

BANGLADESH
UPDATE



1,767
New cases in 24hrs



4,28,965
Total cases



6,159
Deaths



3,46,387
Recoveries



GLOBAL
UPDATE



1,302,537
Deaths



53,302,529
Total cases

STUDENT VISA APPLICATIONS

US embassy to resume process tomorrow

UNB, Dhaka

The US Embassy in Dhaka will accept appointments for new applicants for F, J, and M visas from tomorrow.

The F category covers students -- academic and language, J covers exchange visitors and M category is for vocational.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the embassy is limited to the number of appointments it can schedule each day and processing times may be as long as six weeks, said the embassy yesterday.

Applicants are recommended to submit their applications well ahead of their proposed travel dates.

Applicants need to log in,

update their profile online at www.ustraveldocs.com/bd, and schedule their appointment online after paying associated visa fees.

Until the Dhaka embassy's regular visa services resume, the application fee (MRV) will remain valid and may be used to schedule an interview appointment there until December 31 next year.

The embassy is also accepting interview-waiver applications for continuing students who want to renew their student visas for the same field of study at the same institution.

"We're also accepting applications for continuing F2 spouses and their children under the age of 21," said the embassy.



A five-member family takes a ride in a battery-run three-wheeler on Itna-Mithamoin-Austagram road in Kishoreganj, putting itself in harm's way. This scenic road, which runs straight through a vast haor area, has turned out to be one of the most beautiful destinations for travellers and holidaymakers in the country. But many of them show disregard for their own safety. The photo was taken on Wednesday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Death toll in typhoon-hit Philippines rises to 27

AFP, Manila

The death toll in the typhoon-battered Philippines has risen to 27, an official said yesterday, after some of the worst flooding in years swamped villages and forced thousands to flee their homes.

Torrential rain dumped by Typhoon Vamco -- the third powerful storm to hit the country in as many weeks -- inundated low-lying areas of Manila and surrounding provinces, trapping people on rooftops and balconies.

As floodwaters receded and residents began to return home, the scale of the destruction left by Vamco became clearer.

In Marikina City, one of the hardest hit areas of the capital, mud-covered

washing machines, televisions, couches, office chairs and bicycles were piled up on streets as residents swept debris and murky water from their houses.

Hundreds of thousands were still without power after Vamco lashed the most populous island of Luzon on Wednesday and Thursday, triggering landslides, toppling trees and cutting off roads.

The typhoon claimed at least 27 lives, said Ricardo Jalad, executive director of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council.

Some deaths were still being verified, officials said, suggesting the toll was likely to rise.

The military put the number of fatalities at 39 with 22 missing.

Boost regional

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collaborative effort that addresses the scourge of the pandemic and attempts to redress its devastations.

This is the second ministerial meeting held by China on Covid-19. Earlier, a similar meeting was held with Pakistan, Afghanistan and Nepal in July, but this time they were joined by Sri Lanka and Bangladesh while Afghanistan was absent.

Meanwhile, the Chinese foreign ministry issued a statement that said these five countries held the meeting to build up "political consensus" in containing the Covid-19 pandemic and boosting economic development.

"To jointly defeat Covid-19, protect people's life, safety and health, and accelerate economic and social recovery and development, China, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka convened a vice-ministerial-level video conference on Covid-19 response on November 10," said the Chinese foreign ministry statement.

The five parties agreed that the autumn and winter seasons are a crucial period for Covid-19 containment and vowed to strengthen information sharing and coordination of policies and actions to cope with the impact of the second wave of the pandemic, the statement said.

The Chinese side is ready to step up

cooperation with the other four parties in testing, diagnostics, treatment and medicine, and continue to provide them with assistance in containment supplies, it mentioned.

The countries agreed on the importance of coordinating the Covid-19 response, economic and social development and the advancement of the Belt and Road Initiative to boost post-Covid-19 economic recovery and development.

"Infrastructure connectivity under the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative will be advanced at a faster pace. Smooth transportation of goods at border ports will be facilitated with sufficient containment measures in place," the Chinese foreign ministry statement said.

The Bangladesh foreign secretary said during this pandemic many countries suffered from disruptions in the supply chain and that many global brands were not ready to take responsibility.

The Bangladesh foreign ministry statement said consulting parties also discussed possible modes of cooperation in bringing connectivity back to normalcy after the disruption due to the ongoing pandemic, while agreeing to facilitate the transportation of goods and people across borders with sufficient containment measures.

Need for extra precautions

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Patients in Bangladesh." It found that Covid-19 patients who had diabetes needed treatment beyond 28 days after getting infected.

"In the study, we found diabetes, lung diseases, and hypertension as the top three comorbidity risk factors for the death of Covid-19 patients," Prof Md Ziaul Islam, head of the department of community medicine at NIPSOM, told The Daily Star.

Dr Md Faruk Pathan, a professor at the diabetes & endocrinology department at Birmen General Hospital in Dhaka, said Covid-19 poses three to four times higher risk to any diabetic patient than others. The risk increases further in the elderly diabetic patients.

"We have observed that the severity of diabetes increases when a diabetic patient gets novel coronavirus. Elderly Covid-19 patients [60 and above] with diabetes develop severe pneumonia and hypoxia rapidly," he told this newspaper yesterday.

The experts voiced the concern on the eve of the World Diabetes Day today. This year, the Day is being observed during a global pandemic which has already claimed 6,159 lives and infected 428,965 people in the country.

The theme of the Day -- "Diabetes: Nurses make the difference" -- highlights the crucial role that nurses play in supporting people living with diabetes.

Diabetes occurs either when the pancreas does not produce enough insulin (a hormone that regulates blood sugar, or glucose), or when the body cannot effectively use the insulin it produces. It is a major cause of kidney failure, heart attack, stroke and blindness.

There are three main types of diabetes: type 1, type 2, and gestational diabetes (diabetes during pregnancy). Of them, some 90-95 percent diabetic

patients have type-2 diabetes globally.

According to the Bangladesh Demographic Health Survey (BDHS) 2017-18, around 1.1 crore people aged 18 and above suffer from high blood sugar.

The World Health Organisation estimates that 6 percent of the world's population has diabetes. The total number at present is four times what it was in 1980. The number is rising most rapidly in low- and middle-income countries, which are the least well-equipped to provide treatment, according to WHO.

Global studies found that diabetes increases the risk of severe illness and death among patients infected with the novel coronavirus.

Experts observed that maintaining discipline, taking prescribed diets and medicines and regular physical exercise are very important for diabetic patients.

Dr Faruk suggested all diabetic patients keep their blood sugar level under control.

"Taking insulin is better than oral medicine. Such patients should contact doctors regularly and it should obviously be via telemedicine."

The physician said doing physical exercises indoors and eating a balanced diet are important parts of diabetes management.

Elderly diabetic patients should not go out of home during the pandemic unless it is an utmost necessity, he added.

Dr AKM Sarwarul Alam, director of Kuwait-Bangladesh Maitree Hospital, said, "We observed that death risk is higher among the elderly Covid-19 patients with diabetes than others."

There is no alternative to maintaining health safety rules to stay safe from Covid-19 and it is more important for the elderly people and those with diabetes, he said.

Hope offered to highways

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will require more than \$70 billion over a period of 15-20 years, according to a rough estimate under the concept that suggested creating a separate wing under RHD to look after the expressway-related issues.

The move came at a time when Bangladesh opened its first expressway -- Dhaka-Mawa-Bhanga -- in March this year. Another expressway, Dhaka Bypass, which connects two national highways, is also under construction.

But, RHD officials said, there has to be a complete network to reap the highest economic benefit of these two expressways.

"We have developed a concept to bring major highways under an expressway network," Shishir Kanti Routh, an additional chief engineer of RHD, told The Daily Star recently.

He said the idea is to turn those expressways into economic corridors by connecting them with economic points like sea ports, land ports, inland container depots, for economic growth and meeting future demands.

"We need to have prioritisation, implementation and financing plans for this," he said, adding it would require a huge amount of investment from different sources apart from the government.

Shishir said the ministry already held a meeting with RHD officials last month. Public Private Partnership Authority (PPPA) officials were also involved with the development of the masterplan.

He, however, said they were yet to finalise the total length of highways to be turned into expressway, their standard and financing among many

issues.

Another RHD official, who is also involved with the plan, said they have primarily selected 3,993km of highways for the network and it would take \$78.55 billion as per a very preliminary estimate.

Zakir Hossain, additional secretary (planning wing) of the Road Transport and Highway Division, told this correspondent recently that RHD is now working on the matter and it will be placed before the Prime Minister's Office.

"Then, further decisions will be taken," he said, adding, "It will take this month to prepare for the meeting."

RATIONALE OF THE MASTERPLAN Under the RHD, there are 22,096km of national and regional highways and district roads -- of which, 3,906km are national highways.

Although the government has expanded around 450km highways into four-lane in the last 12 years, most of the national highways -- considered the backbone of the country's road network -- still remain two-lane.

So, these national highways often fail to meet increased traffic demand and cause road safety hazards, resulting in economic losses in terms of travel time, vehicle operation and accidents, experts and RHD engineers said.

Although Bangladesh saw phenomenal economic growth in the last decade, the country ranked 105 out of 140 countries in the "quality of roads" index, according to a World Economic Forum-2018 report.

Transportation costs, the largest direct logistic costs in Bangladesh,

would be up to 35 percent lower if there were no congestion on roads, said a World Bank report unveiled in November last year.

Experts and RHD engineers observed that upgrading the necessary portions of the existing highways to expressways would be cost effective compared to construction of new roads.

They also said major highways need to be developed for cross-border movement of passengers and freight for developing regional connectivity.

Prof Shamsul Hoque of Buet's civil engineering department said many countries had prepared a masterplan for building an expressway network from the '50s to '70s and some of them have already developed strong networks while others are still developing these.

He said Malaysia has already constructed 37 expressways, India 21, Pakistan 11 and Sri Lanka 3. "Unfortunately, we could not prepare even a masterplan till today."

The transport expert said since Bangladesh has a dearth of land, the policy should be to increase the performance of the existing roads. "To do so, there is no alternative to constructing expressways."

He added, "If we want rapid economic growth, we have to develop infrastructure for this, and expressway is one of them."

He said the masterplan should consider the viability of economic and other relevant aspects while considering which highway corridors would be developed as expressways and the number of lanes of the expressways.

Cops sue BNP men for arson

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This newspaper obtained copies of statements of six cases. In three of them, police made identical claims that the attacks were carried out by the BNP, its affiliates and 20-party alliance leaders and activists at the behest of their central leaders to foil Thursday's by-polls and destabilise law and order.

Ishraq Hossain, the defeated BNP candidate in south city mayoral election, has been made the prime accused in a case filed with Motijheel police station.

BNP's SM Jahangir, who was defeated by the Awami League candidate in Thursday by-polls by a huge margin, was mentioned as the mastermind behind the torching of a bus and explosion of two crude bombs in Bhatara area.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday, however, alleged that the buses were torched by government agents. Speaking at a briefing, he claimed that the arson attacks were carried out to malign his party.

Walid Hossain, deputy commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police's media and public relations division, said two cases were filed with Motijheel, Shahbagh and Paltan police stations each while one case each with Bangshal, Bhatara and Kalabagan police stations.

The cases were lodged in the last two days, he said.

Seventy-nine people were named as accused in the two cases filed with Shahbagh police station, 76 in the two with the Paltan station, 87 in the two cases with Motijheel police, 56 in the case with Bangshal police, 49 in the case with Kalabagan police and 95 in the case filed with Bhatara police station.

The nine buses, including three government-owned ones, were set on fire in different parts of the city between 12:07pm and 4:30pm on Thursday.

After the arson attacks, police arrested 21 accused -- nine accused in the two cases with Paltan police, two in the two cases with Motijheel police, six in the two cases with Shahbagh police, two in the case with Kalabagan and two accused in the case with Bangshal police station.

After police placed the accused before two Dhaka courts with remand prayers, the courts placed them on remand for different days.

In one of the cases filed with Motijheel police station, Sub-inspector Ataur Rahman Bhuiyan mentioned that 42 accused, including Ishraq Hossain, and many unidentified leaders and activists of the BNP, its affiliates and 20-party alliance torched a bus of Agrani Bank to foil the Dhaka-18 by-polls and kill a staffer of the vehicle. The named accused included two private secretaries to Ishraq and 38 leaders of different units of BNP and its front organisations.

In the other case filed with the same police station, the allegation was identical. All the 45 named accused in the case was leaders of the BNP, the Jubo Dal, the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal and the Swechhasabak Dal.

In the case filed with Bangshal police, Tajuddin, BNP ward-32 unit president, was named as the prime accused among 56 accused. Other accused include Yakub Sarkar, general secretary of BNP's ward-35 unit, Mamun Hossain, general secretary of Bangshal Thana Jubo Dal, Faruk Ahmed, vice-president of Bangshal Thana Jubo Dal and Mohammad Rashed, general secretary of Bangshal Thana Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal.

In the case filed with Bhatara police station, SI Eskandar Ali Sardar mentioned that Jubo Dal activists took position on the road near Coca Cola intersection and brought out a procession at the directive of SM Jahangir to destabilise law and order and public safety and foil the

Dhaka-18 by-polls. Almost all the 95 accused in the case are leaders and activists of the BNP and its front organisations.

'CALL RECORDS BEING ANALYSED' Additional Commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police and Head of Counter Terrorism and Transnational Unit Monirul Islam yesterday said experts were analysing call records related to the arson attacks.

"We have received a call record relating to buses set on fire in several places in the capital yesterday. The call record is being analysed," he told journalists at Bangladesh Crime Reporters Association office, BSS reported.

He said the call records would serve as important evidence to investigate the cases, adding, "There is a similarity between the call record and the fire incidents."

G20 strikes historic debt pact to help poorer states hit by Covid

REUTERS, Paris/Tokyo/Washington

G20 countries have agreed for the first time on a common framework for restructuring government debt, in anticipation of the coronavirus crisis leaving some poorer nations struggling to pay and in need of relief.

With the Covid-19 pandemic straining the finances of some developing countries, G20 finance ministers said yesterday that more help was needed than a current temporary debt freeze, which will be extended until June 30, 2021.

Major creditors, including China, will be expected to follow the joint guidelines agreed by the G20, which lays out how debt deemed to be unsustainable can be reduced or rescheduled.

Civilian deaths in Ethiopia may be war crimes: UN

AFP, Geneva

The UN rights chief yesterday called for a full inquiry into possible war crimes in Ethiopia after reports emerged of a massacre of civilians in the Tigray region.

"If confirmed as having been deliberately carried out by a party to the current fighting, these killings of civilians would of course amount to war crimes," Michelle Bachelet said in a statement, calling for "full accountability".

Ethiopia's central government launched a military operation in the northern Tigray region last week, accusing the local TPLF ruling party of attacking military bases.

Rights group Amnesty said on Thursday that scores of civilians had been killed by forces backing the TPLF -- claims denied as "baseless" by the party.

Quader blames

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"People have repeatedly shunned them because of their destructive activities and terrorist behaviors. It is their old habit to try to make petty political gains by establishing a reign of terror at the expense of people's lives and properties."

He added that the BNP has a habit of blaming the government and the Election Commission when they get rejected by the people in an election. He then thanked the people for holding the by-elections in Dhaka-18 and Sirajganj-1 in a peaceful manner.

"Give me an example of vote rigging in the two by-elections. When will they give up doing politics with blatant lies? As long as they don't, they will keep becoming irrelevant to the people of Bangladesh."

On the other hand, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir alleged that the torching of buses was an "act of governments agents."

He said, "I want to say clearly that the BNP is not into the politics of destruction. Judging by the past experiences, the government agents have done this."

The aim of this act was to malign the BNP, he told reporters at the Dhaka Reporters' Union.

Fakhrul said what happened on Thursday was a heinous crime.

"I harshly condemned it. We do the politics of peaceful and systematic movement. These types of incidents take place when there is no democratic space in the country."

Since the rights to processions and rallies have been denied, miscreants take advantage and carry out such acts.

Asked whether Khaleda Zia is active in politics, Fakhrul said, "We think she is mentally active. Khaleda Zia has not left politics and she never will."

Fakhrul said the BNP was functioning under joint leadership.

"Our leader was behind the bars for more than two years. Our acting chairman is out of the country. Even in these trying times, our unity remains strong. Our party is run under the joint leadership."

Later in the day, at a press briefing at the BNP chairperson's Gulshan office, Fakhrul said there will be demonstrations on Saturday and Sunday against the arrest of the party's leaders and activists and for cancellation of Dhaka-18 and Sirajganj-1 by-polls.

The BNP will demonstrate in front of Jatiya Press Club on Saturday and all the district towns on Sunday.

14 killed

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"As usual they targeted civilian populations without any remorse," said Syed Shahid Qadri, a government official in Pakistan-controlled Kashmir, where a woman was among the dead and 27 others were injured.

Across the border in Indian Kashmir, officials said an 8-year-old child was among those killed in the shelling that started in the morning and continued late into the evening.

Mukhtar Ahmad, a resident of Uri in Indian Kashmir said there was panic in the hillside town after loud explosions were heard from areas closer to the de facto border.

"Several families have fled the area and taken shelter in Uri town," he said.

More than 40 civilians have been killed in firing between Indian and Pakistani troops this year, according to official data, with both sides suffering similar fatalities.

1,767 infected

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Against a total of 13,539 tests in 115 laboratories in those 24 hours yesterday, the positivity rate was 13.05 percent. With this, the overall positivity rate reached at 17.05 percent.

Meanwhile, a total of 1,519 Covid-19 patients have recovered in the same 24 hours, raising the total number of recoveries to 346,387.

This was 80.75 percent of all confirmed cases, according to the press release.

Among the 19 dead, 13 were males and six were females. All of them died in hospitals.

Five of them aged between 51 and 60 years while the rest 14 were above 60 years.

Of all dead so far, more than half were above 60 years old, according to the DGHS.