

BANGLADESH
UPDATE



1,469
New cases in 24hrs



4,17,475
Total cases



6,036
Deaths



3,35,027
Recoveries

GLOBAL
UPDATE



1,242,865
Deaths



49,261,522
Total cases

If elected, Biden likely to focus on human rights

Experts believe he will give priority to Rohingya issue, strengthening democracy across the globe

PORIMOL PALMA

Potential US President Joe Biden's foreign policy will emphasise on strengthening democracy and human rights globally -- a shift from that of incumbent President Donald Trump who focused on trade, said international relations analysts at Washington, DC.

As part of that, Biden will also put pressure on Myanmar, which has a bad human rights record, especially in its treatment of Rohingyas and some other ethnic groups, they said.

"Obviously, the Biden administration will have more focus on the Rohingya issue than that of Trump. It's been a terrible issue and a tragic thing for long," said Michael Kugleman, deputy director and senior associate for South Asia at the Woodrow Wilson Center, Washington, DC.

Zack Cooper, research fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, Washington, DC, echoed Kugleman's view while interacting with foreign journalists virtually at the 2020 US Presidential Election Reporting Seminar on Friday, organised by the Hawaii-based East-West Centre.

In response to a question by The Daily Star, he said the Trump administration made some important statements on the Rohingyas in 2017, but Biden will be much more vocal about it as he would emphasise on human rights and democracy issues globally as part of his foreign policy.

So far, the international community has provided some humanitarian support to nearly a million Rohingya refugees, who fled military crackdown in Myanmar's Rakhine State in 2017, but not for a sustainable repatriation to their homeland where they are denied citizenship and basic human rights.

Asked how the US-Bangladesh relationship would look like under the

Biden administration, Kugleman said Bangladesh so far has not generated as much attention in the US policy considerations as that of India, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Policymakers of both Republican and Democratic parties are quite concerned about a terrorist attack that took place in Bangladesh a few years back, and also the crackdown on freedom of speech and political opposition.

He thinks Biden will be working with Bangladesh on human rights, governance and democracy issues as well as strengthen economic relations.

US Deputy Secretary of State Stephen Biegun during his recent visit to Dhaka termed Bangladesh a key country under its Indo-Pacific Strategy that aims at a free and open Indo-Pacific and improving relations with allies in Asia, where China's influence is growing.

Kugleman said the Biden administration will work very closely with India, Bangladesh and other South Asian countries to promote trade, human rights, democracy and good governance.

The analysts said the US Asia policy under Biden would mostly be looked at from the China angle. Biden may not be confrontational with China like Trump, but rivalry with China is going to persist for some time.

Xi Jinping and his Chinese Communist Party are not at all popular in the US, they said, adding that while China has tremendous economic influence globally, there are questions over governance, transparency, and environmental issues in the investments that it makes overseas.

Zack Cooper said Biden is likely to have a positive approach with China, instead of a confrontational one. He has a shared vision, not just a negative China vision and will work on relations in ways that he can.

Potato prices

FROM PAGE 1

Hasan, owner of Hasan Store at Kalyanpur Notun Bazar, told the correspondent on Tuesday night that he had not been selling potatoes since Sunday because there was no supply at the wholesale market in Mirpur-1. Sourcing goods from any other market would raise the transportation cost, he said.

"After adding the transportation and other costs, the price would be between Tk 55 and Tk 60 a kg. That's why I stopped selling potatoes," he said.

The crisis began in mid-September and has been getting worse. The Department of Agriculture Marketing (DAM) on October 7 fixed the price of each kg of retail potato at Tk 30 and wholesale at Tk 25. For stockpilers who keep potatoes in cold storage facilities the price was fixed at Tk 23 a kg.

But the price rose to Tk 50 and beyond at retail markets.

The DAM on October 27 fixed the retail prices at Tk 35 a kg following a meeting with cold storage association members and businessmen. The wholesale price was fixed at Tk 30 per kg.

According to the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB), the retail price of potato was Tk 42-45 yesterday. It was

only Tk 23-25 around this time last year.

There are over 100 wholesale shops at the kitchen market in Mirpur-1.

Salesperson Solaiman said he heard the authorities warn storekeepers of six months in jail and Tk 1 lakh in fines for selling potatoes at higher rates.

Some wholesalers in Karwan Bazar said they sell potatoes only at night in fear of being fined.

They suggested the government control the price at cold-storage level.

Some businessmen who hoarded a lot of potatoes last month have made the matter worse.

"But the hoarders stopped selling potatoes once the government fixed the price," said Muslem.

The Bangladesh Cold Storage Association (BCSA) in a letter last week urged the hoarders to sell the potatoes at prices fixed by the government.

According to BCSA, this year the production of potatoes was 85 lakh tonnes and due to transport and labour crises during the pandemic, only 40 lakh tonnes of potatoes were kept in cold storages.

Of the 40 lakh tonnes, 55 percent was sold out by October. Of the rest, 10 lakh tonne are meant for farmers.

County, told reporters that there was no evidence of improper ballots being processed.

Bob Bauer, a senior adviser to Biden's campaign, called the various Trump lawsuits a "meritless" distraction and said the strategy was designed to undermine the integrity of the electoral process.

"This is part of a broader misinformation campaign that involves some political theater," he said.

"They're intended to give the Trump campaign the opportunity to argue the vote count should stop. It is not going to stop," he told reporters on Thursday.

In Pennsylvania, where Trump lost his lead to Biden yesterday, the Trump campaign and other Republicans filed various legal challenges.

An appeals court in Pennsylvania on Thursday ordered that Trump campaign officials be allowed to more closely observe ballot processing in Philadelphia, which led to a brief delay in the count.

A judge later in the day helped negotiate an agreement that a fixed number of observers from each campaign -- up to 60 -- could be admitted into parts of the city's ballot-counting area inside the Pennsylvania Convention Center.

Pennsylvania Democrats filed papers on Thursday in the US Supreme Court saying that although they would not oppose the Trump campaign's bid to intervene in a pending appeal in which Republicans seek to block late-arriving mail-in ballots in the state, it was premature for the court to act on the motion.

Trump has repeatedly said that he expects the Supreme Court, which has a 6-3 conservative majority including three justices he appointed, to have a key role in determining the outcome.

"We think there's going to be a lot of litigation," Trump told reporters on Thursday, adding that "it's going to end up perhaps in the highest court in the land."

But it is unlikely the Supreme Court would have the final word in any decisive way and any challenge would have to make its way through the usual court process, legal experts say.



Workers repair iron sheets along a road in the capital's Dholaikhal, obstructing movement of traffic and pedestrians in the area. Used iron sheets and drums have been piled up, occupying almost half of a lane of the road. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Detectives looking for users' info

FROM PAGE 1

can hold 20 bullets, while service pistols, used by law enforcers, can hold 15, say detectives.

Concerned that the country's law and order could be under risk if such sophisticated weapons are available to people, detectives are now looking into every possible details, including social status, of those who bought them, they said.

The DB launched the investigation after they recovered an Uzi from the possession of a drug dealer -- Minal Sharif -- on August 20 in the capital.

The law enforcers learnt that it was bought against the licence for a rifle.

Confirming the development, Golam Mostofa Rashel, deputy commissioner of DB police (Teigaon Division), told The Daily Star yesterday that they were working after collecting the list of the arms holders.

"We are now sending letters to police stations concerned asking for addresses and other details of the buyers, including their social status," he said. "We are waiting for reports containing the information."

"We saw that such a powerful weapon reached the hands of a drug dealer. We want to know how it happened ... We want to make sure it never happens again," he added.

After getting all the information, detectives would submit a detailed reported to the home ministry, requesting it to take necessary steps.

Talking to this correspondent, a police source said the DMP headquarters had already sent another report to the ministry, detailing how "Uzi pistols" make their way into the country amid lax monitoring and with the use of false declarations.

In that report, the DMP recommended immediate forfeit of all imported "Uzi pistols" and their handover to law enforcers, saying if the firearms reach the hands of militants or any criminal group, it could be dangerous.

The irregularities in the arms import took place as there is no arms expert in customs and district commissioner offices. So, the presence of arms experts is necessary during the release of any arms shipment by the customs house, the police report suggested.

On October 29, The Daily Star ran a report on the issue under the headline "Military-Grade Firearms: Shady import worries cops". The report shed light on how a section of licensed arms dealers brought in the Uzis in the name of rifles.

After the report was published, three other licensed arms dealers -- MH Arms Co, Shafiqul Islam Arms & Co, and Ahmed Hossain Arms Co -- reacted to it, sending a "clarification" to this newspaper which did not mention their names in the news item.

They said the report read that "the Uzi pistol is a military-grade pistol and used by the Defence Force". They claimed it was not true and that the import of semi-automatic firearms was

not prohibited in Bangladesh.

They said the Defence Forces use Uzi full automatic sub-machine gun and use lethal 9mm bullets in them. Whereas, the imported Uzis were of civilian version and use .22 calibre bullets.

The arms dealers also said the arms-manufacturing company makes two models of "rifles" -- one is Uzi SMG with long butt and the other Uzi pistol with a smaller butt. The company uses the pistol tag for the identification of the rifle model.

The tag of a "pistol" does not make a weapon a pistol, they argued.

The Daily Star article was based on a report forwarded to the DMP headquarters by the DB.

In its report, the DB said, "The Uzi pistol is a military-grade weapon and it is largely used by the armed forces in Belgium and the Israeli Defence Force. The arms are used to provide security to VIPs." This newspaper has a copy of the report.

Experts also said the "Uzi pistol" could fire more shots than the service arms used by law enforcers in the country.

The police report also read that "the imported firearm is a pistol and the arms dealers are importing, preserving and selling it after giving false declaration that it is a rifle."

Besides, Clause Six of Arms Rules 2016 says any weapon which exceeds the standard of service weapons cannot be imported in the country for personal use.

Vaccines must be free of cost for all

FROM PAGE 1

Emphasising greater collaboration to conquer any hurdle on the path to prosperity during this difficult time, Hasina said collaboration, not isolation, can help overcome any crisis.

The advanced economies must fulfill their unmet promises concerning duty-free and quota-free market access, and technological support for developing countries, the PM added.

She called upon the G-7, G-20, OECD countries, MDBs and IFIs to play their vital role in bailing out the affected LDCs and developing nations. The PM said they would have to come forward with increased fiscal stimulus, concessional finance, and debt relief measures.

Hasina said the Covid-19 pandemic has had devastating impacts on the health systems and economies of all countries.

She said the least developed and

developing countries, in particular, are the worst-hit by the pandemic and a vast majority of the people are suffering from the loss of income and employment.

Talking about Bangladesh's efforts for advancing its economy, the premier said the country achieved sustained high growth in the last one decade and also attained tremendous progress in some socio-economic indicators.

She mentioned that her government also adopted "Vision 2041" aiming to elevate Bangladesh to an upper-middle-income country by 2031 and a developed one by 2041.

The PM said the country was well on track to achieve SDGs, but the pandemic made a serious dent in the advancements despite her government's all-out efforts to contain the spread of the virus. She said a large stimulus package was given to overcome

economic losses.

Hasina said after suffering an initial setback for a few months, Bangladesh's economy has started recovering.

Finance Minister AHM Mostafa Kamal delivered the welcome address, while vice presidents of World Bank and ADB, as well as the IMF's deputy director for the Asia-Pacific region, gave keynote speeches at the meeting.

Finance ministers, advisers on the ministry of finance and representatives concerned of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) member states, including Germany, Spain, Poland, Bulgaria, Thailand, Japan, China, Myanmar, Indonesia and Singapore, are taking part in the event.

'MITIGATE COVID-19 IMPACTS' Meanwhile, a Bangladesh foreign ministry press release yesterday said participants of the ASEM Finance Ministers' Meeting discussed and

First madrasa for transgender Muslims opens

AFP, Dhaka

Bangladesh opened its first Islamic school for transgender Muslims yesterday with clerics calling it a first step towards integrating the discriminated minority into society.

The madrasa is one of a series of recent moves in Bangladesh to make life easier for the Muslim-majority nation's up to 1.5 million transgender people.

The LGBT community faces widespread discrimination in the country, with a colonial-era law still in place that punishes gay sex by prison terms, though enforcement is rare.

But about 50 transgender students read Quranic verses to mark the opening of the Dawatul Islam Tritio Linger Madrasa, or Islamic Third Gender School, on the outskirts of the capital yesterday.

"I am ecstatic," Shakila Akhter, a 33-year-old student, told AFP.

"We are grateful to the clerics for this beautiful move."

Akhter was born a girl and had always wanted to become a doctor or lawyer, but those ambitions were thwarted when she left home while still a child to join a transgender commune.

"We are Muslims, yet we can't go to a mosque," Akhter said.

A group of clerics led by Abdur Rahman Azad transformed the top floor of a three-storey building into the school with funding from a local charity.

Azad's team already offers Quranic lessons to seven transgender groups in Dhaka and said the madrasa grew out of the need for a permanent base for the community.

Up to 150 students -- nearly all adults -- will get lessons similar to those in a traditional madrasa, where the Quran is taught along with Islamic philosophy, Bengali, English, maths and social sciences.

Azad said transgender people, known as Hijras in Bangladesh, have suffered too much.

"For too long they have been living a miserable life. They can't go to schools, madrasas or mosques. They have been victims of discrimination. We, society and the state are to blame for this," he said.

"We want to end this discrimination. Allah does not discriminate between people. Islam treats everyone as a human being. Hijras should enjoy all rights like any other human being."

In 2015 Islamist extremists hacked to death a leading gay activist and editor of an LGBT magazine, while other prominent homosexuals have since fled the country.

But steps forward have been made for the community. Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's government has since 2013 allowed trans to be identified as a separate gender.

Last year they were allowed to register to vote as a third gender, and their numbers will be counted in a census to be carried out next year across the country of 168 million.

exchanged views on relief and recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and the most effective way for the timely implementation of Sustainable Development Goals.

The Meeting noted that the pandemic brought unprecedented challenges and untold sufferings around the world. As a consequence, more than one million people lost their lives, the socio-economic situation, public health, environment and society have seriously taken a hit and the global economic outlook remains uncertain.

Given the gravity of the devastation and challenges posed by Covid-19 on the economic situation and outlook, the Meeting acknowledged that mitigating social and economic impacts, safeguarding lives, livelihoods and businesses, and finding an effective solution to the Covid-19 are the ASEM member state's urgent collective priority.

Trump loses legal fight

FROM PAGE 1

that 53 late-arriving ballots were mixed with on-time ballots. In Michigan, it had sought to stop votes from being counted and obtain greater access to the tabulation process.

State judges tossed out both lawsuits on Thursday.

On the same day, a federal judge also denied an emergency request from Trump's campaign to stop ballot counting in Philadelphia so long as Republican observers were not present. Trump's campaign had sued Philadelphia County's Board of Elections earlier in the day to seek an emergency injunction.

James Bass, a Superior Court judge in Georgia, said there was "no evidence" that the ballots in question were invalid.

In the Michigan case, Judge Cynthia Stephens said: "I have no basis to find that there is a substantial likelihood of success on the merits."

A Trump campaign spokeswoman did not respond to requests for comment on the Michigan and Georgia rulings.

Trump allies also alleged that there had been voting irregularities in Nevada's populous Clark County, which includes Las Vegas.

Votes are still being counted in all three states, among a handful of battleground states that could decide the presidency. Democratic challenger Joe Biden now leads all the states: Nevada, Georgia and Pennsylvania which includes Philadelphia.

At a news conference in Las Vegas on Thursday, former Nevada Attorney General Adam Laxalt and other Trump campaign surrogates, including former administration official Richard Grenell, gave no evidence to support their allegations of irregularities and did not answer questions from reporters.

"We believe that there are dead voters that have been counted. We are also confident that there are thousands of people whose votes have been counted that have moved out of Clark County during the pandemic," Laxalt said.

He said a lawsuit would be filed in federal court to ask the judge to "stop the counting of improper votes."

Joe Gloria, an election official in Clark

On the verge of victory

FROM PAGE 1

The campaign's general counsel, Matt Morgan, asserted in a statement that the elections in Georgia, Nevada, and Pennsylvania all suffered from improprieties and that Trump would eventually prevail in Arizona.

"This election is not over," he added.

"Biden is relying on these states for his phony claim on the White House, but once the election is final, President Trump will be re-elected."

Election officials in those states have said they are unaware of any irregularities.

In Pennsylvania, Biden moved ahead of Trump by 13,662 votes yesterday. The state's biggest city, Philadelphia, has about 40,000 ballots left to count, which could take several days to complete, Lisa Deeley, chair of the Philadelphia City Commissioners, said during a press conference yesterday.

In Georgia, Biden opened up a 1,553 vote lead. There are just 4,169 outstanding ballots to be counted across a handful of counties in Georgia, Gabriel Sterling, the state's voting system implementation manager, said in a press conference yesterday.

Trump campaign yesterday said they will call for a recount in Georgia. The state allows request for a recount only after state certification, which will be done on November 20 at the latest, and only if results are within 0.5 percent margin.

Biden, 77, would be the first Democrat to win Georgia since Bill Clinton in 1992.

In Arizona, after counting of 93 percent of the votes, Biden's lead had narrowed to about 430,942 votes.

Biden campaign said they had expected Trump to close the gap in Arizona's largest county -- but they still believe Biden has more support coming in from the 220,000 uncounted votes in

the state.

In Nevada, with 92 percent of the votes counted, Biden's lead has widened marginally. He was ahead by about 20,137 till filing of this report.

After 95 percent votes counted, Trump leads North Carolina by 76,737 votes.

Pennsylvania, one of three traditionally Democratic states along with Michigan and Wisconsin that handed Trump his 2016 victory, had long been seen crucial to the 2020 race, and both candidates lavished enormous sums of money and time on the state.

As the country held its breath for a result in the White House race, Georgia and Pennsylvania officials expressed optimism they would finish counting today, while Arizona and Nevada were still expected to take days to complete their vote totals.

TRUMP'S DIMINISHING LEADS

Trump, 74, has sought to portray as fraudulent the slow counting of mail-in ballots, which surged in popularity due to fears of exposure to the coronavirus through in-person voting.

States have historically taken time after election day to tally all votes.

The close election has underscored the nation's deep political divides, and if he wins Biden will likely face a difficult task governing in a deeply polarized Washington.

Republicans could keep control of the US Senate, pending the outcome of four undecided Senate races including two in Georgia that are likely to go for runoffs. A Republican held Senate would likely block large parts of his legislative agenda, including expanding healthcare and fighting climate change.

CNN yesterday projected former astronaut Mark Kelly, a Democrat, to win the Senate race in Arizona, defeating incumbent GOP Sen Martha McSally. The late Sen John McCain once

held this seat.

The winner of the presidential race will have to tackle a pandemic that has killed more than 234,000 people in the United States and left millions more out of work, even as the country still grapples with the aftermath of months of unrest over race relations and police brutality.

'RIG AN ELECTION'

Trump fired off several tweets in the early morning hours yesterday, and repeated some of the complaints he aired earlier at the White House. "I easily WIN the Presidency of the United States with LEGAL VOTES CAST," he said on Twitter, without offering any evidence that any illegal votes have been cast.

Twitter flagged the post as possibly misleading, something it has done to numerous tweets by Trump since election day.

In an extraordinary assault on the democratic process, Trump appeared in the White House briefing room Friday morning (BST) and baselessly alleged the election was being "stolen" from him.

Offering no evidence, Trump lambasted election workers and sharply criticized polling before the election that he said was designed to suppress the vote because it favoured Biden.

Interestingly, in that very speech he praised Republicans for doing well in Senate and House races.

Trump's campaign, meanwhile, has filed lawsuits in several states, though judges in Georgia and Michigan quickly rejected challenges there. Biden campaign senior legal adviser Bob Bauer called them part of a "broader misinformation campaign."

"They're trying to rig an election, and we can't let that happen," said Trump, who spoke in the White House briefing room but took no questions. Several TV networks cut away during his remarks,

with anchors saying they needed to correct his statements.

Biden, who earlier in the day urged patience as votes were counted, responded on Twitter. "No one is going to take our democracy away from us. Not now, not ever."

Trump supporters, some carrying guns, ramped up their demonstrations against the process Friday morning (BST). In Arizona, Trump and Biden supporters briefly scuffled outside the Maricopa County Elections Department in Phoenix.

In Philadelphia, police said they arrested one man and seized a weapon as part of an investigation into a purported plot to attack the city's Pennsylvania Convention Center, where votes were being counted.

1,469 more

FROM PAGE 1

tests in the same 24 hours in 113 laboratories, the positivity rate was 10.86 percent while the overall positivity rate was at 17.26 percent.

Meanwhile, 1,439 new Covid-19 patients have recovered from their illnesses in those 24 hours.

The total number of recoveries rose to 335,027 which was more than 80 percent of all cases.

Among the 15 dead, 11 were males and four were females. All of them died in hospitals, according to the press release.

One aged between 21 and 30 years, four between 41 and 50, five between 51 and 60 and five others were above 60 years.

One each dead was from Mymensingh and Rangpur division, five from Chattogram and the rest eight were from Dhaka division, read the press release.