

BANGLADESH UPDATE



1,842
New cases in 24hrs



4,16,006
Total cases



6,021
Deaths



3,33,588
Recoveries



1,233,891
Deaths



48,646,833
Total cases

Dhaka focuses on building capacity, not waging war

Says PM while commissioning 5 navy ships

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said Bangladesh wants to strengthen its capacity to resist any external attack.

"We don't want to fight a war against anyone... but we want to attain the capability of resisting any external foes so that we can do that if we are ever attacked by them," she said.

The PM said the Father of the Nation had formulated Bangladesh's foreign policy -- "Friendship to all, Malice to none". "We believe in that policy."

Hasina was addressing a programme marking the commissioning of five modern ships of Bangladesh Navy at the Naval Berth-1 in Chattogram.

Among the five are three warships -- BNS Umar Farooq, BNS Abu Ubaidah and BNS Protasha, and two survey ships -- BNS Darshak and BNS Tallashi.

The premier commissioned the ships through a video conference from the Gono Bhaban.

Hasina said the government has been making efforts to build Bangladesh Navy as a three-dimensional force.

She said the commissioning of the five modern ships would further strengthen the country's naval force.

"With this, Bangladesh Navy has moved one step forward towards its progress."

Referring to the construction of the two survey ships at Khulna Shipyard, the premier said Bangladesh has achieved the capacity of building

modern ships.

She said her previous government (1996-2001) had handed over the Khulna Shipyard to Bangladesh Navy in order to modernise it further. "As a result, we have achieved the shipbuilding capacity."

Hasina said she firmly believes that the two modern frigates and one corvette made by China and the two modern survey ships would strengthen the capacity of Bangladesh Navy in protecting the sovereignty of the country.

She expressed optimism that Bangladesh would gradually achieve the capacity of building ships for other countries.

BLUE ECONOMY

The PM said the government has been working to build a vibrant blue economy by utilising marine resources for Bangladesh's economic prosperity.

"We not only want to protect our sea areas, but also use marine resources so that we can achieve economic prosperity. We have adopted the concept of blue economy and have been working on it."

Hasina said Bangladesh attained its sovereignty in a vast sea area as the then Awami League government took proper measures after assuming office in 2009.

Chief of Naval Staff Admiral M Shaheen Iqbal, on behalf of the PM, formally handed over the "commissioning form [statement]" of the ships to their respective captains at the Naval Berth.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina looks at replicas of Bangladesh Navy ships while commissioning five ships, including three warships, through a video conference from the Gono Bhaban yesterday. The warships are: BNS Umar Farooq, BNS Abu Ubaidah, and BNS Protasha. The two survey ships are: BNS Darshak and BNS Tallashi.

PHOTO: PTD

BGB seizes two lakh yaba pills, detains six in Bandarban

5 Rohingyas among them

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) yesterday arrested six people and seized two lakh yaba pills from their possession in Bandarban's Naikhyanghari upazila.

Of the six, five are Rohingyas and one is Bangladeshi, said Lt Col Ali Haider Azad Ahmed, commanding officer (CO) of BGB-34 battalion in a press release.

A patrol team of the BGB confronted the six at Reju Amtali area of the upazila, as they were coming from the Myanmar border around 8:30am, said the press release.

Upon searching, the BGB team found the contraband pills in their possession, it said.

The arrestees were identified as Md Rahamath Ullah, 24, Md Mahmudul Hassan, 21, Md Selim, 22, Md Amin, 22, Md Jiabul Haque 26, of Lambashia Rohingya camp, and Md Joynal Abedin, 25, of Cox's Bazar's Ukhiya.

A case is being filed in this connection, the CO said.

Graft gobbled up over Tk 37cr

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According to the TIB report, a former assistant of a minister influenced the selection of an implementing organisation, its approval, and the choosing of contractors for the solar street lights project.

In one project, about 650 kilowatts of solar energy were produced each day, but most of the energy was wasted in the absence of an executive order to supply over 50 kilowatts to the consumer level.

Since there was no provision to supply the produced energy to the national grid, about 180 megawatts got wasted each year since 2017.

The TIB report mentioned that the financing organisation approved the solar street lights project proposals with additional expenditures, without proper scrutiny.

Although both these projects of similar capacities were approved around the same time, the difference between the costs for each unit of street light was about Tk 1.01 lakh, it said.

The survey data included interviews of 38 key informants, 29 focus group discussions, and information collected in the field-level between June 2018 and September 2020.

According to the TIB report, 40 percent or about Tk 1.31 crore of the budget of Tk 3.27 crore of one of the afforestation projects has been embezzled.

In another afforestation project, vehicles and office equipment purchased disappeared from the project office. Besides, the project saw the plantation of about one lakh fewer saplings than originally planned.

Estimated monetary value of this was about Tk 56.25 lakh, said the report.

In the third afforestation project (eco park), about Tk 1.84 crore of the allocated money was embezzled by showing on paper that the project had been fully implemented.

Similarly, about half (Tk 8.66 crore) of the fund for another afforestation project (carbon sink) was embezzled by implementing only around 50 percent of the physical work, while papers said it was fully done.

For one solar street lights project implemented in 2016-2017, an additional Tk 55.90 lakh was spent.

For another solar street lights project 2016-2018, Tk 69.88 lakh was spent additionally.

For the solar power station, inflated expenditures were shown for purchasing

of equipment and four acres of land at an additional cost of Tk 11 lakh per acre.

Iftekaruzzaman said the government's investment priority on coal and other fossil fuel-based projects instead of renewable energy was a clear violation of its national and global commitments.

By doing so, Bangladesh, already vulnerable to the impact of global climate change, is turning out to be a polluting nation, he told the virtual conference, adding that the country might lose its primary success and reputation in environmental diplomacy.

"The government has to move away from such stances," he said.

In its recommendations, TIB said the least developed countries (LDCs), under the leadership of Bangladesh, must put combined diplomatic pressure on the developed countries to ensure mitigation funding based on the Paris Climate Agreement.

The graft watchdog said different government bodies, including the forest and environment ministry, finance ministry, and power and energy ministry should take steps to stop investment in fossil fuels such as coal and LNG, and invest in renewables.

Man shot dead by 'Rohingya criminals'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

A Bangladeshi national was shot dead allegedly by Rohingya assailants in Jadimura area of Teknaf upazila yesterday.

The victim is Abdus Shukkur, 35, of Jadimura area. He was an informer of law enforcement agencies.

His uncle Abul Hashim said a group of seven to eight Rohingya criminals, led by Zakir alias Dakat Zakir, entered the victim's house around 11:00am.

They dragged Shukkur out of the home and opened fire on him. He died on the spot. They also threatened to kill other members of the family.

Later, the criminals went towards a Rohingya camp, said Hashim.

Contacted, Hemayetul Islam, commanding-in-officer of 16th Armed Police Battalion in Cox's Bazar, said the incident happened around 250 metres away from Nayapara-26 Rohingya camp.

The victim used to work as an informer of law enforcement agencies and helped the government agencies conduct drives against Rohingya criminals. That is probably why he was killed, he said.

"We are working to trace the killers," he added.

Hafizur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Teknaf Police Station, said the body was sent to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital morgue for an autopsy.

The process of filing a case was underway, he added.

Govt signs deal

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chief operating officer of Beximco Pharmaceuticals Ltd, and Sandeep Malay, additional director of SII, signed the agreement.

Beximco Pharma is Serum's sole distributor in Bangladesh.

"We are signing this MoU under the condition that we will take it [the vaccine] only if it is approved by the World Health Organization," the minister said in his speech at the deal-signing ceremony.

The government plans to vaccinate frontline health workers and people aged 65 and above in the first phase, said a health ministry official.

The health minister said, "We will be able to vaccinate a total of 1.5 crore people with these vaccine doses."

Neither the minister nor any official of his ministry, however, said whether the vaccines would be free of cost for people.

Details of the MoU were not disclosed immediately.

The Beximco will collect and transport the Covishield vaccines to storage facilities under the health directorate's Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI) cold-chain network. The vaccine doses must be stored at 2-8 degrees Celsius.

Officials said the EPI has the storage capacity.

"They will supply the vaccines

in phases -- 50 lakh doses each month. We have enough capacity to store them. We, however, will place proposals before our high-ups to increase the capacity if our regular vaccination programme does not get hampered," Shamsul Haque Mridha, director of the EPI programme, told The Daily Star yesterday.

The Covishield, originally named as ChAdOx1 nCoV-19 by the inventor organisations -- Oxford University and AstraZeneca -- is a viral vector vaccine, which is at the final stage trial in multiple countries.

It could be ready as early as December, reported The Indian Express on October 28.

In an interview with NDTV, Adar Poonawalla, CEO of Serum Institute, which is currently conducting late-stage trials of the vaccine in India, said the first batch of 100 million doses should be available by the second or third quarter of next year.

The India Times in a report on August 7 said the SII -- the world's largest vaccine manufacturer in terms of volume -- has capped the price of Covid-19 vaccine at \$3 per dose for low and middle income countries, including India, as part of a new partnership with Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

HC throws away case against 219

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image of the country' and 'hatching conspiracy against the government and the state'. On police plea, the detention order was extended a few times. Subsequently, two other groups of returnee migrants from Vietnam, Qatar and Lebanon were also detained on almost similar grounds after they finished their quarantine period," said the statement.

They got bail at different stages during the last month.

"Earlier, on October 1 the same bench of the High Court summoned the investigating officer of Turag Thana to appear before it to explain why 219 returnees from three Gulf states were detained under Section 54," said the statement.

"The bench of Justice Enayetur Rahim and Justice Mustafizur Rahman also directed the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court to show cause under what law the detention under the General Diary was continuing until then," it added.

Barrister Jyotirmoy Barua made the submission on behalf of one Shahin Alam, a returnee from Bahrain, said the press release.

"The plaintiff sought relief under Section 561A of the Code of Criminal Procedure that empowers 'the High Court Division to make such orders as may be necessary ... to prevent abuse of the process of any Court and otherwise secure the ends of justice,'" it added.

Margins razor-thin

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the presidency. Fox News and AP news agency projected Biden as the winner in Arizona, which has 11 electoral votes, on Wednesday. But other outlets have yet to do so and vote-counting continues in the state, where Biden is holding on to a shrinking lead.

If the former vice president wins Pennsylvania, the race will be over. Thousands of mostly mail-in votes remain uncounted so far, with Biden trailing by just more than 115,000 votes. The Keystone State's Lt Gov John Fetterman, a Democrat, told CNN that the result could come as early as today and that he believed outstanding ballots in areas that favour Democrats would deliver a clear win for Biden.

In large population centers in the state like in Montgomery County, Biden is outperforming Trump with mail-in ballot counts and results to come are from Philadelphia, which has 12 percent of the state's population, and an overwhelming Democratic vote base.

The Democratic nominee has also been making a run in Georgia, which has 16 electoral votes, where the president's lead dwindled to about 13,500 votes overnight as results came in from Fulton County around Atlanta with 98 percent of the state vote count reported. There are only around 50,000 votes left to be counted in the state, according to a statement by Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger.

The story was reversed in Arizona, where several tranches of votes from Maricopa County, which includes Phoenix, narrowed Biden's lead to just under 69,000 votes with Trump's team insisting that the president will eventually prevail and keep his hopes of a path to 270 alive.

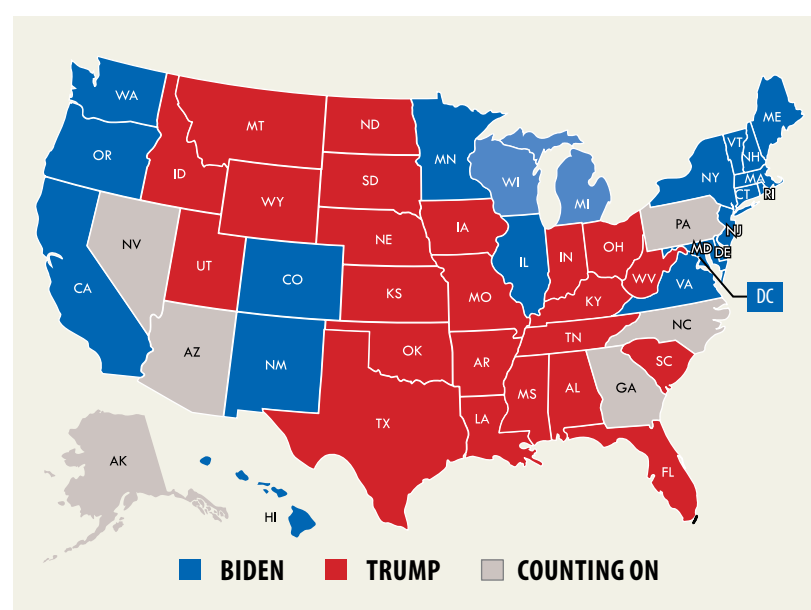
There is also a close contest in Nevada. According to the latest batch of result released by the state, Biden's lead in the state has gone up from 7,647 to more than 11,000. Biden holds 49.4 percent of the vote, while Trump holds 48.5 percent. The final result will come down again to mail-in votes, which could favor Biden since thousands are outstanding in Clark County, around Las Vegas which is usually Democratic territory. If Biden holds leads in Arizona and Nevada, he will get to 270.

However, Nevada is not expected to deliver a complete result until November 12, as it will be accepting mail-in vote deliveries until Tuesday.

The Republican president, who during the long and rancorous campaign attacked the integrity of the American voting system, has alleged fraud without providing evidence, filed lawsuits and called for at least one recount.

Some legal experts called the challenges a long shot unlikely to affect the eventual outcome of the election.

The president appears to have grown more upset as his leads in some states have diminished or evaporated during the counting. Yesterday morning, he



weighed in on Twitter, writing "STOP THE COUNT!"

The counting and court challenges set the stage for days if not weeks of uncertainty before Dec 8, the deadline to resolve election disputes.

Trump's campaign called for a recount in Wisconsin, where Biden has been projected to win by roughly 21,000 votes out of 3.3 million cast, a margin slim enough to entitle him to a recount. Candidates can ask for a recount in Wisconsin if they are within 1 percent of the winner's vote total -- but the recount cannot be formally requested until completion of the canvass, which could be as late as November 17.

However, elections experts said a recount in Wisconsin was seen unlikely to alter the result.

His campaign also filed lawsuits in Michigan and Pennsylvania to stop vote counting. Michigan Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson, in charge of elections, called the Trump team's lawsuit "frivolous".

Trump's campaign filed a lawsuit in Georgia to require that Chatham County, which includes the city of Savannah, separate and secure late-arriving ballots to ensure they are not counted.

Delivering a blow to that effort, a judge there dismissed the petition. County elections officials testified that all the ballots had been received on time.

It also asked the US Supreme Court to allow Trump to join a pending lawsuit filed by Pennsylvania Republicans over whether the battleground state should be permitted to accept late-arriving ballots that were mailed by Election Day.

Trump's campaign said it planned to make an announcement in Las Vegas today. Fox News reported the campaign would announce another lawsuit, this one alleging voter fraud in Nevada.

Despite Trump's allegations of fraud and an unsubstantiated charge that Democrats are trying to "steal" the election, US election experts say fraud in

balloting is rare.

"The litigation looks more like an effort to allow Trump to continue rhetorically attempting to delegitimize an electoral loss," said Joshua Geltzer, executive director of Georgetown Law's Institute for Constitutional Advocacy and Protection.

If victorious, Biden would face a tough battle to govern, with Republicans appearing poised to keep control of the US Senate, which they could use to block large parts of his legislative agenda, including expanding healthcare access and efforts aimed at fighting climate change.

The contentious election aftermath capped a vitriolic campaign that unfolded amid the coronavirus pandemic, which has killed more than 233,000 people in the United States and left millions more jobless. The country has also grappled with months of unrest involving protests over racism and police brutality.

With tensions rising, about 200 of Trump's supporters, some armed with rifles and handguns, gathered outside an election office in Phoenix, Arizona, on Wednesday following unsubstantiated rumors that votes were not being counted. In Detroit, officials blocked about 30 people, mostly Republicans, from entering a vote-counting facility amid unfounded claims that the vote count in Michigan was fraudulent.

Anti-Trump protesters in other cities demanded that vote counting continue and there were arrests in Portland, Oregon, as well as New York, Denver and Minneapolis. Over 100 events are planned across the country between Wednesday and Saturday.

By early yesterday, Biden had drawn about 3.6 million more votes than Trump nationwide.

Trump defeated Democrat Clinton in 2016 after winning crucial battleground states and securing the Electoral College vote even though she drew about 3 million more votes nationwide.

Country sees

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which is 1.45 percent of all confirmed cases in the country.

Yesterday's positive cases were detected after 15,225 tests in 113 laboratories. The positivity rate was 12.1 percent.

The overall positivity rate was 17.3 percent.

Meanwhile, 1,891 Covid-19 patients recovered, taking the total recoveries to 3,33,588, which is more than 80 percent of all confirmed cases.

Among the 17 deceased, 14 were male and three were female.

All of them died in hospitals, according to the release.

One of them was aged between 41 and 50 years, two between 51 and 60, and the rest 14 were above 60, added the release.

One each was from Rajshahi and Chattogram and 15 were from Dhaka division.

Hope for healing

Say experts as Biden inches towards White House

PORIMOL PALMA

As Democratic candidate Joe Biden approaches the magic number of 270 taking him to the White House, many Americans see new hope of healing the scars of divisions in their society.

Analysts say Trump's reelection means the social, economic and political divisions in the US widens, but Biden's victory will help restore the damages, domestically and internationally.

"Trump is a cult of personality," said John B Bellinger III, co-founder of Former Republican National Security Officials for Biden, said Wednesday night during an interaction with a group of journalists virtually participating at the 2020 US Presidential Election Reporting Seminar organised by the Hawaii-based East-West Centre.

This is one of a number of organizations, which have raised millions of dollars to run campaigns opposing Trump, considering the Republican Party under Trump moved away from the party's core values of promoting rule of law, human rights, democracy, free trade, and international cooperation.

Bellinger said White and Evangelical Christians and those living in rural America and don't have college education are a strong voter base of Trump. For long they had a feeling that the politicians had ignored them. Thus, they chose Trump, hoping for a change.

In foreign policy front, withdrawal of Paris Agreement on climate change, nuclear deal with Iran and a harsh trade war with China were also criticized. The trade war with China could be handled in a more sophisticated way, said analysts.

On the other hand, Joe Biden who was ahead of Trump to win the election, talked about how he would be a leader for everyone, calling for unity and bipartisanship.

Bellinger said Trump will not change even if he wins second time because that's his character.

The quality of democracy, freedom of speech and human rights -- the core values of America -- will deteriorate and it will have implications all across the globe, he said.

On the other hand, Joe Biden, a long-time Democrat politician and vice president during Obama administration, is calling for unity. His words give hope and confidence to the Americans. He will definitely work for uniting the people of all colours and races and heal the scars, said Bellinger.

Thomas E Patterson, Bradley Prof of Government and the Press, Kennedy School, Harvard University, said the number of Asian immigrants, urban population, youths, white educated voters and African Americans are increasing in the US. They basically support the Democrats.

"Therefore, within a decade the Democratic Party will be a very strong party," he said. "Meanwhile, I hope Biden heals the division in our country. He has the ability."