

BANGLADESH
UPDATE



1,586
New cases in 24hrs



3,96,413
Total cases



5,761
Deaths



3,12,065
Recoveries

GLOBAL
UPDATE



1,144,971
Deaths



42,172,063
Total cases

CONTINENTAL SHELF IN BAY

Dhaka submits updated report seeking UN nod

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh yesterday lodged an amended submission to the UN on the limits of its outer continental shelf in the Bay of Bengal.

Once approved by the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) of the UN, the country will be able to explore and exploit natural resources on the seabed and subsoil in those areas.

Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the UN, Ambassador Rabab Fatima, handed over the submission to Dmitry Gonchar, acting director of the Division of Ocean Affairs and Law of the Sea, in New York.

Rabab Fatima expressed her expectation that the amended submission will be included in the agenda of the Commission in its next session.

The original submission to the CLCS was made on February 25, 2011. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the maritime boundaries of Bangladesh with Myanmar and India were delimited in 2012 and 2014, through an international adjudication process.

Settling a longstanding India-Bangladesh maritime boundary dispute, a Hague-based international court awarded Bangladesh 19,467

square kilometres out of 25,602 sq km disputed area in the Bay of Bengal.

On the other hand, the German-based International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea sustained Bangladesh's claim to 200 nautical miles of exclusive economic zone and territorial rights in the Bay of Bengal against Myanmar's claim.

The amended submission has been made to reflect the successful outcomes of those international processes.

As per rule, a sub-commission will subsequently be formed to examine the information provided by Bangladesh and make necessary recommendations on the limits of Bangladesh's outer continental shelf in the Bay of Bengal.

Admiral Khurshed Alam (Retd), secretary at the Maritimes Affairs Unit of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who led an expert team to prepare the amended submission, said there is no problem for exploring and exploiting the resources in the Bangladesh's territories in the Bay of Bengal after the international court's verdict.

However, recommendations from the CLCS means endorsement of the UN. In such a case, no one can raise any question when Bangladesh goes for exploration in the sea in its territory, he told The Daily Star.

Israel warplanes strike Gaza following rocket fire

AFP, Jerusalem

Israeli warplanes struck suspected Hamas military targets in the Gaza Strip before dawn on Friday following rocket fire from the blockaded Palestinian territory.

Fighter jets and other aircraft struck a "weapons manufacturing site and underground infrastructures" operated by Islamist group Hamas, which has controlled the territory since 2007, the Israeli army said.

Hamas reported no casualties from the Israeli strikes on the Nuseirat refugee camp and the southern city of Khan Yunis.

Two rockets had been launched at Israel late Thursday, without causing any casualties or damage.

One was intercepted by Israeli air defences, while the other hit open ground, the army said.

The last reported rocket attack from

Gaza was on Tuesday night.

It came after the army announced it had found a new tunnel that crosses "dozens of metres (yards) into Israel" from Gaza.

The next day the army said the tunnel belonged to Hamas.

Authorities have discovered some 20 tunnels originating in Gaza since 2014, army spokesman Jonathan Conricus said this week.

Israel has fought three wars with Hamas since the Islamists ousted loyalists of Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas from the territory in 2007 and there have been numerous smaller flare-ups.

An informal truce brokered by Egypt and the United Nations, with the financial support of gas-rich Qatar, has been in force since late 2018.

It has been broken several times but has been restored on each occasion.

Heavy rain batters life

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of the district remained suspended since morning.

The ban on the launches services would remain in force until further notice, he added.

Meanwhile, the low-lying areas of Barishal city have been flooded following heavy rain.

Around 400 tourists were stranded on Saint Martin's Island, a popular tourist destination in the country, due to bad weather.

Among the tourists, there are 300 people from a group named "Amar Bazar", from Cox's Bazar. They went to the island on Wednesday on a three-day trip.

Teknaf OC Hafizur Rahman said the tourists were safe and that the island's police outpost was instructed

to look after their security.

UNO Md Saiful Islam of Teknaf said he was receiving regular updates from the authorities concerned about the condition of the stranded tourists.

In Patuakhali, the local administration has prepared 800 shelters in coastal areas to tackle any possible cyclone that could be triggered by the depression at the Bay.

A total of 6,000 volunteers and 110 medical teams are also ready, said Matuli Islam Chowdhury, district administrator of Patuakhali, at an urgent meeting at his office on Thursday night.

People should call the national helpline 999 for any kind of help and information, said Sheikh Bilal Hosen, additional superintendent of police in the district.

Bills paid sans work

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"We have submitted the report around a month ago and we found anomalies. We found that some of the allegations are true," Sabbir Hossain told The Daily Star, without elaborating.

The Daily Star also obtained several documents relating to a workshop held under the project in Moulvibazar.

According to these documents, food for that workshop was purchased from Sampan Restaurant and Catering, located on Station Road, and stationery items were purchased from Achal Paper, Stationery and Library.

Responding to the probe committee query about the authenticity of the bills, however, DGFP's Moulvibazar unit on December 31, 2018 wrote that they did not find the existence of these shops at the stated addresses and that the purchase of food and stationery was therefore inapplicable.

"The payment was received submitting false and forged vouchers and documents," said a DGFP official, preferring not to be named.

In the Moulvibazar workshop bill, it was stated that the cost of a ball pen was Tk 80, a writing pad Tk 80, and that of a bag Tk 1,050.

But in its investigation, the price of

a bag was found to be Tk 370, said the DGFP official.

The allegations of financial foul play were mainly against IEM Director Dr Ashrafunnessa.

On September 16, the Anti-Corruption Commission questioned Dr Ashrafunnessa over a complaint that Tk 7 crore was embezzled by issuing fake bills in the name of workshops, seminars, and trainings.

ACC Deputy Director Md Salahuddin questioned Ashrafunnessa for around four and half hours and she avoided answering most of the questions, sources in the anti-graft body said.

"We've got allegations. Now we're verifying these," Salahuddin told The Daily Star earlier this month.

Last month, ACC Secretary Dilwar Bakht told journalists that they have decided to investigate after scrutinising the allegations primarily.

This correspondent reached out to Dr Ashrafunnessa, who joined as the IEM director in 2018, but she refused to comment.

The Daily Star also approached DGFP Director General Sahan Ara Banu for comment, but she declined to talk about the matter.



Cattle stand along the Agunmukha river in Koralia area of Patuakhali's Rangabali upazila yesterday as the swelling water of the river inundates the area. The water level in the river rose following heavy rain and a tidal surge caused by a depression in the Bay of Bengal. Standing crops in low-lying coastal areas of the district were damaged due to the flooding.

PHOTO: SOHRAB HOSSAIN

Myanmar wants to resume talks

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The UN Security Council has not taken any concrete measure against Myanmar due to opposition by China and Russia.

China, a close ally of Myanmar, has been trying to facilitate a bilateral solution to the crisis.

As the US-China relations hit rock bottom, the US is boosting its relations with the Indo-Pacific countries. A US diplomat recently said the country would work with urgency to address the humanitarian needs of the Rohingyas and to find a lasting resolution.

Following a recent visit to Delhi and Dhaka, US Deputy Secretary of State Stephen Biegun said China had done very little to help resolve the Rohingya issue.

At the donor's conference, co-hosted by the US, UK, EU and UN Refugee Agency, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said the UN Security Council's five permanent member states had special obligations in ending the violence in Myanmar.

He said the US will continue to advocate for a sustainable solution that creates the conditions for the voluntary, safe, dignified, and sustainable return of Rohingya refugees and other displaced persons to their places of origin or to a place of their choice.

The co-hosts in a joint statement said Myanmar should provide a pathway to citizenship and freedom of movement for the Rohingyas.

Myanmar must provide justice for the victims of human rights abuse, they said.

Wang Yi also assured Momen of providing the Chinese vaccine for Covid-19 to Bangladesh on a priority basis and expressed his interest in working with Bangladesh in the post-pandemic economic recovery.

The Chinese-funded projects in Bangladesh will pick up pace after the pandemic, he said.

THE GAMBIA FILES MEMORIAL

The Gambia yesterday filed a more than 500-page memorial in its lawsuit against Myanmar at the International Court of Justice, showing how Myanmar government is responsible for genocide against the Rohingyas.

The memorial includes over 5,000 pages of supporting materials substantiating the case. The Gambia opened a case at the ICJ, also known as the World Court, in November last year against Myanmar for failing to prevent genocide against Rohingyas.

After a preliminary hearing, the Court issued an order asking Myanmar to take provisional measures to prevent

further acts of genocide in Rakhine.

After the Gambia's initial filing, the ICJ found there were substances in their claims. Based on that, it agreed to go further with the case. That's why the Gambia has filed the memorial.

"This is a significant step towards Rohingya justice. However, success of the case will depend on how strong the evidence included in the memorial is," said Prof Mizanur Rahman, an expert on international law.

Following the filing by The Gambia, Myanmar has three months to file a counter-memorial at the ICJ. The Memorial and Counter-Memorial will not be made public for the duration of the trial, which is expected to last several years, said regional rights body Fortify Rights in a statement.

"It is another step towards justice for Rohingyas," said Matthew Smith, chief executive officer at Fortify Rights.

International accountability mechanisms, like the ICJ, are crucial, especially given that mass atrocity crimes continue against Rohingyas and others in Myanmar, he added.

Myanmar should immediately comply with the ICJ orders to prevent ongoing acts of genocide and preserve evidence of genocide against Rohingyas Muslims, said Fortify Rights.

Assignments for 6-9 students

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..." she had said during a virtual press briefing. The decision was made to curb transmission risk amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, she added.

According to the academic calendar, their annual exams were scheduled to be held between November 28 and December 10.

Before the announcement, students and guardians all over the country were confused about the process of promotion to higher classes as schools and madrasas have been shut for more than seven months due to the pandemic.

The government had already announced that the closure was extended until October 31.

Officials said the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) had already prepared a brief syllabus for students of classes 6-9 so they can achieve the minimum learning

outcomes.

Students will be able to receive and submit assignments online or in person, following proper health guidelines. Students can also get assignments through TV classes and on educational websites.

DSHE Secondary Director Belal Hossain said they are working closely with NCTB on the assignments. Students would have to answer short questions, board questions and creative questions based on what they learned in a particular week.

"We will ensure that this assignment does not create any kind of pressure on students," he said.

During Wednesday's press conference, Dipu Moni said students who have been displaced due to the pandemic will be able to collect and submit assignments from nearby educational institutions.

She also said no one will be allowed

to take any kind of tests during this assignment process.

Wednesday's announcement elicited mixed reactions from parents and educationists.

Manzoor Ahmed, professor emeritus of Brac University and the founder-director of the university's Institute of Educational Development, said the government should provide guidelines to teachers that would enable them to properly evaluate assignments and identify shortcomings.

"The government should introduce a guideline for them [teachers]," he said.

Golam Faruk said yesterday that they will also provide teachers guidelines regarding the process.

According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Education and Statistics (BANBEIS), there are about 1.05 crore students in classes 6-9 across the country -- around 87.32 lakh studying in schools and the rest in madrasas.

Less chaos but plenty of clashes

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between two men.

The absence of disruptions yielded a more substantive debate over a range of topics including the economy, race, climate change, healthcare and immigration. But the coronavirus, which has killed more than 221,000 people in the United States, loomed over the proceedings as it has throughout the campaign.

The televised encounter in Nashville, Tennessee, represented one of Trump's last remaining opportunities to reshape a race that national opinion polls show he has been losing for months, though the contest is much tighter in some battleground states likely to decide the election.

"Anyone who's responsible for that many deaths should not remain president of the United States of America," Biden said.

Trump, who has put his stewardship of the economy at the center of his campaign, defended his approach to the outbreak and said the country could not afford to close businesses again despite fresh surges.

"We're learning to live with it," said Trump, who has played down the virus for months. "We have no choice."

"Learning to live with it?" Biden retorted. "Come on. We're dying with it."

In a reminder of the Covid-19's accelerated spread as winter approaches, researchers at the University of Washington's Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation warned the virus could kill more than half a million people in the United States by the end

of February 2021.

Trump, whose instinct remains to run as an outsider, portrayed Biden as a career politician whose nearly 50-year record was insubstantial.

After an opening segment on the pandemic, Thursday's clash pivoted to rapid-fire exchanges over whether either candidate had improper foreign entanglements. Trump repeated his accusations that Biden and his son Hunter engaged in unethical practices in China and Ukraine. No evidence has been verified to support the allegations, and Biden called them false.

Biden defended his family and said unequivocally that he had never made "a single penny" from a foreign country, before pivoting to accuse Trump of trying to distract Americans.

He instead accused Trump of avoiding paying taxes. Trump, who has broken with decades of presidential precedents in refusing to release his tax returns, said he had paid "millions." He again said he would release his returns only once a longstanding audit was completed.

The candidates argued over foreign policy, immigration and - after months of anti-racism protests - race relations, with Biden saying Trump was "one of the most racist presidents" in history.

"He pours fuel on every single racist fire," Biden said. "This guy has a dog whistle as big as a foghorn."

Trump responded by criticizing Biden's authorship of a 1994 crime bill that increased incarceration of minority defendants while asserting that he had done more for Black Americans than any president with the "possible"

exception of Abraham Lincoln during the US Civil War in the 1860s.

During a segment on climate change, Biden said his environmental plan would "transition from the oil industry" in favor of renewable energy sources, prompting Trump to go on the attack.

"He is going to destroy the oil industry," Trump said. "Will you remember that, Texas? Will you remember that, Pennsylvania?"

Biden said he simply wanted to eliminate federal subsidies for oil companies.

TRUMP TO VOTE TODAY IN FLORIDA
President Donald Trump will cast his own ballot for reelection early while in Florida today, the White House said. Vice President Mike Pence cast his early-vote ballot in Indianapolis yesterday morning.

A day after the debate, Trump and Biden are scheduled to return to campaign trail. Trump, 74, will hold two rallies in the battleground state of Florida, where opinion polls show a tight race. Biden, 77, will deliver a speech in his home state of Delaware on his plans for leading a recovery from the pandemic.

Former President Barack Obama, with whom Biden served as vice president for eight years, will campaign in Florida on Saturday. Obama made his campaign-trail debut for Biden in Pennsylvania on Wednesday.

Biden entered the final days of the race with more cash than Trump. The Democrat raised about \$130 million during the Oct. 1-14 period, about three times the roughly \$44 million raised by Trump's campaign.

Play robust role

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our challenges today are interconnected and can only be addressed through reinvigorated multilateralism. Only together we can build resilience against future pandemics and other global challenges."

On the 75th founding anniversary of the UN, Bangladesh joins the international community in reaffirming its unwavering commitment to the principles and objectives enshrined in the United Nations Charter, Hasina said.

She said this year holds a special significance for Bangladesh as the birth centenary of the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, is being celebrated.

The PM said 2020 is a challenging year because of the Covid-19 outbreak and since early this year, the pandemic continues to ravage through and reverberate around the world.

"It has put enormous strains on our societies, economies, health systems, lives and livelihoods, businesses and export earnings. Only by working together and in solidarity, we can end the pandemic and effectively tackle its consequences."

She said over the last 75 years, the United Nations has had many achievements and it has promoted freedom, shaped norms for international development, helped mitigate conflicts and saved hundreds of thousands of lives through humanitarian actions.

It has worked to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, including the equal rights of women and men, the premier added.

Mentioning that Bangladesh has been an active, contributing and responsible member of the UN, Hasina said in the endeavor to maintain global peace and security, Bangladesh has emerged as one of the leaders in the UN Peacekeeping Missions by adhering to its long-standing "Culture of Peace".

"Our government has also made exemplary achievements in implementing the SDGs, increasing women empowerment, enhancing access to economic and social rights, achieving food security and reducing inequalities," she said.

Noting that the world today is different from what it was 75 years ago when the UN was founded, the PM said, "In this ever-evolving world of more challenges and opportunities, we expect the UN to remain the most trusted partner to all nations."

Hasina said Bangladesh remains committed to working together with the UN and international community in responding to all shared challenges to create a peaceful, sustainable, inclusive and just world.

Mobile money

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The interoperability service, however, will go live on October 28 and it will be applicable for the banks and MFS providers that have successfully completed their pilot testing.

But, other banks, which are yet to complete their preparations, will have to run the programme by March 31.

As per a Bangladesh Bank notice, clients will have to pay a maximum of 0.8 percent of their fund to be transferred from one MFS provider to another as fee.

Clients, however, will have to count 0.45 percent per transaction from banks to MFS providers, added the notice.

UN chief urges

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waves of infections now affecting many countries.

Guterres said the United Nations also will be "strongly advocating" during the G-20 summit for a guarantee that when a vaccine is available, "it becomes indeed available and affordable for everyone, everywhere."

On last Saturday, Guterres accused the divided world of failing to rise to the challenge of fighting the pandemic and warned concerted action was needed to prevent millions of people being pushed into poverty and hunger.

The former Portuguese prime minister said far more could have been done if countries had worked together to combat the disease, which has killed more than one million people.

"The COVID-19 pandemic is a major global challenge for the entire international community, for multilateralism and for me, as secretary-general of the United Nations," Guterres told Portuguese news agency Lusa.

"Unfortunately it is a test that, so far, the international community is failing."

He said that if coordinated measures were not taken, "a microscopic virus could push millions of people into poverty and hunger, with devastating economic effects in the years to come."

Guterres also criticised countries for a lack of unity in trying to solve other global challenges including the conflicts in Afghanistan, Yemen and Syria. "It is a source of enormous frustration," he said.

Infections have been reported in more than 210 countries and territories since the first cases were identified in China in December 2019.