address all the leading sources of pollution; these data clearly show we have a public health imperative to rapidly implement clean air solutions.

Dr Zulfiqar Bhutta, another independent researcher who saw the report, said the State of Global Air report is a reminder that air pollution is not just an environmental issue: it is a major public health problem.

"The message for us could not both outdoors and in the home. The

ACC sues **BIFFL**

FROM PAGE 1

1,125,924 Deaths **40,854,412** Total cases

Tk 584.67 crore. The two private banks include the now-defunct Farmers Bank and ICB Islami Bank, and the 12 NBFIs include Peoples Leasing, Reliance Finance Limited and Union Capital, added the sources.

Anti-Corruption Commission Assistant Director Saiful Islam yesterday filed a case against Farmanul Islam and BIFFL's Head of Treasury Nisarul Kabir Siddiqui with its integrated district office for misusing power and for misappropriating about Tk 584.67 crore.

This correspondent got a copy of the First Information Report.

As per Finance Division directives, only 25 percent of the total capital could be invested as FDR in NBFIs before 2018. In 2018, the Finance Division amended rules and raised it to 50 percent, reads the FIR.

In the 23rd board of directors meeting on April 11, 2015, Farmanul was appointed as BIFFL's CEO and executive director. He assumed office on June 1, 2015.

After joining office, he allegedly started pulling out money from public banks and investing more at lowgrade private banks and non-banking institutions. financial violating directives of the Finance Division.

Between June 1, 2015 and December 5, 2017, BIFFL's investment as FDR was Tk 838.79 crore. Of the amount, 52.72 percent was invested at private banks and the remaining 47.28 percent, which is Tk 396.57 crore, was kept at NBFIs, reads the case statement.

Between December 2017 and December 2018, the total investment stood at Tk 761 74 crore Over 62 13 percent of the investment was made at NBFIs.

By July 2019, the volume of investment at NBFIs shot up to 72 percent and the amount of FDR was Tk 463.94 crore. The remaining Tk 179.09 crore was kept at private banks.

According to the FIR, BIFFL invested bout Tk 55 crore at Peoples Leasing and Financial Services Limited, an NBFI that has already gone through liquidation.

"With the help of Nisarul, the former CEO invested capital at these B-grade private banks and NBFIs. They got benefits in return," an ACC source said.

All of a sudden, on July 28 last year, during a board meeting, Farmanul submitted his resignation on personal grounds

On August 7 that year, the finance ministry issued him a show-cause notice, asking him to explain his role in the incident.

When the BIFFL was launched, included providing its goal long-term finance to critically important infrastructure projects, catalysing co-financing from private financial sources, and providing a unique vehicle for capital market development by exploring a number of avenues to capture domestic and foreign investment, according to its

but over the last three days the supply had dwindled to a trickle.

"Businessmen are not releasing the potatoes from cold storages," he added.

Rabiul, a retailer, was selling potatoes at Tk 220 per five kg. "I have only three sacks. After that, I'll stop selling.

Abdul Kader came to Karwan Bazar to buy potatoes in bulk. "People from the middleclass, like us, are passing a tough time," he said, adding he was buying potatoes in bulk as it costs less compared to local market.

Not only consumers, porters who used to live on unloading potatoes from trucks in Karwan Bazar are also

Speaking to journalists at the secretariat, he said farmers did not get fair prices last year and that resulted in their frustration followed by a drop in

"Potatoes were given to the Rohingya refugees and used as a relief product during the lockdown... Due to excessive rainfall, many vegetable crops were damaged and people became more dependent on potatoes. As a result, the price shot up," he said.

Daily Star, DAM Director General Mohammad Yusuf, said, "The new price was fixed in favour of the potato traders. If they still do not follow the newly fixed price, we will take action."

production.

Meanwhile, speaking to The

DU to hold tests

FROM PAGE 1

Star the distribution of the 80 marks has not been decided yet but the authorities will stress more on the written part of the exam.

Earlier on October 17, virtual meeting of the Bangladesh Parishad, Bishwabidyalaya an association of public university vicechancellors, decided in principle that admission tests for freshmen would be held

They, however, then said the date and the method of the exams would be announced later.

It is certain that no students will be admitted to a university without tests, Prof Rostom Ali, VC of Pabna University of Science and Technology, told this newspaper after the meeting.

While students generally opt for public universities when it comes to higher education, the number of seats is much lower than that of admission seekers.

Of the 46 public universities, excluding National University, Open University and medical universities, 39 have the capacity of enrolling around 65,000 first-year students.

This year, confusion surrounding the admission tests emerged after the government decided to award grades to HSC candidates and those of equivalent exams without holding the public exams amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Instead of the exams, candidates' evaluation would be based on their results in the Junior School Certificate, SSC and equivalent tests.

HSC and equivalent exams were cancelled out of fear that they would increase the risk of coronavirus transmission. More than 13.65 lakh students were expected to sit for the exams.

The government postponed the exams following the closure of all educational institutions on March 17. They are to stay closed until at least October 30.

Usually, admission tests at public universities are held a month after the HSC results are published.

Till last year, 32 of the 39 public universities held separate admission and the remaining seven tests, held agricultural universities uniform admission test.

Espionage in Australia at higher levels than Cold War, spy chief warns

AFP, Sydney

Espionage in Australia had eclipsed Cold War levels, the country's spymaster told parliament yesterday, in a speech warning that citizens were being monitored and harassed by

foreign powers.

Several politicians across the ideological spectrum have become embroiled in investigations into influence suspected overseas operations -- most notably from China.

and COPD [chronic obstructive pulmonary disease], you will see a rise. The main reason is poor air quality."

Prof Md Rashidul Hassan, president of Bangladesh Lung Foundation, said the number of

JS body to make list of 90k forest

FROM PAGE 1

"We want to see who has occupied these forestlands. We want it so that even an inch amount of forestland cannot be occupied illegally by anyone," he added.

Saber Hossain said that the parliamentary committee also asked the ministry for a detailed report on the current state of the occupied forestland.

"We want to see how many notices have been issued to evict the occupants and what steps have been taken by the authorities concerned. Who were the lawyers? The forest department, the ministry and the parliamentary committee will now work to recover the land on an emergency basis," he added.

According to the working paper

Dream coming true bit by bit

FROM PAGE 1

to leave Mongla port on November 5 and reach Rooppur river port on November 21, according to a press release by the science and technology ministry

In easy terms, a nuclear reactor is a device in which nuclear chain reactions are initiated, controlled and sustained at a steady rate. The life cycle of a reactor is 60 years with the possibility of further extension, according to Russia's State Atomic Energy Corporation, Rosatom. Each reactor unit comprises a reactor and four circulation loops, with each loop having circulation pipelines, a reactor coolant pump and horizontal steam generator.

Amid growing demand for electricity, the government moved to build the country's first-ever nuclear power plant in Pabna and gave Rosatom the task of implementing it. The government put this ambitious mega project on the list of 10 top priority projects or fast-track projects for completing it on time.

The power plant will have two units Rooppur Unit-1 and Unit-2 -- with a power generation capacity of 1,200MW each. A third-generation technology is total amount of forestland of different classes in the country is 46.47 lakh acres at present. The forest department has handed

over 1.60 lakh acres of land to various organisations including the Armed Forces, Rapid Action Battalion and Border Guard Bangladesh.

The ministry informed the parliamentary committee that influential industrialists and individuals have forcibly occupied the forestland and they take stay order from higher court through filing appeal when the respective authorities start eviction activities against the land grabbers.

local Besides, people and administration and law enforcement agencies do not cooperate in the

of the parliamentary committee, the eviction activities, the ministry informed the standing committee. About the reasons behind

grabbing of vast forestland, the ministry said the forestland was originally recorded in the CS record but later recorded in the name of various individuals or organisations in the SA/RS/BS survey.

In addition, the construction of various infrastructures through the forest, especially the construction of roads, increases the tendency of encroachment of forestland on both sides, the ministry said.

Local people and influential people have occupied the forestlands and built permanent establishments, houses, roads, markets, schools and institutions. Industries have been set up on many occupied forestlands.

Besides, the work of manufacturing

They said the government plans

meet 9 percent of the country's

With the first nuclear power plant

electricity requirement from nuclear

power. It also seeks to reduce

dependence on fossil fuels by the

at Rooppur, Bangladesh will become

the third Asian country -- after India

and Pakistan -- to harness the power of

VVER-1200 reactors are characterised

by an unprecedented level of safety,

which allows them to be classified as

Nuclear power plants built with

the plant is going on in full swing,

mentioned the officials.

atoms.

generation "3+".

website.

Ten pvt labs FROM PAGE 1 DAILY UPDATE

Eighteen people died from Covid-19 in the country in the last 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, according to a press release issued by the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

With this, the total number of deaths rose to 5,699 and the death rate now stands at 1.46 percent.

In the same 24 hours, new 1,380 people were tested positive for the viral infection in 109 rt-PCR labs, taking the total number of people infected to 391,586.

Bangladesh is currently 17th in the list of worst affected countries in the world in terms of the number of cases.

The position is one step behind Italy and one step ahead of Germany, according to worldometers.info.

Against 13,611 tests in those 24 nours, the positivity rate was 10.14 percent.

With this, the total positivity rate reached at 17.86 percent.

Covid-19 Meanwhile, 1,542 patients have recovered in the last 24 hours, raising the total number of recoveries to 307,141.

With this, the recovery rate reached at 78.44 percent.

Among the 18 deceased, 14 were males and four were females.

Two of them aged between 41 and 50 years, five between 51 and 60, and the rest 11 were above 60 years, added the release.

US to sue Google in biggest antitrust case in decades: reports

AFP, Washington

The US government was preparing to sue Google yesterday in what would be the biggest antitrust case in decades, media reports said.

The Wall Street Journal and New York Times said the Justice Department suit will accuse the California tech giant of illegal monopoly behavior to preserve its dominance in internet search and advertising.

The move comes after months of nvestigations by federal and state antitrust enforcers seeking to check the power of the massive technology firm and parallel probes into other giants such as Amazon, Facebook and Apple.

being used to construct the plant with already been built, and construction of a five-layer security system.

commercial operation by 2023 and the second one by 2024.

The foundation stone of the Tk 113,092-crore power plant was laid in October 2013 and construction began on 1,062 acres of land in November 2017.

Project officials said that as of August this year, the project saw 37 percent progress and there will be a major leap in its implementation once the reactor is installed.

"The real progress will be visible from January next year," said a project

Md Shawkat Akbar said, "The reactor for the second unit will arrive

2023, he mentioned.

to supply power to the national grid from April 2023 on a test basis, and that there will be a test run for a year. Project officials said the containment walls of the first reactor building have

the second building will be completed

has already been installed. The purpose of the support truss is to fasten

the reactor vessel and to bear its weight loads. other machinery and equipment for

official seeking anonymity. middle of the next decade when both reactors of the new power plant will be in operation.

in the country soon. The work of loading uranium fuel to the first reactor will begin in February,

The project director said they expect

The first unit is expected to go into by next year The reactor support truss in Unit-