

BANGLADESH
UPDATE



1,267
New cases in 24hrs



4,99,560
Total cases



7,242
Deaths



4,35,601
Recoveries

GLOBAL
UPDATE



1,684,864
Deaths



76,186,444
Total cases

19 univs now set for uniform

FROM PAGE 1
different parts of the country in one admission season just to be able to sit for the tests.

However, Dhaka University, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet), Rajshahi University, Jahangirnagar University and Chittagong University opted out of the system.

But Buet recently had shown their interest in participating, said Prof Muhammed Alamgir, member of the University Grants Commission (UGC).

After yesterday's meeting at Jagannath University, it's VC Prof Mijanur Rahman told The Daily Star that there would only be multiple choice questions in each exam and a student would get a score between 0 and 100.

Each of the universities will fix a minimum score required for admission, he added.

"It was also discussed whether the test should be held when there are fewer Covid-19 cases."

Students of science, humanities and business, who want to switch to other disciplines, will no longer be required to sit for an additional exam, he added.

Barishal University VC Professor Sadequ Arefin said the minimum GPA requirement for science students would be seven, combining the SSC and HSC results. The requirements for business students would be 6.5 and humanities students 6.

Anyone with a GPA below 3 in either exam will not be eligible, he said.

Sadequ added that it would be up to the individual universities to decide whether to take SSC and HSC results into their consideration in the admission process.

Also, it will be up to the individual universities to decide whether to give a chance to second time admission seekers, according to Mijanur and Sadequ.

They added that humanities students will need to answer Bangla questions on 40 marks, English on 35 and ICT on 25. Business students will get accounting questions on 25 marks, management 25, Bangla 13, English 12 and ICT 25.

A science student will get English questions on 10 marks, Bangla 10, Chemistry 20, Physics 20 and any two subjects from ICT, mathematics and biology on 20 marks.

The 19 public universities are, Jagannath University, Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, Khulna University, Begum Rokeya University, Islamic University, Hajee Mohammad Danesh Science and Technology University, Mawlana Bhashani Science and Technology University, Noakhali Science and Technology University, Comilla University, Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University, Jessore University of Science and Technology, Pabna University of Science and Technology, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Science and Technology University, University of Barishal, Rangamati Science and Technology University, Rabindra University, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Digital University, Sheikh Hasina University, and Bangamata Sheikh Foilatunnesa Mujib Science and Technology University.

On January 23 last year, the UGC announced that it would hold a uniform admission test in the 2020-2021 academic year. In February, it was decided in principle that universities would hold the admission test in a method called cluster system.

Public universities remain the students' top choice. But the number of seats is way lower than that of the students seeking admission.

About a million students pass the HSC and its equivalent exams every year, and the public universities enrol around 65,000.

As of last year, 32 of the 39 public universities held separate admission tests, and the remaining seven agricultural universities held a uniform admission test.

Alamgir said that seven agricultural universities will form a cluster of agriculture universities.

Chattogram University of Engineering and Technology, Rajshahi University of Engineering and Technology and Khulna University of Engineering and Technology, in principle, decided to form another cluster and held a uniform admission test. Buet authorities have shown interest in joining this cluster.

UGC officials said Bangladesh University of Textiles, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Aviation and Aerospace University and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Maritime University have also shown interest in joining this cluster.

"We will sort the matter out very soon," Alamgir said.

1 year since his passing

FROM PAGE 1
known to all as Brac.

At first it was just a small relief and rehabilitation effort carried out in a remote area of Sylhet division. Over the last 47 years, it expanded itself to provide services to over 100 million people in 12 countries of Asia and Africa.

"Brac now stands as a unique ecosystem interweaving microfinance, social enterprises, university, bank and multidimensional investments targeting the development of the poor and marginalised people," stated a press statement circulated by the NGO on the occasion of his first death anniversary.

Sir Fazle was honoured with numerous national and international awards for his achievements in leading Brac, the statement added.

These include the Yidan Prize for Education Development in 2019, LEGO Prize in 2018, World Food Prize in 2015, Spanish Order of Civil Merit in 2014, Inaugural WISE Prize for Education in 2011, David Rockefeller Bridging Leadership Award in 2008, Inaugural Clinton Global Citizen Award in 2007, UNDP Mahbubul Haq Award for Outstanding Contribution to Human Development in 2004, Olof Palme Prize in 2001 and Ramon Magsaysay Award for Community

Leadership in 1980.

The press statement further added that in 2010, Sir Fazle was appointed Knight Commander of the Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George by the British Crown in recognition of his services to reducing poverty in Bangladesh and internationally. In addition, he was honoured with a Dutch Knighthood in 2019.

Sir Fazle was a member of the Group of Eminent Persons appointed by the UN Secretary-General in 2010 to advise on support for the Least Developed Countries.

In 2014 and 2017, he was named one of Fortune Magazine's World's 50 Greatest Leaders.

The many honorary degrees received by him include those from Princeton University (2014), the University of Oxford (2009), Columbia University (2008) and Yale University (2007).

"All the members of the Brac staff, in their commemoration, remember the eternal source of inspiration that the founder will continue to be in their life. They have pledged to stand beside the poor and marginalised communities and work hand in hand to build equality for all," the NGO said.

The event will be commemorated online through discussions hosted online.

Investigate the EC for graft

FROM PAGE 1
individuals involved in the allegations.

In the letter, the citizens mentioned that members of the EC, under KM Nurul Huda's leadership, have committed misconduct and irregularities, including spending Tk 2 crore for delivering speeches as "special speakers" and Tk 8.08 crore in recruiting staffers for the Commission.

Three commissioners have also allegedly been using cars in violation of relevant rules.

The letter also said the EC has committed gross misconduct and irregularities in buying and using the electronic voting machines, and in holding the 11th parliamentary election, and also elections to Dhaka North and South city corporations, and Khulna, Gazipur, Sylhet, Barishal and Rajshahi city corporations.

With the letter, they attached relevant documents regarding the allegations.

They spoke of the allegations at a virtual press conference yesterday.

Dr Shahdeen Malik, one of the signatories, told the press conference that the present EC, after its formation in February 2017, has been involved in financial corruption, irregularities and gross misconduct.

He said the SJC (led by the chief justice) can probe the allegations against any constitutional post-

holder, including the EC. "We believe the allegations against the present Election Commission will be found true in the probe."

Another signatory, Dr Iftekharuzzaman, told the press conference that the current EC has broken the record of corruption, irregularities and misconduct compared to that of previous ECs.

The commission can voluntarily step down from office on ethical grounds, he said, adding that both the president and the prime minister can consider the allegations against the EC and take necessary action.

Dr Badiul Alam Majumdar said the EC has betrayed the blood of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and freedom fighters and let down democracy by committing corruption and irregularities and misconduct.

The signatories include Prof Serajul Islam Chowdhury, M Hafizuddin Khan, Dr Akbar Ali Khan, Advocate Sultana Kamal, Ali Imam Mazumder, Dr Hameeda Hossain, Prof Moinul Islam, Khushi Kabir, Dr Badiul Alam Majumdar, Dr Shahdeen Malik, Dr Iftekharuzzaman, Dr Shahidul Alam, Syeda Rizwana Hasan, Prof Anu Mohammed, Dr CR Abrar, Prof Tofail Ahmed, Prof Asif Nazrul, Dilip Sarker and Barrister Jyotirmoy Barua.



At least 12 people were killed and many others injured when a train rammed this bus near Joypurhat town yesterday morning.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

12 killed as bus-train collide

FROM PAGE 1

There were other passengers in the bus, but they managed to get out before the accident.

The injured were sent to different hospitals, including Joypurhat Modern Hospital and Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital in Bogura.

Md Javed, a witness, said the bus driver drove through the level crossing although the loco master of train was honking horn repeatedly.

The gate of the crossing was open and the gateman was not there, he said.

Alamgir Jahan, officer-in-Charge of Joypurhat Sadar Police Station, also said the bus driver drove through the gate since it was kept open.

The gateman was absent, he said.

Citing preliminary investigation, Shahidul Islam, divisional railway manager of Paksey of BR, said although gatekeeper Nayon Miah was present, he failed to discharge his duty.

"So, we have suspended him. Further action would be taken upon receiving investigation report," he told The Daily Star last night.

The bus driver is also responsible for the accident, said Shahidul.

He also said a four-member probe

committee, led by Nasir Uddin, divisional transport officer of Pakshy, was asked to submit its report on the incident in three working days.

"We hope to get the report earlier," he said.

Talking to The Daily Star earlier in the day, Sardar Sahadat Ali, additional director general (operations) of BR, said "Puranapoli Level Crossing is an authorised and manned level crossing. The probe will determine who is or are responsible for the incident."

Six of 12 deceased could be identified till last night. They were Mamunur Rashid, the bus driver, of Harail village of Joypurhat Sadar Upazila, Ramjan Ali of Hitmi village, Sarwar Hossain of Panchbibi upazila, Sazu Mia of Chawk Billa village, Babu Mia of Bijoykandi village of Raninagar upazila of Naogaon.

Faruk Hossain, Ziaur Rahman Zia of Panchbibi upazila of Joypurhat, and Julhas Islam of Matikata village under Tangail district were among the injured were being treated at Joypurhat Modern Hospital.

Shaheedul Islam, divisional railway manager (Pakshi) of BR, said a relief train was sent to restore railway communication, which remained

suspended after the accident.

Talking to The Daily Star over the phone, he said Noyon Mia was the gatekeeper of the Puranapoli gate in Joypurhat Sadar upazila. He was appointed temporarily for a BR project.

Replying to a question, he said he heard that the gateman was absent when the accident happened. "Action will be taken if the probe body finds this to be true."

The rail communication, which was snapped after the accident, will be restored within 4:00pm, he added.

Meanwhile, Joypurhat deputy commissioner's office also formed a three-member body led by Md Reza Hasan, additional district magistrate, to find the cause of the accident.

It was asked to file its report in three working days.

The DC office would pay Tk 20,000 to each of the victims who died.

Deputy Commissioner Md Shariful Islam and Superintendent of Police Salam Kabir of the district visited the spot after the accident.

On July 10 in 2006, at least 32 people travelling in a bus was killed as a train hit a bus at a level crossing in Akkelpur upazila of Joypurhat.

Chaos at bar council exams

FROM PAGE 1

exam only.

"Our exam started at 9:00am. About one hour later, we heard a hue and cry and saw some examinees protesting. They went from one exam hall to another and drove us out," said an examinee at Mohammadpur Kendriya College.

The protestors took away answer scripts and set those on fire, he added.

Another examinee Shihab Kausar said, "I was in an exam hall on the fourth floor of the college building... the invigilators said they would not take the exam amid such a situation and asked us to submit our answer scripts around 10:30am, even though the test was supposed to end at 1:00pm."

"We went to the centre but could not sit the exam. We demand the authorities hold a re-examination," he said.

The test was held at nine examination centres in the capital, but a section of examinees also reportedly boycotted the exam and prevented others from sitting the exam at Mohammadpur Mohila College, Government Mohammadpur Model School and College also, police and examinees alleged.

Sub-Inspector Newton Mridha, a duty officer of Mohammadpur Police Station, said some students staged protests at the centres, entered exam halls, and prevented others from taking the exam.

Police rushed to the two exam centres and brought the situation under control, the SI told The Daily Star.

At Dhaka Mohanagar Mohila College, some students boycotted the exam and tried to force others to do the same.

AFP, Suva

The devastation in Fiji following Cyclone Yasa was compared to a war zone yesterday as reconnaissance flights showed entire villages wiped out and authorities put the cost at hundreds of millions of dollars.

The death toll rose to four with aid workers fearing it will increase when contact is re-established with outlying areas.

A state of natural disaster has been declared for 30 days as emergency services scramble to provide food and

clothing to the worst affected areas.

The superstorm slammed into Fiji's second-largest island Vanua Levu late Thursday, leaving a trail of destruction and affecting 93,000 people, according to the National Disaster Management Office.

Of the 24,000 people who evacuated their homes at the height of the storm, 16,113 are still unable to return.

A New Zealand Air Force reconnaissance flight flew over the area on Saturday to assess the scale of the

damage, with reports of houses, crops and entire livelihoods wiped out.

The storm also damaged schools and caused widespread flooding and landslides.

"We've been receiving pictures of Kia island. We have seen total devastation. It looks like a war zone," Save the Children Fiji chief executive Shairana Ali told AFP.

"Houses have been smashed to pieces and nothing remains. People are really desperate for shelter and desperate for food. There's obviously huge psychological damage."

US planning to close last consulates in Russia: report

AFP, Washington

Donald Trump's outgoing administration is planning to close the two remaining US consulates in Russia, media reports said Friday, as President-elect Joe Biden prepares to take office amid high tensions with Moscow.

The US will close its consulate in the far eastern city of Vladivostok and suspend operations at its post in Yekaterinburg, CNN reported, citing a December 10 letter sent to Congress from the State Department.

The move comes in "response to

ongoing staffing challenges for the US Mission in Russia in the wake of the 2017 Russian-imposed personnel cap on the US Mission and the resultant impasse with Russia over diplomatic visas," the report said, citing the letter.

Ten diplomats assigned to the consulates will reportedly be relocated to the US embassy in Moscow, while 33 local staff will lose their jobs.

"No action related to the Russian consulates in the United States is planned," CNN cited the letter as saying.

The closures would leave the

embassy in Moscow as the United States' last diplomatic mission in Russia.

In March 2018 Moscow ordered the closure of the US consulate in St Petersburg amid a diplomatic spat sparked by the poisoning of Sergei Skripal on UK soil.

It was unclear whether the closures would happen before January 20, when President-elect Biden takes office.

AFP reached out to the State Department for comment on the report, but did not receive a response.

Biden team warns of security risk after Pentagon halts briefings

AFP, Washington

The incoming administration of President-elect Joe Biden warned Friday of risks to national security after it said the Pentagon suddenly halted briefings for the transition team.

Yohannes Abraham, executive director for the Biden transition team, said he was "concerned to learn this week about an abrupt halt in the already limited cooperation there."

President Donald Trump, who is refusing to acknowledge his election loss to Biden, until recently held back from allowing government agencies to cooperate with Biden's team, as is the custom.

On Friday, Trump's acting defense secretary, Chris Miller, said in a statement that the two sides had a "mutually agreed upon holiday pause" on briefings with military officials.

Abraham said this was not true.

"There was no mutually agreed upon holiday break," he told reporters, warning that "a failure to work together could have consequences well beyond" Biden's inauguration in January.

The latest stumble in what is traditionally a carefully choreographed handover of power between outgoing and incoming US administrations comes as Washington reels from a massive, possibly Russian state cyber attack.

"There's no time to spare," Abraham said.

Trump has yet to give a direct statement on the hacking breach or to comment on allegations by senior politicians and private cyber security companies that it was carried out by Moscow.

Abraham said the attack was of "great concern" and that under Biden cyber attacks will meet a response inflicting "substantial cost."

According to Abraham, the Biden team has "hope and expectation" that the Pentagon briefings will recommence "immediately."

Erdogan tells Merkel Turkey wants to turn over new leaf

AFP, Ankara

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Friday told German Chancellor Angela Merkel in a videoconference call Turkey wants to turn over a new leaf with the European Union, the Turkish presidency said.

EU leaders meeting in Brussels last week decided to draw up a list of Turkish targets for sanctions over Ankara's "unilateral actions and provocations" in the eastern Mediterranean, believed to be rich in energy resources.

"President Erdogan during the meeting said Turkey wants to open a new page in its relations with the EU, as he thanked Merkel for her constructive contributions and efforts on Turkey-EU relations," the presidency said.

Erdogan said there was a new "window of opportunity" for Turkey-EU relations to strengthen but some countries were "trying to create a crisis" that would damage "this positive agenda", it added in a statement.

He did not name which countries but Turkey has been at loggerheads with EU member states Greece and Cyprus -- backed by France -- in the eastern Mediterranean.

Turkey and Greece previously agreed to discussions over the disputed waters but nothing concrete has taken place.

Erdogan accused Greece of running away from talks, but insisted Turkey's attitude was "constructive".

He also called for an update to the 2016 deal aimed at cutting migration to Europe in return for financial aid, which he said would be "the key to a positive agenda".

The EU on Thursday said it allocated to Turkey the full six billion euros promised for refugees in the agreement.

France charges four over attack on former Charlie Hebdo offices

AFP, Paris

French authorities have charged and detained four Pakistanis suspected of links to a meat cleaver attack by a compatriot outside the former offices of the Charlie Hebdo weekly that wounded two people, the national counter-terrorism prosecutor's office said Friday.

The four male suspects, aged 17 to 21, were in contact with the attacker, said a source familiar with the case.

They are suspected of being aware of the attacker's plot and inciting him to carry it out, according to another judicial source close to the investigation.