

BANGLADESH UPDATE

1,845
New cases in 24hrs4,27,198
Total cases6,140
Deaths3,44,868
Recoveries

GLOBAL UPDATE

1,295,722
Deaths52,916,869
Total cases

34 robbers give up arms, surrender

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN, from Banskhali

At least 34 members of 11 robbery gangs yesterday surrendered their weapons to Rab-7 at Chattogram's Banskhali Adarsha High School.

Rab-7 Commander Lt Col Moshirul Rahman Jewel presided over the surrender ceremony, in which local members of parliament and high officials of police and Rab were also present.

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan attended as the chief guest, while Shamsul Hoque Tuku, chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on the home ministry, Home Senior Secretary Mostofa Kamal Uddin, Inspector General of Police Benazir Ahmed and Rab Additional Director General Col Tofail Mostafa Sarwar were special guests.

Addressing the ceremony, Asaduzzaman warned robbers who are yet to surrender would face legal action.

Regarding those who have surrendered, he said the government would provide all necessary legal assistance for the disposal of the cases against them, unless there are charges of murder or rape.

IGP Benazir Ahmed suggested that Rab provide support and rehabilitate the surrendered robbers based on their individual expertise.

He said the Sundarbans was declared a robber-free area in 2018 and now around 25 lakh locals are being able to live there without fear.

He urged everyone to stand against those who are trying to sabotage and foil the country's development.

The 34 robbers surrendered 90 firearms and 2,056 bullets and cartridges.

Earlier on October 20, 2018, 43 robbers of Maheshkhali surrendered their arms at a similar programme, said Lt Col Jewel.

Meanwhile, Rab-6 in Khulna and Rab-8 in Barishal celebrated the second anniversary of the day the Sundarbans was declared robber-free.

Addressing the occasion, the elite force gave financial aid and clothes

to robbers who previously laid down their arms.

SECOND CHANCE AT LIFE
Five years ago, Mizanur Rahman got married and took up a tuition job to support his new two-member family.

However, as the income was too low, he got himself involved in different criminal activities and joined a robbery gang in Maheshkhali to make easy money.

Six months into his marriage, he got arrested twice and served jail for over three and a half years.

Speaking to this correspondent, Mizan's wife Zinnat Ara said her five-year-old daughter has not yet gotten the chance to spend any time with her father.

"I am hopeful that my husband will now be able to get back to his normal life get the chance to get his normal life back and my family can finally be happy," she said.

Sardar Abdul Hakim, chief of the Baisya Dakar gang, said, "I was the son of a good man -- a fisherman -- and we used to lead a happy life out at sea. But five years ago, I was lured onto a dark path by some bad people."

"People started hating me and my children because I chose this path. But now I have the chance to go back to normal life."

He urged all others, who are still on the path of crimes, to surrender.

"You will not get this opportunity again once it's gone."

Another robber from Maheshkhali, Mamun, also said he was happy to be able to get another chance at a peaceful life.

Nazim Bhandari, 60, was excited that his son got the opportunity to surrender. "My son Enamul Hoque was a CNG-run auto-rickshaw driver. He got involved in crimes to make easy money, but now he will get another chance at a good life."

Speaking to The Daily Star, Nesar Majhi, a boatman who was injured in an attack by robbers, said, "Thousands of people have been tortured in the area due to such attacks [by robbers]. I am very happy to see the surrender of 34 of them."

74 dead as boat sinks near Libya

FROM PAGE 1

those hoping to travel to Europe, mainly embarking from Libya and neighbouring Tunisia.

The UN's International Organization for Migration reported "a devastating shipwreck which claimed the lives of at least 74 migrants today off the coast of Khoms," in a statement, adding that the coastguard and fishermen were searching for survivors.

Khoms is a port city 120 kilometres west of the Libyan capital Tripoli.

The IOM called it the latest disaster in a "series of tragedies" involving at least eight other shipwrecks in the Mediterranean sea since the start of October.

"The boat was reported to be carrying over 120 people, among them women and children," the IOM said, adding that 47 survivors had been brought back to shore and 31 bodies retrieved.

The IOM said that in the past two days, at least 19 other people, including two children, drowned after two boats capsized in the central Mediterranean.

More than 20,000 migrants have died in the last seven years, according to the UN refugee agency.

Human traffickers have taken advantage of persistent violence in Libya since the 2011 fall of dictator Muammar Gaddafi, turning the country into a key corridor for migrants fleeing war and poverty in desperate bids to reach Europe.

While many have drowned at sea, thousands have been intercepted by the Libyan coast guard, which has been backed by Italy and the EU, and returned to Libya.

They mostly end up in detention, often in horrific conditions.

Educational institutions

FROM PAGE 1

the schools due to the pandemic and extended the closure in several phases. Academic activities of around four crore students are being hampered due to the pandemic.

The long closure has led to cancellation of exams and left academic calendars in disarray.

This year's Higher Secondary Certificate and equivalent exams, Primary Education Completion and its equivalent exams, and Junior School Certificate and its equivalent exams were cancelled.

In place of HSC exams, candidates will be evaluated based on their results in JSC and SSC tests.

More than one crore students of Class-VI to IX will be promoted to the next classes this year without any annual examinations, the government announced. Instead, school authorities will give assignments to students.

Because of the pandemic, the government will not hold the Textbook Festival on January 1 when textbooks are handed over to primary and secondary students for free.

It also delayed introduction of new curriculums by a year. The pandemic also made the admission tests at schools uncertain.

The government launched

Rights groups have denounced the policy, and the IOM has campaigned to end returns to the North African country, 300 kilometres from the Italian coast.

"The mounting loss of life in the Mediterranean is a manifestation of the inability of states to take decisive action to redeploy much-needed, dedicated search and rescue capacity in the deadliest sea-crossing in the world," said Federico Soda, the IOM's Libya mission chief.

"We have long called for a change in the evidently unworkable approach to Libya and the Mediterranean, including ending returns to the country and establishing a clear disembarkation mechanism followed by solidarity from other states."

"Thousands of vulnerable people continue to pay the price for inaction both at sea and on land."

The latest shipwreck comes as Libyans were yesterday hammering out in Tunisia the powers of a proposed transitional government in UN-led talks aimed at ending a brutal decade-old conflict.

Since Gaddafi's ouster and killing, oil-rich Libya has been gripped by chaos and violence, with rival administrations in the east and the west vying for control of the country.

The political talks in Tunisia follow a ceasefire deal struck in October, and come as military talks, also led by the UN, were underway in Sirte, Gaddafi's hometown.

The IOM said that so far this year, at least 900 people had drowned in the Mediterranean trying to reach European shores -- some due to delays in rescue.

educational programmes on Sangsaj TV for secondary students on March 29, for primary students on April 7, and for technical and madrasa students on April 19 to help them make up for the losses due to the closure of educational institutions.

Many guardians said it was only partially fulfilling the objective, as almost half of the people -- many of them underprivileged -- do not have access to TV sets.

Worst day

FROM PAGE 1

17,112 tests yesterday, the positivity rate was 10.78 percent, while the overall positivity rate stood at 17.08 percent.

At least 1,737 Covid-19 patients recovered in the 24 hours.

With this, the total number of recoveries rose to 3,44,868, while the recovery rate stood at 80.73 percent.

Among the 13 deceased yesterday, four were females. All of them died in hospitals, according to the press release.

Four of them were aged between 51 and 59 years and nine were above 60 years old, added the release.

As of yesterday, a total of 2,533 patients were undergoing treatment in general beds while 268 were in ICU beds at the Covid-19 designated hospitals across the country, added the release.

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Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan, Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Home Ministry Shamsul Hoque Tuku, Inspector General of Police Benazir Ahmed along with other Rab and police officials pose for a photo with arms surrendered by 34 robbers. Rab-7 organised the surrender programme at Banskhali Adarsha High School field in Chattogram yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

AL candidates win by-polos in Sirajganj, Dhaka

FROM PAGE 1

In Sirajganj-1, Tanvir got 1,88,325 votes while BNP's Selim Reza got 468. Voter turnout was 51.75 percent.

Polling in both constituencies started at 8:00am and continued until 4:00pm without a break.

In Dhaka, police, Ansar and Election Commission officials were seen playing the role of spectators while the rules were broken.

A large crowd of AL supporters and activists was seen on the premises of Baunia Abdul Jalil High School, less than a kilometre from the international airport.

There were five centres in the school.

Inside a booth on the ground floor of a building, where no one except the voter is allowed, two women wearing boat badges were guiding the voters.

When asked, Presiding Officer Mohammad Shahadat Hossain said he was not aware of it.

He went with this correspondent to the booth and found one of the women inside a booth.

"No one can enter the booth. Please don't go there," he told the woman.

On the 2nd floor of a nearby government primary school, a polling agent wearing a white panjabi was seen holding the hand of a voter and taking him towards an EVM machine.

Asked, Presiding Officer Mir Anisur Rahman said it was not possible for officials to patrol all the time.

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"Within a few seconds, fire engulfed the whole bus. All the passengers managed to get down," he added.

Russel Shikder, duty officer of the Fire Service and Civil Defence, said that

"I instructed them not to allow anyone except the voters in the booth," he said.

Pointing to a crowd of ruling party men on the school premises, he said, "You understand the situation here."

At a booth for women at Bangamata Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib Govt Secondary School near Haji Camp, a man wearing an AL badge cast a vote before this correspondent, apparently manipulating the devices. The photo and other details of a female private service holder appeared on the display when the man wearing a red shirt put his finger on the sensor.

Despite this, the polling officer asked the young man to cast his vote. The man then went to the booth meant for women and cast a vote.

Asked what had been happening, the polling officer left the room without an answer. Within a few moments, the man along with two others approached the correspondent and asked furiously, "Any problem?"

Hundreds of AL supporters were outside the school while the correspondent left the premises.

In Sirajganj, the BNP brought allegations of a lack of peaceful environment.

BNP candidate Selim Reza told the Daily Star that no polling agent of BNP could stay in polling centres because ruling party men drove them away.

AL nominee Tanvir said these were politically motivated allegations.

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