

**BANGLADESH UPDATE**



**1,788**  
New cases in 24hrs



**4,62,407**  
Total cases



**6,609**  
Deaths



**3,78,172**  
Recoveries



**1,461,315**  
Deaths



**62,755,483**  
Total cases

## ROHINGYA CRISIS

# Keep supporting us

Bangladesh urges OIC members

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh has urged the OIC member states to continue political and humanitarian support to Bangladesh until dignified repatriation of Rohingyas to Myanmar is ensured.

Bangladesh's Permanent Representative to Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and Bangladesh Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Mohammad Javed Pathway made the call at the 47th session of the Islamic Council of Foreign Ministers in Niamey, Niger yesterday.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen was supposed to lead the Bangladesh delegation at the meeting but his visit was cancelled as he had tested positive for Covid-19 hours before his departure.

Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen also missed the event as he also tested positive for the virus.

The meeting discussed various issues including ways for supporting the Rohingya case at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), according to Bangladesh Embassy in Riyadh.

Bangladesh is now hosting over 1.1 million Rohingyas in Cox's Bazar district.

The Gambia filed a more than 500-page Memorial, which also includes more than 5,000 pages of supporting material, in its lawsuit against Myanmar at the ICJ in The Hague, making its case for how the Government of Myanmar is responsible for genocide against Rohingyas.

In November 2019, The Gambia opened a case at the ICJ, also known as the World Court, against Myanmar for failing to prevent or punish genocide against Rohingya Muslims.

On January 23, 2020, the ICJ

unanimously indicated legally binding provisional measures, requiring the Government of Myanmar to take all steps within its power to prevent the commission of all acts of genocide, such as killing, causing serious mental or bodily harm, and other acts listed in the Genocide Convention.

The OIC CFM was opened on Friday by Mahamadou Issoufou, president of the Republic of Niger, who affirmed that the Organization of Islamic Cooperation is important to its member states, and that his country plays an active role in the organisation.

He also extended his appreciation to the Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Yousef Al-Othaimen for the work he did for the organisation.

On his part, Al-Othaimen said that the choice of the theme for the session, "United against Terrorism for Peace and Development", is a strong reminder that "terrorism is the single most serious threat to the region and the world, given its negative impact on growth rates and cooperation ties, in addition to worsening Human Development Indices (HDI) ranking."

He also valued the role assigned to the OIC Sawt al-Hikma (Voice of Wisdom) Center, which acts in coordination with the International Islamic Fiqh Academy to bring reason to bear and promote moderation and tolerance.

The secretary general offered his gratitude to His Excellency the President of the Republic of Niger for his gracious patronage of the meeting, and also thanked the people and government of the republic of Niger for the organisation of the meeting and the warm hospitality.



Four people in Abdullahpur in the capital crossing the highway with little concern for their own safety as vehicles speed towards them. Such reckless disregard for safety leads to potentially fatal accidents. This photo was taken on Saturday.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

## Returnees see bleak future

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"Had it not been for the pandemic, I would still be in Bahrain, working at the cosmetics shop where I used to work. Now, the future looks uncertain," said Masum.

Mostakim and Masum are among thousands of Bangladeshi migrant workers who returned home almost empty-handed in recent months after job losses in the host countries amid the pandemic.

According to Expatriates' Welfare Ministry data, about 2.72 lakh Bangladeshi expatriates returned home between April 1 and November 11 this year after coronavirus struck.

Stuck at home for months, most of them see a bleak future ahead with no prospect of a job anytime soon in the host countries. The government's various initiatives for their economic reintegration could not yield benefits to the bulk of the returnees, said migrant rights activists.

Besides, the grace period against loan in most ventures is limited to one month only. Therefore, returnees have to start paying instalments almost immediately after taking the loan, they added.

"The government's reintegration initiatives should reach the returnees in their areas," said Shariful Hasan, head of Brac Migration Programme. "Now, the migrants [who returned] have to rush to banks, and here and there," he said.

In a survey report published in May, Brac said about 87 percent of 558 returnees did not have income opportunities amid the pandemic.

The telephonic survey, conducted in 13 migration-prone districts in April, found 84 percent returnees were uncertain about their future plans.

Six percent wanted to go back to their workplaces abroad and others thought about small scale agro-based business or groceries at home, said the

### RETURNEES FOR DIFFERENT COUNTRIES (April 1-November 11)

| COUNTRY              | NUMBER OF RETURNEES | REASONS OF RETURN  |
|----------------------|---------------------|--|
| Saudi Arabia         | 76,922              | Served jail term and returned with "out pass", many returned after job loss or on vacation.                        |
| United Arab Emirates | 71,903              | Many workers were sent back by their companies on assurance that they will be rehired once situation turns normal. |
| Qatar                | 29,655              | There was no prospect of job.  |
| Oman                 | 16,095              | Served jail term and returned with "out pass".   |
| Maldives             | 13,244              | Employers or companies sent them back as there was prospect of job.  |
| Malaysia             | 12,368              | There was no prospect of job.  |
| Kuwait               | 11,952              | Returned under amnesty programme after they became undocumented, served jail term and returned with "out pass".    |
| Turkey               | 10,453              | There was no prospect of job.  |
| Iraq                 | 10,169              | There was no prospect of job.  |
| Lebanon              | 7,169               | There was no prospect of job; many returned with "out pass".   |
| Singapore            | 5,311               | Returned after expiry of job contracts.  |
| Jordan               | 2,204               | Returned after expiry of job contracts.  |
| Bahrain              | 2,023               | Served jail term and returned with "out pass"; some with sickness, and job loss.                                   |

SOURCE: EXPATRIATES' WELFARE MINISTRY

The initiative to provide the returnees with a special loan under a Tk 200-crore fund saw poor response.

Between its launch on September 21 and until mid-October, a little over Tk 1 crore from the Tk 200 crore special fund was disbursed.

About 60 applicants received the money, according to Probashi Kallyan Bank.

As reasons behind the poor response, migrant workers and rights activists found some terms and conditions for getting the loan tough to fulfil. They said the four percent interest rate for a loan up to Tk 5 lakh is high considering the financial condition of the returnees.

report titled "The Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on the Life and Livelihoods of Returnee Migrants".

Shariful said services like training or enterprise offers could be taken to those areas under a comprehensive initiative. This will make it easier for the returnees to pick the right opportunity.

He said the bulk of the Covid-19 affected returnees are from 10 to 12 districts.

International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in a report published in August found about 70 percent of 1,486 returnees in 12 migration-prone districts were unemployed.

The survey for the report titled

## Would remove all sculptures

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soul. I never in any way oppose such a late national leader and I don't think it is appropriate to do so," Mamunul, also secretary general of Bangladesh Khelafat Majlish, said at a press conference at the Majlish's office in the capital.

Mamunul said he would continue to oppose installation of any sculptures in the country.

"I don't want to get involved in any fight against the state or the government but it [the government] should not take any step that is reckless and can endanger the lives of people as well as their property," he added.

Earlier this month, Mamunul had sparked outrage by reportedly

speaking against the sculptures of Bangabandhu. He skipped a Hefajat programme in Chattagram on November 27 amid demonstrations by ruling party activists.

Hefajat once again came under the spotlight after Junayed Babunagari became its new Amir following the death of Shah Ahmed Shafi in September.

Under the new leadership, Hefajat became vocal on various issues including installation of Bangabandhu's sculpture in the capital's Jurain.

The government has been arguing that sculptures and idols are not the same as many Muslim countries have those.

## Infection spikes by 32.5pc

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risen, by 8.03 percent, in November.

There were 635 deaths in the first 29 days of October, and 686 deaths in November in the same number of days.

A week on week comparison, however, indicates that the rise in deaths have been sharper in late November.

In the week that just passed, ending Saturday, the number of deaths rose by almost 30 percent compared to the previous week, according to data from the DGHS.

It has been 38 weeks since Bangladesh recorded the first three Covid-19 cases on March 8.

On March 18, the DGHS reported the first casualty in Dhaka.

At the beginning of the Covid-19 outbreak, the daily positivity rate was comparatively lower but it peaked to 25 percent of those tested in late May. Until the third week of August, the positivity rate was over 20 percent, which came down to 10 percent in October.

The positivity rate started to rise again since the beginning of November.

"Usually, the number of casualties increases three weeks after the infection rate rises. So, the number of casualties will also go up in the days to come," Prof Mushtaq Hussain, consultant of the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR), told this paper yesterday.

Pointing to the second wave of Covid-19 in Europe and America, the epidemiologist said, "Despite experience of the first wave, the death

rate is higher in western countries. Actually, Covid-19 is dangerous for people with chronic diseases like diabetes, hypertension, etc. because such patients develop severe illness early and require treatment in ICU. But there is a shortage of ICU [beds] in our hospitals."

"To tackle the situation, there is no way to control the transmission by implementing health measures," he said. "Viruses spread more in cold weather."

He also suggested taking people infected with Covid-19 to hospitals in time.

**29 DEAD, 1,788 INFECTED**  
Twenty-nine more people died from Covid-19 in the past 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, according to a DGHS press release, taking the total number of deaths to 6,609. The overall death rate is 1.43 percent.

In the same 24-hour period, meanwhile, some 1,788 people tested positive for the virus, taking the number of confirmed cases to 4,62,407.

Against a total of 13,737 tests in the 24 hours in 115 labs, the positivity rate was 13.02 percent while the overall positivity rate is 16.77 percent.

At least 2,287 Covid-19 patients recovered in those 24 hours.

The total number of recoveries rose to 3,78,172 and the overall recovery rate is 81.78 percent.

Among the 29 deceased, 23 were male and six female.

Two were aged between 41 and 50, eight between 51 and 60, and 19 were above 60 years old, added the release.

## Editors' Council concerned

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case was filed against Matiur Rahman and others even though he was not present on the occasion.

While expressing its highest regard for the judiciary and rule of law, the parishad respectfully expressed concern about filing charges against someone who was not at the location of the incident.

The parishad hoped that no external factors will influence the due process of justice.

Parishad members also discussed the effect of the pandemic on the journalism industry, its uncertain future,

the decreasing flow of advertisements and falling subscription numbers.

Concern was expressed at the rising prosecution of media workers using the Digital Security Act and the harassment of editors and senior reporters.

The participants expressed deep sorrow at the death of the parishad's founding member Khandaker Muniruzzaman, editor of Sangbad, and conveyed their deepest condolences to the bereaved family.

A decision was taken to organise a memorial webinar in remembrance of the veteran journalist.

## Sculpture, idol are different

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who want to ruin the beautiful atmosphere of communal harmony for their petty interests.

"But the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has been able to create a beautiful atmosphere of communal harmony in the country by cracking down on those circles.

"Secularism is one of the principles in our constitution. Bearing the spirit of secularism, the government led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has been working tirelessly to ensure the equal rights of [people of] all religions."

He also said people of all communities of this country have

been living in harmony for a long time.

"We will continue to work relentlessly with utmost sincerity on behalf of the Ministry of Religious Affairs to build a moral, non-communal Bangladesh under the dynamic and strong leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina."

## Pvt hospitals

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normal capacity... Make it 20 percent; increase ICU [capacity]," Zahid said.

He was speaking as the chief guest at an event, titled "Tackling the Second Wave of Corona and Vaccine", in Dhaka.

"The first reason behind the rise of the coronavirus infection is that we are not maintaining health safety rules. We are moving around desperately; we are not wearing masks -- we have become overconfident," he said.

The transmission is increasing also due to social gatherings during winter, he added.

"Different types of diseases spread during winter. Covid-19 transmission may rise due to these diseases. Besides, different events take place in winter... Hundreds of thousands of people are traveling to Cox's Bazar. Transmission is increasing from there."

About the Covid-19 vaccine deployment in Bangladesh, he said, "We will get the vaccine for the first phase once the World Health Organization approves it. If vaccines are given at the government hospitals, they will also be arranged for private medical college hospitals."

Speaking at the event, Prof ABM Khurshid Alam urged private hospital authorities to reduce the Covid-19 testing fees in the meantime.

Md Ali Noor, secretary of medical education, MA Matin Khan, president of Bangladesh Private Medical College Association, and Dr Anwar Hossain, general secretary of BPMCA, spoke at the event among others.

## Govt establishing

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up a rail line from Dhaka to Payra Port via Barishal and Patuakhali.

"We'll start a feasibility study, we've taken initiative in that regard," she said.

Sheikh Hasina said that after assuming power, the government has done a massive expansion in the railway sector through various steps including procuring new locomotives and compartments.

"Now, Railways is giving service to the people, contributing especially to goods carrying, above all during the Covid-19 pandemic Railways is giving the highest service to the people," she said.

Recalling the suicidal decision of the BNP government to strangle the railway sector, the prime minister said that the government again revived the sector through various time-befitting decisions.

"Railways now is the place of highest confidence among the people, which will contribute a lot to our economy, I think," she said.

She said that the government is developing and modernising the communication network of the whole country apart from diversifying it so that it could contribute a lot in enhancing the socio-economic condition of the people.

"We're working to keep our eyes on that matter," she added.

She mentioned that the government is implementing various massive development programmes for the overall development of water, rail and airways.

Railways Minister Nurul Islam Sujan, Ambassador of Japan Ito Naoki and Railways Secretary Selim Reza also spoke at the programme.

## Recover 1.38 lakh

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The ministry will write to all deputy commissioners across the country by January 31 to prepare eviction notices, mentioned the Awami League lawmaker.

Within February, the DCs will serve the notices to the 88,000 individuals and organisations who grabbed forestland, asking them to return the occupied land to the government agencies concerned, Saber said.

"From March, the deputy commissioners will start eviction drives to recover the forestland," he added.

Earlier in October, the ministry had informed the committee that 287,000 acres of forestland, including 138,000 acres of reserve forestland, are illegally occupied by individuals and organisations.

Of the 64 districts, Cox's Bazar has lost the highest area of forestland -- 59,471 acres -- to grabbers, according to the ministry data.

The committee yesterday asked the ministry to publish the names of the grabbers of forestland on its website and also digitalise all the records and documents on forestland.

It also recommended that the ministry estimate the value of all forestland.

"We will not be able to protect our forestland if we don't estimate its value," Saber said.

The JS body also asked Bangladesh Economic Zone Authority to conduct an environmental study before setting up an economic zone anywhere in the country.

Committee members, including Environment Minister Md Shahab Uddin, independent lawmaker Rejaul Karim Lablu and AL MP Khodeza Nasreen Akhter Hossain, were present at the meeting.