

BANGLADESH UPDATE 2,111 New cases in 24hrs	4,38,795 Total cases	6,275 Deaths	3,54,788 Recoveries	GLOBAL UPDATE 1,347,477 Deaths	56,158,656 Total cases
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DELAY IN ROHINGYA RETURN

Myanmar's lack of sincerity key reason

Says foreign minister

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen yesterday said Myanmar's lack of sincerity was the key reason for the delay in Rohingya repatriation.

"Myanmar says they will take back Rohingyas, but they didn't take back anybody despite giving two dates for their repatriation," he told reporters at an interaction session with Dhaka Reporters Unity (DRU).

The minister said Myanmar does not feel any pressure and they do not respond to Bangladesh on the Rohingya repatriation issue.

He said Bangladesh was fully ready to send the Rohingyas back when Myanmar gave Bangladesh dates twice to do so. "They made a commitment to take back Rohingyas after verification, but didn't live up to it."

Momen said Russia and China have encouraged all to solve the Rohingya issue bilaterally. "We remain engaged on all fronts -- bilateral, trilateral and multilateral -- to find a solution."

China willingly came forward to help Bangladesh, but it does not mean that Myanmar will listen to China always, he added.

The minister said the international community is putting much focus on the improvement of Rohingyas' living conditions while Bangladesh's aim is to send them back as soon as possible. "So, there is a gap."

Momen said the government would relocate 100,000 Rohingyas to Bhasan Char, but no date was fixed yet. "We will relocate them in

small groups without making any big announcement."

He said international agencies and NGOs were creating barriers to Rohingya relocation to Bhasan Char from Cox's Bazar camps.

TEESTA DEAL
Talking about the Teesta water sharing deal with India, the foreign minister said Bangladesh remains hopeful of signing the agreement.

However, Bangladesh expects "no magic" on that front during the PM-level virtual meeting between India and Bangladesh in the third week of next month, he added.

Responding to a question, Momen said four MoUs would be signed during the virtual meeting and some projects would be inaugurated.

DRU President Rafiqul Islam Azad and General Secretary Reaz Chowdhury also spoke at the "Meet the Reporters" programme.

On Tuesday, the foreign minister said Bangladesh would approach for resuming Rohingya repatriation talks after the formation of a full new government in Myanmar.

The repatriation talks remain halted due to the Covid-19 pandemic and elections in Myanmar.

The Myanmar side made commitments over repatriation of Rohingyas, but not a single Rohingya returned to Rakhine over the last three years.

There is a trust deficit among Rohingyas that needs to be addressed by the Myanmar side, Bangladesh said.



A grocer cutting off sprouts of onions. Small retailers buy these onions from importers for cheap, about Tk 40 a kg, and sell them for nearly Tk 60 after they have cut off the sprouts and have dried them. The photo was taken in CRB area of Chattogram yesterday. PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Future not coal power

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the construction work even after getting approval from the government," State Minister for Power and Energy Nasrul Hamid recently told The Daily Star.

Five projects that have made certain level of progress in physical construction work and generated funds are Payra (1,320MW Bangladesh-China joint venture in Patuakhali), Rampal (1,320MW Bangladesh-India joint venture in Bagerhat), S Alam (1,224MW, at Banskhalhi in Chattogram), Barisal Electric Power Company Ltd (307MW, in Barguna), and Matarbari (1,200MW Bangladesh-Japan joint venture in Cox's Bazar).

Of those, one unit of the Payra power plant has already gone into production.

"It has been providing 600MW electricity to the national grid for the last few months," said the state minister, adding that they will now start to construct the second and third units.

Before Payra, the 525MW capacity plant at Barapukuria in Dinajpur was the country's lone electricity source from coal. The Matarbari plant is all set to start electricity generation in 2023.

RAMPAL PROJECT ON
Among all other coal-based power projects, the Rampal plant touched off an unprecedented uproar among green campaigners at home and abroad, as it is being constructed close to the Sundarbans, the largest mangrove forest in the world.

The state minister, however, insisted that there is no chance of Rampal power plant being cancelled.

"The Rampal power plant has already completed 40 percent progress in construction work. So, there is no chance it will be cancelled," he said.

"None of these power plants will cause any harm to the environment as ultra super critical technology is being implemented while constructing these plants."

Environmentalists, on the other hand, could not disagree more with the government standpoint.

Apart from black smog generated from coal power plants, the fleet of ships carrying coal for the power plants will cause air and water pollution -- which will be harmful for the fragile ecosystem of the Sundarbans, they argued.

ALTERNATIVES TO COAL
Environmentalists say such a move against dirty energy will not hamper electricity supply in the near future.

"We do not need coal-based power plants anymore as the production capacity of the country's power plants is much higher than the existing requirement," said Badrul Imam, a leading energy conservationist and a professor of geology at the University of Dhaka.

For instance, the country's electricity demand is now a maximum of 12,000-13,000MW against a production capacity of 20,383MW, Bangladesh Power Development Board data

showed.

The country is generating this from gas, oil, hydropower, solar power, and coal-fired power plants. Also, the country's lone nuclear power plant Rooppur is likely to generate power by 2024.

About the government's policy for power generation, Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury, adviser to the prime minister on power, energy and mineral resources, told The Daily Star that the government is looking for alternatives, as power generation with imported coal is going to be costly, aside from the pollution factor.

"Yet we need to increase power generation thinking about future demand. So, the government will go for a mixed approach of power generation using LNG, oil, coal and solar so that the country is not too dependent on a single source," Tawfiq-e-Elahi said.

When asked about clean energy like solar power, he said the main problems of solar power are that a lot of space is required and there are no cheaper options of storing the power for night-time use.

It would require 10 square km of land to produce only 1,000MW of electricity by solar power, he said.

"Unless new technology is developed that will help to store power, solar power is not viable for us. But we are still using solar power in agriculture. And we have nearly six million home solar users, one of the largest in the world."

Outrage over MP's rape comments

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religious sentiments would grow within them."

REACTIONS OF WOMEN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS
Coming down heavily on the independent MP, Shireen Haq, founding member of Naripokkho, said he is an uncivilised person who has spoken like a "Neanderthal".

"It appears that the light of education or knowledge has not touched him at all. There is a term -- Neanderthal -- to describe a man like him," she also said.

She said this parliament is not working for women. Not a single MP or the state minister for women or Speaker, or even the prime minister said anything against the MP or protested his remarks, she added.

Calling the statement "cheap", Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) Executive Director Shaheen Anam said rights activists have been fighting to change the mindset of common men so they can respect women, which would help bring equality between women and men.

"But if the mindset of lawmakers is like this, I don't know what to say in this regard. I just want to ask him, why do the children or the madrasa girls or the women wearing Burqa get raped? Statements like this just instigate and encourage the rapists," she added.

She also expressed concern over the silence of female lawmakers after his statement.

Women's rights activist Khushi Kabir, coordinator of Nijera Kori, said "We expect the lawmakers, who are present in parliament as a representative of the public, to deliver research-oriented, facts-based and

responsible speeches in parliament. It would be appreciated if he [Bablu] could gather the information on rape, gang-rape, and sexual violence and analysed the background and clothing of women."

She said since they are elected by the people and receive their tax money, they must not talk in such an irresponsible manner and make baseless comments in parliament.

"The government is inspiring women to be independent, yearning to reach the SDGs [Sustainable Development Goals] to ensure equality for women; we have a policy for women development, a ministry to ensure women's empowerment. The government is creating many opportunities for women to achieve top positions in both government and non-government sectors, and they are becoming the role model for many," she said.

"As a lawmaker, he [Bablu] must know these," added Khushi.

Mentioning the patriarchal mindset of the Bogra-7 lawmaker, Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association (BNWLA) President Advocate Salma Ali said, "I think the time has come to rethink about who are representing the common people, and how they are being elected."

"Those who talk about the tamarind theory, consider women as objects, or talk like the burqa and headcover can stop rape, I just want to tell them that I had attended many meetings with more than 450 women wearing burqa, and when they were asked whether they faced sexual harassment, every one of them put their hands up," she said.

"Women's clothing or freedom has no connection with rape; instead, the

change of mindset is most important here," she added.

Tamanna Hoq Riti, coordinator, Human Rights Forum of Bangladesh in her Facebook post said, "These days, I wonder from where we should start reforms. We have all gotten rotten. Is it possible to bring any reforms here?"

WILL THE AMENDED BILL SOLVE TH PROBLEM?

While women rights activists have long been demanding comprehensive reform in the definition of rape, criminalising marital rape and the inclusion of special provisions for the rape of a male child, the government on October 13 published a gazette declaring death penalty for the rapists.

After the gazette was published, experts said the amendment did nothing to address the actual reforms being demanded. A month later, the statistics support the assertion.

According to statistics from leading human rights body Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), in September this year, 86 women and children were raped and 16 women were gang-raped, while two were murdered after rape.

However, after the gazette was published in October, a total of 374 women and children were raped, 69 women were gang-raped, and three were murdered after rape.

Human rights activist Nur Khan said, "I fear incidents of killing after rape may increase in order to destroy evidence, as perpetrators will not want to keep the victim alive to avoid capital punishment."

Shireen Haq also believed that it is an established truth that the severity of punishment will not solve the problem, and said justice must be ensured and there should not be a culture of impunity.

US approves first rapid home Covid-19 test

AFP, Washington

The US issued an emergency use authorization for the first self-administered rapid coronavirus test Tuesday, as more parts of the country increase restrictions in an attempt to halt a Covid-19 surge.

The Food and Drug Administration approved a testing kit for people age 14 and older whom a doctor suspects to have Covid-19. The test, which is by prescription only, delivers results in 30 minutes.

"We continue to demonstrate unprecedented speed in response to #COVID19," tweeted FDA commissioner Stephen Hahn.

"FDA authorized the first #COVID19 test that's fully self-administered & provides results at home. It's an important advancement, underscoring our commitment to expanding test access."

Over 2K

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five percent and does not increase, it means the transmission is under control, according to epidemiologists.

Throughout the last two months till last week, the positivity rate was almost every day below 12 percent, which started increasing during last week.

Since last month, countries across Europe and America are seeing a resurgence in Covid-19 cases with the advent of winter after successfully slowing outbreaks earlier in the year.

Observing a rising trend in Covid-19 infections and deaths, experts in Bangladesh stressed the need for immediate acceleration of scientific virus curb measures to stop the transmission.

"Without scientific measures, random administrative orders will not work ... We have to assign volunteers across the country to increase awareness," Dr Mushtaq Hussain, consultant of the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research, told The Daily Star on Tuesday.

Meanwhile in those 24 hours, 21 people died from Covid-19, taking the number of deaths to 6,275, said the DGHS press release.

The death rate now stands at 1.43 percent, and the overall positivity rate is now 16.97 percent.

In the same period, 1,893 Covid-19 patients recovered from their illness.

The total number of recoveries rose to 3,54,788, which was 80.86 percent of all confirmed cases.

Of the 21 deceased, 14 were males and seven females.

One was aged under 10, one between 31 and 40, six were aged between 51 and 60, and 13 were above 60 years, added the release.

Noted citizens

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case, especially against the editor of Prothom Alo, has surprised and made us worried for various reasons.

Naimul Abrar was electrocuted during the anniversary programme of Kishor Alo at Dhaka Residential Model School and College sports ground on November 1 last year. It was an unexpected and tragic incident.

However, it was not Prothom Alo's programme but the anniversary programme of his magazine Kishor Alo. The Prothom Alo editor was not even present at the programme. After the incident, Naimul Abrar's father Mojibur Rahman filed an unnatural death case with a police station. Later, he filed a complaint case registered separately with the court.

We think there is no scope to see the case separately from the ones filed in the past against the country's reputed and freethinking editors, including Matiur Rahman, to harass them. Neither can it be seen as a separate incident from the repeated attacks on media freedom in the country. We demand that path be kept open of the right to legal remedy for all the accused in the case including the Prothom Alo editor.

Our concern is that such cases would be misused to shrink the freedom of the editors and newspapers. We call upon everyone to desist from such attempts.

The signatories to the statement are: Ahmad Rafique, researcher and language movement veteran; Serajul Islam Choudhury, emeritus professor, Dhaka University; Hasan Azizul Huq, litterateur; M Hafizuddin Khan, former adviser to a caretaker government; Perween Hasan, vice-chancellor, Central Women's University; Abul Kashem Fazlul Haq, retired professor, Department of Bangla, Dhaka University; Ali Imam Majumder, former cabinet secretary; Sultana Kamal, human rights activist; Brig Gen (retd) M Sakhawat Hussain, former election commissioner; Mamunur Rashid, actor, playwright and director; Rasheda K Chowdhury, former adviser to a caretaker government; Syed Manzoorul Islam, author and educationist; Moinul Islam, economist and former professor of Department of Economics, Chattogram University; Badiul Alam Majumdar, secretary, Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik; Tofail Ahmed, former professor of Department of Public Administration, Chattogram University; Ifekharuzaman, executive director, Transparency International Bangladesh; Shahdeen Malik, advocate, Bangladesh Supreme Court; and Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive, Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association.

PM again warns of second wave

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She also said the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank has approved a loan of \$100 million for Bangladesh.

Responding to a question from Jatiya Party's Fakhru Imam, the leader of the House said all law enforcement and intelligence agencies, including the police, have been working round the clock through mutual coordination between themselves to bring all those involved in sabotage and violent activities to book and take appropriate legal actions against them.

Replying to a query from another lawmaker, Hasina said the trend of increasing crop production has continued in the country by adopting the policy of bringing every inch of land under cultivation despite the affects of climate change and the Covid-19 pandemic.

The PM said Bangladesh has now moved up to the third place from fourth in the world in terms of rice production. "As a result, food security in the country has been strengthened."

Besides, Bangladesh is a role model in agricultural development in the world today as the country remains in the third place in terms of vegetable production, 7th in mango production, 8th in potato and guava production, she added.

Govt doctors to face action

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attended the meeting.
Dr Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin, president of Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA), told The Daily Star: "No government physician should conduct private practice during office hours."

GOVT TO SET FEES FOR PRIVATE HEALTHCARE SERVICES

The government will set the fees for private healthcare services, including treatment and pathology costs, Health Minister Zahid Maleque said yesterday.

The fees will be set based on the categories of the hospitals and the ministry will form a "high-power committee" soon, the minister told a review meeting on the status of private healthcare services at the ministry.

In the meeting, MA Mubin Khan, president of Bangladesh Private Medical College Association, proposed a "centralised medical waste management system" for all private healthcare organisations. The minister agreed with him.

He also urged for help from the private healthcare organisations to tackle the "second wave" of the Covid-19.

Prof ABM Khurshid Alam, director general of the DGHS; Prof Khan Abul Kalam Azad, principal of Dhaka Medical College; and representatives from different healthcare organisations attended the meeting.

However, convener of the taskforce Mostafa Kamal, additional secretary (public health-1), said their latest move is not related to the High Court ruling.

This move is only to create awareness, not to hurt anybody, Dr Shabbir said.

"Private practice during office hours is illegal for any government physicians. In fact, our aim is to make sure everyone maintains the service rules."

The HC bench of Justice FRM Nazmul Ahasan and Justice KM Kamrul Kader came up with the order and rule following a writ petition filed by five Supreme Court lawyers, seeking directives to stop private practice by government-appointed doctors.

In Tuesday's meeting, the committee also decided that all private hospitals, diagnostic centers, laboratories and clinics have to mention its license number clearly in its signboard and other places.

The committee members will visit and conduct drives against illegal private healthcare organisations, and applications for licence submitted after November 16 will not be accepted.

Director of hospitals and clinics at the health directorate Dr Farid Hossain Mian, and joint secretaries Salma Tanzia and Shaila Farzana

No charges except for tuition fees amid Covid

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there was difference of opinions among guardians and school authorities regarding the collection of tuition fees.

Many guardians argued that the tuition fees should not be collected as they faced financial losses due to Covid-19 and no class was held, but school authorities demanded tuition fees to ensure teachers' and other staffs' salary as they were trying their best to continue education through distant learning programmes.

"We should be careful. If the schools are permanently closed or become ineffective, life of teachers and others staffs may fall in serious crisis," it added.

According to the circular, the school authorities should also take it into special consideration if a guardian face serious financial crisis.

There are 19,985 non-government schools with 9,712,639 students in the country.

After the schools were closed due to Covid-19 pandemic, the government launched educational programmes on Sangsad TV for secondary students on March 29, to help them make up for the losses due to the closure of educational institutions.

It later urged all schools to hold online classes. Many of city schools started online classes ever since.