

# Govt to work for development of medical science: PM

BSS, Dhaka

Putting emphasis on advancing the country's medical science further, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said her government will do whatever is necessary to develop the field.

"We want to do everything necessary for the development of medical science, education and higher education," she said.

The PM was addressing the medical team, comprising Bangladeshi and Hungarian doctors and other staff members, who recently carried out a critical surgery on conjoined twins Rabeya and Rokeya at the Combined Military Hospital in Dhaka. The team called on the premier at the Gono Bhaban on Friday night.

Hasina said, "We will have to pursue all types of education so we can do more critical works like the successful operation of conjoined

# Domingo

FROM PAGE 1

While making the announcement, BCB President Nazmul Hassan said Domingo's vision for Bangladesh made him the ideal candidate for the role.

"He has a wealth of experience and we were very impressed with his passion and coaching philosophy. He has a clear idea of what is required to take the team forward," said Nazmul.

For Domingo, who plans to develop some bright prospects, the ICC T20 World Cup, which is scheduled to begin on October 18 in 2020 in Australia, will be the biggest challenge for him in his two-year period as it is a format where the Tigers are yet to vastly improve.

"It is a massive honour to be appointed as head coach of the Bangladesh national cricket team. I have followed Bangladesh's progress with keen interest and I am extremely excited to assist the team in reaching the goals they are capable of," Domingo said as quoted in a press release from the BCB yesterday.

Domingo gave an interview to the BCB earlier this month and the board officials were satisfied with his plan and vision during the presentation.

# India eases

FROM PAGE 1

US President Donald Trump urged the nuclear-armed rivals to come back to the negotiating table, speaking to Khan by phone on the importance of "reducing tensions through bilateral dialogue".

India yesterday meanwhile gradually restored phone lines following an almost two-week communications blackout in its part of Kashmir, imposed hours before Prime Minister Narendra Modi's surprise August 5 gambit.

Seventeen out of around 100 telephone exchanges were restored Saturday in the restive Kashmir Valley, the local police chief told AFP.

But mobiles and the internet remained dead in the Muslim-majority Kashmir Valley, the main hotbed of resistance to Indian rule in Jammu and Kashmir state in a 30-year-old conflict that has killed tens of thousands. In the Jammu area, which is mainly Hindu, mobile services have been restored in some districts.

Fearing an angry and potentially violent response, India also sent 10,000 extra troops to the area, severely restricted movement and arrested some 500 local politicians, activists, academics and others.

The state's Chief Secretary BVR Subrahmanyam had said Friday there would be a "gradual" restoration of phone lines over the weekend, with schools to resume classes in some areas next week.

The transformation of Srinagar into an eerie maze of barricades, soldiers and concertinas of barbed wire has failed to stop public anger boiling to the surface.

"We want peace and nothing else, but they have kept us under this lockdown like sheep while taking decisions about us," resident Tariq Madri told AFP.

"Even my nine-year old son asked me why they had locked us inside," he added.

Several hundred protesters clashed with police in the city on Friday, who responded with tear gas and pellet-firing shotguns.

People hurled stones and used shop hoardings and tin sheets as improvised shields, as police shot dozens of rounds into the crowd. No injuries were reported.

The clashes broke out after more than 3,000 people rallied in the city's Soura neighbourhood, which has witnessed regular demonstrations this month.

A week earlier around 8,000 people staged a protest which also ended in a violent confrontation with police, residents said.

"I want the government to know that this aggression and aggressive policies don't work on the ground," said 24-year-old Adnan Rashid, an engineering student.



People climb on to the locomotive and the roof of an overcrowded train heading for the capital from Chapainawabganj yesterday as Eid holidaymakers return to Dhaka in large numbers. The photo was taken at Tangail Railway Station.

PHOTO: MIRZA SHAKIL

# Hassles also on return journey

FROM PAGE 1

The last working day before Eid was on August 8. A two-day weekend began on August 9 and the official three-day Eid holidays on the 11th. August 14 was the only working day before the National Mourning Day and another weekend, which ended yesterday.

Some office goers took leave on August 14 (Wednesday) and made a nine-day holiday.

At Shimulia Ferry Terminal in Munshiganj, thousands of people from the southern districts were seen crossing the Padma on ferries, launches, and boats.

Most of the launches on Shimulia-Kawrakandi route were seen overcrowded and the operators were charging passengers more than usual.

"The government-set launch fare is Tk 33. But they are charging us Tk 50," said Habibur Rahman, who came from Faridpur.

After crossing the river, people had to wait a long time to get on buses to Dhaka and the bus operators

also were charging more than usual, alleged passengers.

"I had to wait for around an hour to get on the bus. They are charging each passenger over Tk 100 when the actual fare is Tk 70," said Solaiman Miah, who was traveling to Dhaka from Satkhira yesterday.

Munshiganj's Mawa Zonal Traffic Inspector Helal Uddin claimed that they kept watch to prevent overcharging.

Soumitra Ghosh, who was traveling to Dhaka from Rajbari via the Paturia Ferry Terminal in Manikganj, said, "Bus operators demanded Tk 300 for a trip to Dhaka from Paturia Ferry Terminal. The usual fare is Tk 120. When I refused to pay the extra money, they forced me off the bus."

Even, state-run Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) buses were also overcharging, alleged passengers.

"I got on a BRTC bus from Paturia and was heading towards Savar. The normal fare is Tk 80. But they charged

me Tk 200," said Akhtar Hossain, who also came from Rajbari.

Manikganj Deputy Commissioner SM Ferdous also claimed that they kept watch to prevent overcharging.

At Tangail New Bus Terminal, over 150 passengers were seen waiting in front of a bus counter around 11:00am.

"I have been waiting for around three hours but no bus is available," Nizamuddin told The Daily Star correspondent around 11:00am.

Tangail's Traffic Inspector Raifqul Islam said there were no tailbacks on the Dhaka-Tangail highway but traffic was very heavy and slow.

At Barishal Launch Terminal yesterday evening, every vessel was packed as a huge number of passengers poured into the terminal to board launches for Dhaka.

Azmal Huda Mithu, deputy director of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) of Barishal River Port, claimed that over one lakh people left for Dhaka on launches yesterday.

"I have been trying to get a ticket for two hours. If I fail to get one, I will have to come back to the terminal tomorrow," Bashudeve Mazumder, a resident of Barishal city, said around 7:00pm yesterday.

The Patuakhali Launch Terminal was crowded. Eight launches left for Dhaka yesterday; all overcrowded.

A gang was occupying space on the launch decks with bed sheets and then selling the space to passengers.

"After reaching the terminal, I found the launch was filled with passengers. Seeing me upset, a few people came to me and offered me space for money. I paid them Tk 200 and got a small space which they had kept occupied," said Abul Hossain, a resident of Nilganj under Kalapara upazila in Patuakhali.

At Kamalapur Railway Station, all incoming trains were full.

"Despite the crowd, I prefer trains because there is no traffic jam to worry about," said Zakir Hossain who arrived from Sirajganj yesterday.

# Faulty gas pipes fed the blaze

FROM PAGE 1

director (ambulance) Abul Hossain as its head, assistant director (operation) Abul Hossain as member secretary and deputy assistant director (Mirpur Zone) Newaz Ahmed as member.

**LIVING ON THE STREETS**

Most of the slum dwellers spent the night on the streets and in the open space of nearby Public Works Department (PWD) office premises.

Around 100 people suffered minor injuries while escaping the fire and took primary treatment from local pharmacies.

The DNCC has set up a temporary primary-treatment booth yesterday morning where 41 people took treatment, mostly for cuts sustained while trying to escape the fire in a rush, till 2:00pm.

Soheli Begum, who lives in the slum, said the fire originated from the northern side of the slum and took some time to reach the other end, where she resided.

"I thought the fire would not come here. But it engulfed everything in a few minutes. I couldn't save anything," she said in despair.

She added they did not have an exit and so they had to escape after breaking a wall.

Many residents of the shanties were seen coming to the site in the morning to find anything sellable out of the ruins, in order to buy daily necessities.

The DNCC and some volunteers provided food for the slum dwellers at Bangabandhu Bidyaniketon School located nearby, where some of the

victims have been taking shelter from the time being.

**'DO A FAIR PROBE'**

Multiple versions surfaced about the cause of the fire. Some suspect short-circuits while some others suspect an act of sabotage. Officials, however, are still in the dark about it.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir demanded a fair and neutral investigation into the fire as such incidents are on the rise.

He visited the spot yesterday around 12:00pm.

Talking to reporters after the visit, Fakhru also urged the government to rehabilitate the victims and provide them with compensation.

"Fire incidents at city slums have seen a rise these days, hitting the destitute hard. So, a neutral probe body needs to be formed to look into the matter," he said.

The BNP leader also said stern punitive actions must be taken if anybody's involvement in the fire incident is found.

Visiting the fire-ravaged area, Gonoforum President Dr Kamal Hossain yesterday urged the government and social organisations to come forward in aid of the victims.

"Following the fire, thousands of people are living under the open sky without food, shelter and clothes in a dengue-hit city. I call upon the government and the social organisations to immediately stand by them," he said.

He voiced deep concern over the

repeated fire incidents at different slums.

Researcher and writer Syed Abul Maksud also visited the area.

After a visit yesterday, Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) Mayor Atiqul Islam promised all kinds of assistance to rehabilitate the victims.

Fire Service and Civil Defence Assistant Director Rezaul Karim said as many as 3,000 families have been affected in the massive fire.

"There were 500 to 600 shanties in the slum. We managed to save only some of those," he said, adding that they have enlisted 300 victim families so far.

However, local MP Elias Uddin Mollah said around 1,200 shanties were affected by the fire.

Replying to a query, he said he had heard that a ruling party man owned around 750 shanties at the slum and all were burned to ashes.

The fire broke out in the 35-year-old Chalanika slum around 7:22pm on Friday. After a six-hour long effort, 24 firefighting units doused the blaze around 1:30am.

The firefighters rescued four injured people and took them to hospital.

Friday's blaze left thousands of slum dwellers homeless. Most of them are low-wage earners, including garment workers, rickshaw-pullers, hawkers, house maids and day labourers.

Most of the families went to their hometowns to celebrate Eid. Many returned to find only ashes where their homes once were.

On August 7, the Cabinet Division issued a circular asking all ministries and divisions, departments as well as other agencies to take necessary steps so that Aedes mosquitoes cannot breed in offices and their surrounding areas during the holidays.

Contacted yesterday, Cabinet Division Deputy Secretary Sazzad Ul Hasan said they did not have any monitoring teams.

"But we believe that all offices acted accordingly," said Sazzad, who had signed the circular.

Many private offices are also taking steps to prevent mosquito breeding.

Nadim Haider Rauf, managing director of Market Fit, Dhaka, said they had dedicated staff for cleaning so that no Aedes mosquito can breed in their office.

Of the four deaths reported yesterday, two were in Faridpur and one each in Dhaka and Sirajganj.

Monowara Begum, 55, died of dengue at Dhaka Medical College Hospital, said her husband Saiful Haque, from Kishoreganj.

Sumon Bashar, 20, a student of Sortajitpur College in Magura, died of the viral disease at Faridpur Medical College Hospital around 9:30am, said Kamonda Proshad Saha, superintendent of the hospital.

Yunus Sheikh, 55, from Sultanpur village in Sadar upazila of Rajbari, died of dengue at the same hospital in the evening, the official added.

In Sirajganj, college student Mehedi Hasan, 17, died around 8:00pm at Sirajganj General Hospital. He was admitted with dengue fever at the hospital on August 14, said Faridul Islam, resident medical officer of the hospital.

# Kazakhstan court frees anti-Beijing activist

AFP, Almaty

A rights activist in Kazakhstan who faced seven years imprisonment over his outspoken opposition to neighbouring China was unexpectedly freed Friday as public and international pressure over his case mounted.

Serikjan Bilash, whose activism in defence of Muslim and Turkic minorities in Xinjiang earned him global media attention, told AFP he struck a plea bargain with the court that allowed him freedom but will end his activism.

"I had to end my activism against China. It was that or seven years in jail. I had no choice," Bilash told AFP at a restaurant where he held a celebratory midnight feast with his family and about 40 supporters.

Bilash agreed to accept guilt over inter-ethnic incitement charges triggered by his call for an "information Jihad" against the Chinese authorities over their policies in Xinjiang earlier this year.



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