

BANGLADESH UPDATE



1,888

New cases in 24hrs



4,75,89

Total cases



6,807

Deaths



3,93,408

Recoveries

GLOBAL UPDATE



1,528,037

Deaths



66,429,093

Total cases

ATTACKS AGAINST JOURNALISTS

Cross-border media cooperation launched

IPI, five South Asian media organisations join hands



DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The International Press Institute (IPI) and five South Asian media organisations on Thursday launched a cross-border cooperation to highlight attacks on journalists and create public awareness and influence policymakers to end impunity for crimes against journalists in the region.

News organisations partnering with IPI under the project -- "Covering and investigating attacks against journalists in South Asia: a Cross-Border cooperation" -- are The Daily Star in Bangladesh, The Week - Malayala Manorama in India, Dawn in Pakistan, and Nagarik (Nepali) and myRepublica (English) in Nepal.

"We are excited at the prospect of working with some of South Asia's most respected news organisations to give visibility to the attacks that journalists face in the region as well as their consequences on people's right and ability to be informed," IPI Executive Director Barbara Trionfi said.

The project is partially supported by UNESCO's Global Media Defence Fund, a multi-partner trust fund. The media partners will gather information about attacks on journalists and the impunity for crimes against journalists in their respective countries.

Also, throughout the year, the participating newspapers will cover the issue of journalist safety through different journalistic formats, in line with their editorial policies.

Special attention will be given to attacks against women journalists. The partners will also publish in-depth reports on the topic. All the stories and

reports will be shared for publication by participating news organisations.

IPI will engage with like-minded organisations in South Asia and around the world to raise awareness about the challenges journalists face.

Speaking on the collaboration, The Daily Star Editor Mahfuz Anam said, "South Asia has witnessed a rapid decline in press freedom and safety of journalists. At least seven journalists have been killed in the four countries this year and investigations in earlier killings remain pending.

"The collaboration between publications in the region will shed light on this grave situation and allow us to highlight the challenges that we journalists face."

The Week Editor-in-Charge VS Jayachandran said The Week has been proud of standing by courageous journalists who risk their lives for truth and freedom, both of which are vital to the magazine's own existence as an honest and unbiased publication, as well as to the growth of good journalism in India, a country that has seen a number of attempts at silencing journalists in modern times.

Dawn Editor Zaffar Abbas said the cross-border collaboration is an excellent initiative as safety of journalists is a common cause for all.

"I am quite confident that together we will be able to highlight the issue of threat to journalists and journalism not just in our own countries but in the whole of South Asia."

Nagarik Editor-in-Chief Guna Raj Luinl said it's an important and timely effort to highlight the issue of safety of journalists in South Asia.

US sets record of Covid cases

225,201 new infections recorded in a day; UK eyes major fall in deaths by early 2021

AGENCIES

For the second day in a row, the United States on Friday notched a record number of coronavirus cases in 24 hours, reaching 225,201 new infections, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University.

The novel coronavirus has killed at least 1,519,213 people since the outbreak emerged in China last December, according to a tally from official sources compiled by AFP at 1100 GMT yesterday.

At least 65,865,820 cases of coronavirus have been registered. Of these, at least 41,777,200 are now considered recovered.

On Friday, 12,177 new deaths and 677,808 new cases were recorded worldwide. Based on the latest reports, the countries with the most new deaths were the United States with 2,506 new deaths, followed by Italy with 814 and Brazil with 694.

The United States is also the worst-affected country with 279,008 deaths from 14,372,570 cases. At least 5,470,389 people have been declared recovered.

After the US, the hardest-hit countries are Brazil with 175,964 deaths from 6,533,968 cases, India with 139,700 deaths from 9,608,211 cases, Mexico with 108,863 deaths from 1,156,770 Ireland said.

Elated and eager to get to work

unrest here. That's a relief," he said.

Akbar Hossain chimed in: "The government was saying we would get jobs here. I am a carpenter. The sooner I get work the better. We want work immediately."

On the island, the choices include cattle rearing, farming and fishing. Around 10,000 buffaloes and 1,000 sheep were grazing on a green field.

Commodore AA Mamun Chowdhury, director of the housing project called Ashrayan-3, said the island was also suitable for farming vegetables, fruits, fish, ducks, swans and chickens.

The Rohingyas were taken there amid concerns from the United Nations and other development partners who demanded an independent assessment of the project before the relocation took place.

There were allegations that the refugees were taken to Bhasan Char by force. But none of the Rohingyas said they went there against their will. The project director said the happy refugees will be able to bring more Rohingyas there.

"Besides, we have preparations for providing medical support, sanitation services, and education to one lakh Rohingyas for a year," he told The Daily Star.

The living quarters are divided in 120 clusters. They are now living in four. Many of them were still unpacking their belongings yesterday. Men brought the belongings from the vessels while women at home sorted those out.

The children were seen playing outside their houses.

Muhammad Anwar was selling betel leaves on a small table near a building. "There were some rowdy people in Kutupalong [camp] who would always create unrest. There will be no such



Modunaghata Water Treatment Plant's daily withdrawal of 36 crore litres of water from the Haldia river will pose a serious threat to the unique water body, experts, environmentalists say. Haldia is the lone natural spawning ground of carp fish in South Asia.

PHOTO: FILE

Fresh threat haunts Halda

FROM PAGE 1

of Water Modelling (IWM) drew the ire of environmentalists for being vague, ill-motivated, and intentionally evading the risk factors facing the water body.

The Daily Star obtained a copy of the feasibility study and found gaps between the final version and a summary presented in a review meeting organised by the Department of Environment on October 13 this year.

Following the criticism and a letter from the water resources ministry last month, IWM is now set to review the study.

QUESTIONS OVER FEASIBILITY STUDY

Chattogram Wasa wants to take around 336 million litres per day (MLD) water, according to the study. This will be added to the existing 225 MLD withdrawn for irrigation and other purposes.

That means a total of 561 MLD water will be extracted from Halda river every day.

Taking an average of water flow (1,875 MLD) during the dry season, particularly in February-March, total withdrawal would then be nearly one third of Halda river's water flow.

These two months are the pre-spawning period as brood fish usually lay eggs in April.

Noted Halda researcher and professor at the zoology department of Chittagong University Dr Manzoorul Kibria told The Daily Star, "The feasibility study assessed the water flow as 1,600 MLD to 2,150 MLD in the February-March period, which is crucial for Halda because spawning occurs in April."

"The total withdrawal of water will be 29.92 percent of the total water Halda holds at that time. This will reduce water flow drastically, allowing salinity far deeper into the Halda."

But this figure was presented as different in the review meeting, where IWM showed the water flow during February-March as 27,402 MLD -- raising doubts about the

IWM team did not meet local stakeholders such as egg collectors and local fisheries and administration officials when they prepared the feasibility study, Kibria said. Egg collectors, who work and live close to the Halda, confirmed this to The Daily Star.

Kibria proposed an alternative solution, suggesting a water reservoir be built with streams in the Mirsarai hilly area, rain water harvesting, and withdrawing water from the Muhuri river, Mohamaya lake, and Feni river -- all of which are also close to the economic zone.

A 2016 study on the ecological impact of water withdrawal from Halda led by Prof Ainun Nishat, a prominent water resources management and climate change specialist, had warned more removal

authenticity and thoroughness of the study, Kibria said.

Referring to a study he conducted last year, he said, salinity is a major concern for Halda as it is on the rise after the construction of sluice gates, rubber dams, and irrigation projects. Due to salinity, a venomous sea snake -- Belcher's sea snake -- is now present in the Halda river, he added.

A three-year study since 2016 by Chattogram Wasa revealed 700mg of salinity per litre of water of Halda, while the ideal according to international standards is 600mg per litre.

The feasibility study also did not focus on specific details of how much water, plankton, and micro benthic organisms are needed for brood fish to be able to lay eggs as it regularly takes place in Halda.

It is also not made clear in the report how the withdrawal of water will affect the brood fish, dolphins, and overall biodiversity of the water body.

Kibria also said the study was based on old data -- for example, the study intentionally omitted the fact that high yields of fish eggs have been collected in the Halda every year since 2016, and the highest haul of eggs in the decade this year.

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