

**BANGLADESH  
UPDATE**



**1,799**  
New cases in 24hrs



**4,92,332**  
Total cases



**7,089**  
Deaths



**4,23,845**  
Recoveries

**GLOBAL  
UPDATE**



**1,621,660**  
Deaths



**72,801,619**  
Total cases

CONTEMPT OF COURT

# 5 officials apologise to apex court

*Woman who topped the test finally gets to be primary school teacher after 12 years*

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Five government officials yesterday apologised to the Supreme Court's Appellate Division for failing to comply with its order to appoint a woman as a primary school teacher in 15 days.

The woman, Beauty Begum, scored the highest in primary school teachers recruitment test in Gaibandha in 2008, but did not get the job.

After she launched a legal battle, the Appellate Division on August 3, 2017 directed the officials to recruit her to the post in 15 days.

Her lawyer Altaf Hossain said the inaction to hire his client in the given time was tantamount to the contempt of court.

The five officials include then director general of the Directorate of Primary Education Dr Abu Hena Mostafa Kamal, who is now the defence secretary.

Yesterday, they appeared in person before a three-member bench of the Appellate Division, headed by Justice Muhammad Imman Ali, and apologised unconditionally through submitting two separate petitions before the bench.

The apology petitions mentioned that the government has now appointed Beauty Begum in line with the order.

Her lawyer Altaf Hossain told this correspondent that the government issued an appointment letter on Thursday and Beauty would join work

immediately.

After accepting the apology, the apex court pardoned the officials and disposed of a contempt of court petition filed against them, Altaf added.

The other officials are primary education directorate's Deputy Director Md Ramzan Ali, Gaibandha Primary Education Officer Aminul Islam, Gaibandha Sadar Education Officer Md Abdus Salam, and Assistant Thana Education Officer Masumul Islam, he said.

Attorney General AM Amin Uddin represented the state while lawyer Shafique Mahmud Puspsha appeared for the officials during the virtual hearing.

The apex court bench on December 7 summoned the five officials.

The top court passed the order while hearing a contempt of court rule issued earlier against the officials. The apex court issued the rule on March 2 this year following the contempt of court petition filed by Beauty, who stood first in the test for the post of primary school teacher.

Lawyer Altaf Hossain said the government officials recruited Nazma Sultana, who had the second highest score in the exam.

The lower courts concerned, the High Court, and Appellate Division at different times had ordered the officials to recruit Beauty Begum to the post.



**Police charge truncheons on activists of BNP when they gathered at Paltan intersection in the capital yesterday and started chanting anti-government slogans creating traffic jams.**

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## UN projections show high hope

FROM PAGE 1

Bangladesh was included in the LDC list in 1975. In 2015, it crossed the threshold of the World Bank-defined lower middle-income country and became eligible for graduation in 2018.

A country must cross the threshold on two of the three criteria in two consecutive triennial reviews to be considered for the graduation.

The CDP will scrutinise Bangladesh's progress towards the graduation for the second time at its triennial review in February next year. The country's official graduation from the LDC category will take place after a three-year transition period.

If the country maintains its position in all the three categories for the next three years, it will be recognised as a developing country in the UN General Assembly in 2024.

**PER CAPITA INCOME**

According to the UN's graduation threshold, the GNI per capita of a country has to be \$1,230 or above. Bangladesh's GNI per capita is now \$1,640, according to the government's status report.

The GNI per capita is the value of a country's final income in a year, divided by its population. It reflects the average income of a country's citizens.

The UNCTAD estimates that in this criterion, the distance of Bangladesh from the graduation threshold was more than 50 percent between the years 2000 and 2009.

Riding on robust macroeconomic fundamentals and strong growth of exports and remittances, the country reported a consistently improving performance against the per capita income criterion, it said.

A continuous rise in the GNI per capita guaranteed that Bangladesh exceeded the graduation threshold for the very first time in 2018, said the UNCTAD assessment.

"In the year 2021, Bangladesh will be at 142 percent of the graduation threshold," said the assessment.

"This suggests that Bangladesh is likely to fulfil graduation criteria in terms of per income at the next triennial review in 2021."

In 2018, the country scored 104 percent of the graduation threshold.

**HUMAN ASSETS INDEX (HAI)**

In terms of the HAI, a country must have a score of 66 or above. Bangladesh has performed better than it did in 2018 as its score has risen to 75.3 from 72.8,

according to the government's status report.

The HAI is an indicator of nutrition, health, adult literacy and secondary school enrolment rate.

Mentioning that a steady progress has been observed in Bangladesh in this criterion, the UNCTAD estimates that the country will stand at 114 percent of the graduation threshold in 2021.

It said the country's score was 45.3 in 2003 and then it exceeded the graduation threshold in 2018 with a score at 111 percent of the threshold.

The key indicators underpinning the evolution of the HAI include child (under five) mortality rate, maternal mortality ratio, prevalence of stunting, gross secondary school enrolment ratio, adult literacy ratio and gender parity index for gross school enrolment ratio.

In terms of child mortality, the country has achieved remarkable success as the under-five mortality rate fell to 31 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2019 from 222 in 1971, 138 in 1991, 82 in 2001 and 46 in 2011, said the assessment.

"Over these decades, extensive changes have occurred in health policy related to maternal health and new-born care- with an emphasis on the integration of delivery of services and interventions targeted at underserved populations-, which could partially explain reduced child mortality." It further said mortality declines can be also explained with improved coverage of effective interventions to prevent or treat the most important causes of child mortality.

The maternal mortality has decreased significantly over the years, though it remains higher than in developed countries. Between 1990 and 2017, the maternal mortality rate in Bangladesh decreased from 574 to 173 (per 100,000 live births), a remarkable 70 percent decrease in three decades, it said.

The UNCTAD said the gross secondary school enrolment rate has increased, albeit in a volatile manner, over the years.

However, it is still relatively low (72.6 percent in 2019), particularly when compared to other South Asian LDCs.

**ECONOMIC VULNERABILITY INDEX (EVI)**

In the EVI criterion, a country's score has to be below 32. Bangladesh's score is 27.3 against 25 two years ago, said the status report of the government.

The EVI is a composition of indicators

like instability of agricultural production and exports of goods and services and share of agriculture, forestry and fisheries in gross domestic product. The lower a country scores in this index the better it performs.

The UNCTAD assessment said Bangladesh's performance under the graduation threshold relevant to this criterion demonstrated sustained improvements between 2012 and 2015 triennial reviews, with the EVI score hitting a plateau thereafter.

The EVI score of Bangladesh in 2018 was 25.2, which was 127 percent relative to the graduation threshold. The provisional value relevant to this criterion for 2021 triennial review is estimated to meet graduation threshold at 117 percent, it said.

The assessment said the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sector displayed sustained growth in labour productivity, even though its contribution to value -- as well as its employment share -- has declined.

Although exports played an important role in its growth trajectory for Bangladesh, the heightened dependence on the readymade garments sector remains a source of concern in the long term, it cautioned.

**BANGLADESH WILL RESPOND**

Finance ministry officials said the government disagrees with some of the observations of UNCTAD and will send its opinion to them shortly.

After receiving Bangladesh's opinions, UNCTAD will present the assessment during a meeting in January next year where a group of CDP experts will discuss the country's position.

Upon getting the experts' views, the CDP will hold the triennial review on February 7, 8, and 9 and recommend Bangladesh's name for the graduation if the country passes the assessment.

If Bangladesh gets out of the LDC bloc in 2024, it will be given a three-year transition period before it loses duty-free and quota-free market access to the European Union under the Everything but Arms initiative for LDCs, according to the CDP.

The officials said the representatives of BGMSEA and FBCCI requested to keep the duty-free export facilities and other benefits for Bangladesh until 2030, considering the economic fallout of the pandemic.

## Two die after falling sick in shipbreaking yards

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Two employees, including a security guard, of two shipbreaking firms in Chattogram's Sitakunda upazila died yesterday morning after falling sick at their workplaces.

The deceased -- Kranti Tripura, 25, of Janata Steel Yard, and Jolendra Chakma, 24, of Mother Steel -- were from Khagrachhari district.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Janata Steel Yard Manager Md Sohel said Kranti was a security guard at their firm. He was not feeling well after having dinner on Sunday night.

As his condition deteriorated, he was rushed to Chattogram Medical College Hospital (CMCH) where he passed away around 4:00am, added Sohel.

Abul Kashem, owner of Mother Steel, said Jolendra fell ill yesterday morning. He died "after being taken to CMCH".

ASI Md Hamid of CMCH Police Box said a patient was sent to the hospital from Sitakunda shipbreaking yard in the morning.

Abdullah Al Sakib Mubarrat, deputy inspector general (Chattogram directorate) of Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments, said he visited the two firms, talked to witnesses and found that the deaths were not caused by any accident.

ASI Mohammad Kaiser of Sitakunda Police Station said they had no information about the deaths of two employees at the shipbreaking yards until yesterday evening.

## Five sentenced to death get acquitted

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday acquitted all five people, who were sentenced to death by a lower court in Netrokona, in a case filed for the abduction and gang rape of a teenage girl in 2002, as the allegations brought against them were not proved beyond reasonable doubt.

The HC bench of Justice SM Emdadul Hoque and Justice Bishmadev Chakraborty delivered the verdict after hearing the appeals of the convicted accused and the death reference (lower court documents) of the case.

## Post-Covid-19

India and Bangladesh have continued to maintain regular exchanges at the highest level, MEA said.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina paid an official visit to India in October 2019.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi delivered a video message on the historic occasion of Mujib Borsho in March 2020.

Both the leaders have remained in regular touch during the Covid-19 pandemic, MEA said.

On Sunday, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen said Bangladesh will raise all the big issues, including water and border ones during the virtual Summit.

"We'll raise our major issues, which we usually raise," he told reporters at his office adding that a number of "quick-impact" projects will be inaugurated, too.

Chilahati-Haldibari rail link, a pre-1965 connectivity line, would be inaugurated along with some other projects during the virtual Summit.

The Foreign Minister, however, said the month of Victory will come up prominently in the meeting because it is also a victory for India as they helped Bangladesh achieve the victory. "We must acknowledge the contributions of the then Indian Prime Minister."

Dr Momen said the relations between Bangladesh and India are historic and of blood-relations, and India is a time-tested friend of Bangladesh. "So, India has reasons to be proud of our victory."

He recalled the then governments of India and the United Kingdom for bringing Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman back to home alive. "We must acknowledge it."

The Foreign Minister said Bangladesh and India are witnessing a golden chapter in their relations. "Two countries have set an example by resolving issues like LBA and maritime boundaries through dialogue and discussion."

He said they believe that the two countries can resolve all the issues through discussion. "Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has shown leadership maturity in resolving problems."

Responding to a question, Dr Momen said a Swadhinata Sarak will be opened marking the 50 years of Bangladesh's independence on March 26 next year.

He said the road remains functional on the Indian side while it will be connected through Mujibnagar, Meherpur district. "It'll help boost people-to-people contact between the two countries."

Bangladesh has invited Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to visit Bangladesh on March 26 in person to jointly celebrate the Independence Day of Bangladesh. The Indian side accepted the invitation in principle.

Bangladesh and India will chart out plans to take the "rock-solid and historic" Dhaka-Delhi relations to the next level expanding areas of cooperation between the two countries with a number of engagements in the coming months, officials said.

In March this year, the two Prime Ministers joined a virtual meeting of Saarc countries on cooperation to deal with the Covid-19 situation in the region.

## Recruitment at RU halted

FROM PAGE 1

about some negative news regarding the malpractices in the recruitment process."

The university's Institute of Biological Sciences cancelled the process for appointment of two teachers this month as 13 candidates did not receive admit cards for the viva voce exam.

An official of the University Grants Commission (UGC) said the government might have issued the order in response to a UGC probe that found evidence of corruption and irregularities by the RU vice-chancellor and pro-VC in the recruitment of teachers.

The UGC in the report recommended taking actions against VC Prof M Abdus Sobhan, Pro-VC Prof Chowdhury M Zakaria and others concerned over the matter. It also suggested scrapping the appointment of 34 teachers, who were recruited following "relaxation of university rules".

Contected, Deputy Education Minister Mohibul Hassan Chowdhury refused to comment on the issue.

The VC and the pro-VC did not answer phone calls and SMSs.

RU Registrar Prof MA Bari said he would not comment on the matter without seeing related documents.

A senior teacher of Institute of Biological Sciences said a total of 24 candidates had applied for two teaching positions. The viva voce exam was held on December 8.

Later, at least 13 jobseekers alleged that they did not receive admit cards. The institute's Board of Governance on December 10 decided to cancel the appointment process.

Speaking at a press conference on the campus on November 26, a group of teachers under the banner of "Teachers' Society Against Corruption" demanded postponement of all kinds of recruitment at the university until the government made a decision in line with the UGC's probe findings.

They alleged that a recent RU syndicate meeting relaxed recruitment conditions for appointing four lecturers to the tourism and hospitality management department and two lectures to applied physics department.

The teachers said the process of appointing 13 officials to the university medical centre, 28 employees and support staffers to different offices was also underway.

Prof Sultan ul Islam of geology and mining, also the convener of Teachers' Society Against Corruption, yesterday said the authorities continued the recruitment process like they did in the past without caring about the UGC investigation.

About the education ministry's December 10 notice, he said the VC knew about it. "But he ignored it to complete the recruitment process illegally," he told The Daily Star.

According to the UGC probe report, the vice-chancellor and some others concerned relaxed the university rules to appoint the VC's daughter and son-in-law as teachers of the public university.

The UGC submitted copies of the probe report to the education ministry, Anti-Corruption Commission and the Prime Minister's Office on October 20.

During the investigation, the probe committee found evidence of 25 kinds of irregularities and corruption committed by top members of the university administration.

The probe found that the VC provided false information to the chancellor on voluntary retirement; he practiced nepotism in recruiting teachers; the VC and the others appointed heads of different departments violating university rules; and officials were involved in irregular financial transactions.

The report said the VC and some others relaxed the university's recruitment policy on purpose and appointed the VC's daughter and son-in-law as teachers. Besides, some 34 low-qualified candidates were recruited as teachers.

## Nation vows to safeguard

FROM PAGE 1

He said the fundamentalist forces could be able to reach their present position due to patronising and compromising attitude of the successive governments.

The noted political analyst said the present Awami League government's compromising attitude towards Hefajat-e Islam, which opposes the construction of sculpture of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, is also responsible for the rising of the fundamentalist forces.

Abul Quasem Fazlul Haq, another political analyst and a former Dhaka University professor, said, "We should not put all blame on our enemy. We should also do our self-criticism and go for our soul-searching for not fulfilling the dream of the country's martyred intellectuals and the rise of fundamentalist elements over the years." "Our political parties and its leaders lack this sincerity of doing self-criticism. They speak on this issue from the point of view of the interest of their parties and individuals," he added.

He said in absence of democracy, people are rushing towards religion and a section of religious leaders are taking this opportunity to gain their political interest through misleading people.

Fazlul Haq said, "Our political leaders don't have nationalistic thinking in their minds. That's why they rush to different embassies with different issues."

To mark the Martyred Intellectuals Day, elaborate programmes were held nationwide to commemorate the December 14 tragedy.

The nation observed the day to commemorate those intellectuals killed systematically by the Pakistan occupation forces and their local collaborators at the fag-end of the country's Liberation War in 1971.

Just two days ahead of the country's final victory for independence on this

day 49 years ago, the Pakistan occupation forces with the help of their local collaborators -- Razakar, Al-Badr and Al-Shams -- killed the most prominent intellectuals of the country.

As many as 200 illustrious sons of the soil, including professors, journalists, doctors, artists, engineers and writers, were abducted from their respective residences blindfolded between December 10 and 14 in 1971.

They were taken blindfolded to torture cells at Mirpur, Mohammadpur, Nakhapara, Rajarbagh and other locations in different parts of the city.

Subsequently, they were put to death en masse at different killing grounds, most notably Rayerbazar and Mirpur, in a bid to cripple the newly emerging Bangladesh intellectually.

Among the martyred intellectuals of December 14 were Prof Munier Chowdhury, Dr Alim Chowdhury, Prof Muniruzzaman, Dr Fazle Rabbi, Sirajuddin Hossain, Shahidullah Kaiser, Prof GC Dev, JC Guhathakurta, Prof Santosh Bhattacharya, Mofazzal Haider Chowdhury, journalists Khandaker Abu Taleb, Nizamuddin Ahmed, SA Mannan (Ladu Bhai), ANM Golam Mustafa, Syed Nazmul Haq and Selina Parvin.

Since then, the day is being observed as the Martyred Intellectuals Day to pay homage to the great fallen heroes.

President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina paid rich tributes to the martyred intellectuals in the morning.

The day was observed on a limited scale due to fresh surge of the Covid-19 cases.

Paying tribute to the martyred intellectuals, Obaidul Quader, AL general secretary and also road transport and bridges minister, called upon the pro-liberation forces to build united resistance to root out the communal forces from the society.

## It's even worse during pandemic

FROM PAGE 1

Among the complaints received, those of "non-compoundable criminal offences" were also higher this year compared to last year -- 2,412 in 2020 versus 1,739 in 2019. "Non-compoundable criminal offence" includes grave criminal acts like rape, attempt to rape, and domestic torture.

The data shows that rape complaints rose by 63 percent on average (excluding May and September which showed slight dips).

Meanwhile, "Polli Shomaj", the organisation's ward-level units, reported over 2,000 more incidences of violence against women and children across 54 districts, this year than they did last year.

"Polli Shomaj" groups are comprised of women members from all wards of a union council and they undertake activities such as stopping child marriages.

According to data provided by Brac, Polli Shomaj prevented 371 child marriages between January and September in 2019, while 97 incidents of child marriage were reported by community members. During the same time period in 2020, they prevented 646 incidents of child marriage, while community members reported 146 incidents of child marriage.

The crisis worsened from July, the data shows. "We saw a rise in underage marriages and domestic violence," said Md Abdul Hai, a programme organiser from Damarrhuda in Chuadanga, who is working for Brac's Community Empowerment Programme.

"People were home and unemployed. The families are going through poverty. Since the men are home, they are constantly interfering in the women's

domestic duties, leading to altercations. The girls are home and not working or studying, so they are being seen as a burden," described Hai.

"In the last year, I stopped five underage marriages in Damarrhuda. There were also four or five such marriages I could not stop. All the brides were 13 or 14," he added.

"Domestic violence has also increased. I had to intervene in a marriage, where a 17-year-old bride was being tortured for dowry of Tk 1 lakh. The husband beat her up and broke her arm. Then she was beaten up again by a mob led by a woman her husband was having an extra-marital affair with, and she needed to be hospitalised," narrated Hai.

Special attention must be paid to adolescent girls, especially those between 10 and 18 years, recommended a media brief circulated by Brac.

## New rail line to link northern tip

FROM PAGE 1

regarding where the line will be connected [with the Indian railway] in the border," DN Majumder, additional director general of the BR, told The Daily Star.

"The aim of constructing the rail line is to boost regional connectivity," he added.

Currently, India, Bhutan and Nepal are connected with Bangladesh via Banglabandha port through roads.

Extension of the railway from Panchagarh to Banglabandha will create a scope for rail communication with India and therefore, with Nepal and Bhutan, the officials said.

In 2018, the BR took up a project titled "Study for Important Projects of West Zone" for carrying out its feasibility study and prepare alignments for three rail lines and a rail bridge in the railway's western zone.

"Consultants have submitted three alternative routes for the Panchagarh-Banglabandha section, and one of them were finalised at today's meeting," a BR official said.

Now, the BR will appoint a consultant to prepare a detailed design, tender documents and a Development Project Proposal (DPP), he said, adding that

they hope to complete these works within this fiscal year.

"Once approved, it would take two years to implement the project," the official said wishing not be named. Asked about cost of the proposed project, he said, "That can be learned after completion of the detailed design."

Although, the government formally opened the Bangladesh land port in May, 2004, Bangladesh-Nepal transit through Banglabandha was introduced in September, 1997.

Trade between Bangladesh-India through the Banglabandha-Phulbari (in Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal) border began in January 2011.

The port is being used for goods transported among Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Bhutan.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in November 2015 directed the Railway Ministry to build rail line between Panchagarh and Banglabandha.

She gave the directives after a report was placed before the cabinet saying that operation of heavy trucks and trailers from the port to other parts of the country was causing damage to roads, specially the Mahananda Bridge, according to the project document.

About 5,812 passengers have left