

BANGLADESH
UPDATE



813
New cases in 24hrs



5,25,723
Total cases



7,849
Deaths



4,70,405
Recoveries

GLOBAL
UPDATE



1,991,289
Deaths



92,977,768
Total cases

Work for people’s development

PM Hasina urges all

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged all to work from their respective positions alongside the government for the socio-economic development of the people to build the country as Golden Bengal.

“Not only the government but also everyone else has to carry out some responsibilities from their respective positions for socio-economic development, find out those who are poor or homeless or in trouble in their own localities,” she said.

The PM was addressing a programme marking the launch of a programme on sending allowances and stipend money directly to different vulnerable groups under the social safety net using mobile financial services.

The progamme was held at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre. The premier joined the event virtually from the Gono Bhaban

From now on, the allowances for elderly people, widows, women abandoned by their husbands and differently abled people as well as the stipend money for differently abled students would reach the mobile accounts (Nagad and bKash accounts) of the beneficiaries.

Hasina said if the vulnerable people are identified, the government will surely provide them with accommodation and other support.

“If we work together, we will definitely be able to make the country Golden Bengal as dreamt by the Father of the Nation.”

She said the government has been working with a plan to make Bangladesh a hunger and poverty-free country.

The PM said her government wants to celebrate the golden jubilee of

the country’s independence and the Mujib Borsho, the birth centenary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, through ensuring housing for all homeless people as well as bringing cent percent people under electricity coverage.

Talking about the social safety net, Hasina said her government has long been working to send the allowances directly to the beneficiaries, removing all middlemen in the disbursement process.

She thanked the social welfare ministry, and other agencies concerned, including the ICT Division, the finance ministry and banks for the introduction of the government-to-person (G-2-P) disbursement system of the social safety allowances.

“The allowances will be sent through Nagad and bKash services. All [the beneficiaries] will be benefited from the system.”

The PM said the beneficiaries should not depend on the social safety allowances only, rather the capable persons should also work for their livelihoods.

The allowances are given so that any individual doesn’t think himself “worthless”, she said.

Hasina said her government formed in 1996 had taken an initiative to bring elderly people, widows, husband-abandoned women and freedom fighters under the coverage of allowances.

Later, the PM exchanged views with some beneficiaries and local stakeholders at the offices of deputy commissioners of Chaddpur, Pirojpur, Lalmonirhat and Netrakona through video conferences.

Social Welfare Minister Nuruzzaman Ahmed also spoke at the virtual function, moderated by PM’s Principal Secretary Ahmad Kaikaus.

Rab’s DERADICALISATION PROGRAMME 9 militants surrender to return to normal life

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nine militants, who had previously severed ties with their families and the society, have decided to return to normal lives, thanks to counselling they received under Rab supervision for between two and six months.

They surrendered to Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal and Inspector General of Police Benazir Ahmed yesterday.

As part of a new initiative, Rab deradicalised them and reintegrated them into the society.

The nine people include engineer Shawon Muntaha Ibne Shawkat, 34, a young man from Sylhet, and his wife Nusrat Ali Juhri, 29, a doctor.

They surrendered at a programme at the Azad Memorial Hall at Rab Headquarters in the capital.

The seven others are Abida Jannat Asma alias Tarad alias Ramisa, 18, and Abdur Rahman Soheli, 28, of Cumilla, Mohammad Hossain alias Hasan Gazi, 23, and Mohammad Saifullah, 37, of Chandpur, Abdullah Al Mamun, 26, and Saidur Rahman, 22, of Chuadanga, and Saiful Islam, 31, of Jhenaidah.

They were active members of Jama’atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), Neo JMB and Ansarullah Bangla Team.

Abida Jannat Asma said, “I passed the SSC exams in 2018 and got married. After that I got involved in militancy with my husband. I was alone and took the wrong path.”

She went abroad with her husband to study and returned without informing her family. She

then became a member of a militant group, she said.

An initiative is being taken for her to complete her studies.

Asma’s mother Shahida Sultana said, “My daughter has come back to me today. We have loved Asma since she was born. We found out that Asma, who ran away and got married, became a militant... Being a mother of a militant is very difficult. I would request all parents to take care of their children.”

The Rab initiative titled Deradicalisation and Rehabilitation Programme aims to make misguided young people shun the paths of violence and extremism.

Rab officials said different countries have similar programmes, adding that deradicalisation is possible until the extremists cross a certain line. Otherwise, legal action is inevitable.

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan said, “Bangladesh doesn’t patronise militancy and we never said that we have eradicated militancy, but we say that we have been able to contain militancy.”

“Many people in different countries have asked me how we tackle militancy. In reply, we said the people of the country do not support militancy. That’s why we have been able to control militancy.”

Bangladesh is now becoming a role model in controlling militancy and chances have been given for the militants and extremists to return to normal life.

“Besides, we have also taken steps for their rehabilitation.”

Violence claims

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Around four hours later, their rival Babu’s body was found in a river.

Babu’s family members said he left his house around 10:00pm and a few minutes later, he called a family member and said he was planning to go into hiding.

He then asked his family members not to open the doors to anyone.

Around 1:30am yesterday, one of his relatives found his body in the Kumar river in Debtala area.

Family members alleged that Baltu’s supporters killed Babu.

However, some local AL men claimed that Babu might have died of cardiac arrest because he panicked after hearing about Baltu’s death.

Jahangir Alam, officer-in-charge at Shaikhupa Police Station, said no case had been filed as of 6:00pm yesterday, said the OC.

The elections to Shaikhupa municipality will be held on January 16.

In Barguna municipality, at least three people were injured when supporters of a mayor aspirant attacked the followers of the AL nominee early yesterday.

Police and locals said district Jubo League President Kamrul Ahsan Maharaj was running for mayor with the AL ticket and his opponent was expelled general secretary of Barguna Sadar AL Shahadat Hossain.

Around 12:10am yesterday, Shahadat’s supporters attacked Maharaj in the Stadium area, leaving three people injured.

Police arrested three people after a case was filed, said Shahidul Islam, OC of Barguna Police Station.

Shahadat refuted the allegation, saying, “Three of my supporters were arrested on false charges.”

Elections to Barguna municipality will be held on January 30.

[Our correspondents in Jhenaidah and Patuakhali contributed to the report]



Trawlers, used for catching fish in the sea, is being made in Rasulpur area of Barisal city. Each of these boats could be as high as 50 feet and it takes months to build one. The photo was taken a couple of days ago.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

Beware of bird strike!

FROM PAGE 1

landing -- airport authorities across the globe use modern and conventional technologies to drive the birds away from key aviation installations.

The HSIa also has such equipment but they are barely functional.

The two automated bird deterrents installed on the runway have remained out of service for more than seven years. One of them was to drive the birds away by using laser beams while the other sends sound signals to deter the birds, airport sources said.

Besides, four out of six guns meant to scare the birds away from the busiest international airport of the country have also been out of order for the past six years.

Pilots and aviation experts termed the situation unacceptable and blamed the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) for its sheer negligence.

“The CAAB is earning over a thousand crore taka every year, but it’s a shame that they could not afford a few guns or modern deterrents to ensure safety of aircrafts from bird strikes,” a Bangladesh Biman pilot told this correspondent.

“The price of CAAB slacking off has been heavy,” he fumed.

Wishing anonymity, the pilot said an aircraft of Biman narrowly escaped a major accident in 2019, adding that he was forced to land a few minutes after take-off after he felt a bird hit one of the two engines.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, aviation expert Kazi Wahidul said, “Bird strike is a serious issue at the Dhaka airport. We have tried to raise it several times before the Civil Aviation Authority.”

“Guns of primitive ages will not work to deter birds. CAAB should immediately take urgent measures to install modern equipment to address the bird strike issue.”

M Mokabbir Hossain, Biman’s CEO and managing director, said at least 20 of our aircrafts suffered bird strikes at the HSIa in 2019.

Other airlines have also suffered similar accidents, sources say, but the HSIa authorities could not give an exact number.

According to pilots, costly repairs are required if birds strike the engine, the fuselage below the wings or the windshield.

The annual cost that commercial planes bear worldwide due to bird strikes is estimated around \$1.2 billion, according to information

available on aviation websites.

HSIA PRONE TO BIRD STRIKE

Sources of different airlines said the HSIa has several water bodies and wetlands in and around it, which is inviting to birds. Besides, the risk of bird strikes increases in winter when migratory birds flock the area, they said.

HSIA sources said there is a landfill of the Dhaka North City Corporation at the north end of the airport and birds are usually seen in the sky surrounding it in search of food. Planes usually fly over that exact area during final approach.

Statistics of the International Civil Aviation Organisation show that 90 percent of bird strikes happen around airports.

The majority of bird strikes are caused by unknown species while perching birds account for 22 percent, shore birds for 11 percent, raptors -- such as hawks, eagles and vultures -- for nine percent, pigeons, doves and swifts another nine percent, and ducks, geese and swans account for just two percent, according to the website of a company which works on airport bird control.

In the first meeting of the Asia Pacific wildlife hazard management working group held in Thailand in 2019, Bangladesh presented its experience on the establishment of a National Civil Aviation Wildlife Control Committee.

It was said in the presentation that bird strikes on and around airports in the country were a common phenomenon and its continued rise had put airport operators to look for effective mitigation measures.

According to different online reports, incidents of bird strikes at different airports in South Asia, including in India, has increased in recent years.

WHAT AUTHORITIES SAY

“We have six guns to deter birds,” Group Captain AHM Touhid-ul Ahsan, director of the HSIa, said recently. “But four of them have been out of service for long and have been rendered irreparable. Our bird shooters deter birds with the two other guns.”

Two shooters move from one corner to another of the airport when they see birds in the sky, he added.

Touhid said bird strike is a global problem, adding that the process of buying new guns was underway. “We have applied to the home ministry for a licence in June [last year].”

He also admitted that the two

automated deterrents have been out of order “for a long time”.

“We have started the process to purchase the modern Bird Monitoring and Control System to automatically detect and deter birds at the airport,” said Touhid.

Asked whether the absence of any automated device and shortage of guns pose serious risks to aircraft operating at the HSIa, Touhid said, “Birds do not fly around the runway in flocks. When one or two birds fly individually, bird shooters rush to deter them.”

“The shooters also work in coordination with the airport control tower. Sometimes birds are killed and sometimes they are deflected with shots in the air.”

Sources with knowledge of how it works said the sound of gunshot often does not work at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport as birds of the area have become used to it.

Mokabbir Hossain of Biman said they have been informing CAAB about the matter.

“When you follow one specific method to drive away birds, it does not work after some days as birds usually adapt to it. Therefore, there should be multiple methods to get effective results,” he said.

Aviation experts said CAAB should also take measures to encourage birds to seek alternative nesting and feeding grounds by applying a number of methods, which include removing food sources such as seed-bearing plants, food sources for the insects that birds eat, covering ponds with netting to prevent birds from landing and clearing bushes and trees that offer attractive nesting sites.

Air Commodore Md Khalid Hossain, member (operations & planning) at the CAAB, told this correspondent recently that they were trying to find a modern and better approach to resolve the problem.

“A committee is working to finalise tender specifications for procuring a Bird Monitoring and Control System. We will go for bidding very soon after getting the report from the committee,” he said.

Asked why the CAAB was not repairing the guns and other existing equipment to deter birds, he said they were facing “various difficulties” including trouble with the agencies that supply the equipment.

“To be very honest, the existing system was not very effective,” he added.

‘No one’

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-- of Andrew Johnson in 1868, Bill Clinton in 1999 and Trump last year -- lasted 83 days, 37 days, and 21 days respectively.

McConnell, the most powerful Republican in Congress, has said he would not reconvene the chamber, currently in recess, before its scheduled resumption January 19, one day before the inauguration.

But the chamber’s top Democrat, Chuck Schumer, stressed that McConnell could begin a trial “immediately” if he chose to reconvene for an emergency session. If not, the process could launch after Biden’s inauguration.

“But make no mistake, there will be an impeachment trial in the United States Senate,” Schumer said in a statement.

“There will be a vote on convicting the president for high crimes and misdemeanors, and if the president is convicted, there will be a vote on barring him from running again.”

Schumer -- who is on track to become the majority leader once two new Democratic senators are sworn in and Biden takes office -- said Trump will face trial “for his role in inciting the violent insurrection at the US Capitol on January 6th and attempting to overturn a free and fair election.”

Trump “has deservedly become the first president in American history to bear the stain of impeachment twice over,” Schumer said.

AVOID VIOLENCE

Holed up in the White House, Trump issued a videotaped address in which he made no mention of impeachment.

Instead, the comments focused on an appeal for Americans to be “united,” avoid violence and “overcome the passions of the moment.”

“There is never a justification for violence. No excuses, no exceptions: America is a nation of laws. Those who engaged in the attacks last week will be brought to justice,” he said.

Biden, who inherits the pandemic and an ailing economy amid many other woes, welcomed Wednesday’s decision but urged the Senate to address his priorities such as approving cabinet nominations while also dealing with Trump’s trial.

“I hope that the Senate leadership will find a way to deal with their Constitutional responsibilities on impeachment while also working on the other urgent business of this nation,” Biden said in a statement.

Despite Trump’s denunciation of violence following the mayhem inflicted by his followers when they invaded Congress, fears of unrest are high.

Armed National Guards deployed across the capital, and downtown Washington streets were blocked to traffic.

In the Capitol building, guards in military fatigues and carrying assault rifles assembled, some of them grabbing naps early Wednesday under the ornate statues and historical paintings.

Pelosi also announced fines of up to \$10,000 for lawmakers who refuse to go through newly installed metal detectors after several Republican lawmakers pushed past police even after setting them off.

Tk 1,000cr

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The four could not be reached for comments.

The ACC has so far arrested two people -- Abontika Boral and Shankha Bepari -- for abetting Halder in amassing illegal wealth.

On January 8 last year, the graft watchdog filed a case against Halder over amassing about Tk 275 crore beyond his known sources of income.

Halder allegedly laundered over Tk 10,000 crore from four non-bank financial institutions (NBFIs) abroad.

In connection with the graft case, the ACC seized Halder’s two flats and six acres of land following a court order in this regard last month.

According to the case statement, Halder invested about Tk 123.54 crore in Lipro International. He purchased 589 decimals of land for Tk 1 crore in Mymensingh.

During the enquiry, the ACC found that he invested about Tk 67.35 crore in eight companies.

Besides, documents show that Halder has moveable properties worth Tk 32.25 crore. The total amount of his moveable property stands at Tk 99.61 crore, which he amassed directly and indirectly using others’ names, reads the FIR.

The graft watchdog found that Halder, now staying abroad, has a legal income of about Tk 12.48 crore against his total wealth, including moveable and immovable properties, of Tk 287.39 crore.

“He has amassed Tk 274.91 crore beyond his known sources of income,” it said.

Halder had joined NRB Global Bank as its managing director in 2015. Several enquiries over embezzlement of crores of taka from NBFIs by Halder are now pending with the ACC.

People get stuck

FROM PAGE 1

of vehicles use the highway every day.

Ashikur Rahman, a private employee who commutes between the capital and Savar every day, said his travel time has doubled since Wednesday.

Golam Mostofa, officer-in-charge of Savar Highway Police Station, told The Daily Star that police teams were trying to clear the road as fast as possible.

6 airlines ask for permit to operate in Bangladesh

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Korean Air are flag carriers of Indonesia South Korea.

Zia Ul Kabir yesterday told The Daily Star that CAAB will meet officials from Iraq and Iran.

“We have sought necessary documents from those airlines and we will verify them later. Besides, officials of CAAB will also visit those countries for audit purposes. Frequency of flights will be fixed before giving final permission,” he also said.

“Seeking permission to operate flights is definitely good news for the country,” Zia Ul Kabir also said.

“We have a huge market of air passengers.”

Iraq and Iran have good reasons to operate flights from Dhaka because of the large number of Bangladeshis living there, he said, adding that Indonesia has become a lucrative destination for holiday makers.

South Korea’s interest might be linked to cargo operations.

CAAB officials said foreign airlines

must have taken note of the country’s economy as well as the improved security at the airport.

“When other countries are seeing a decline in traffic, Bangladesh is seeing new airlines come. It is good news for the country’s aviation industry,” aviation expert Kazi Wahidul Alam told The Daily Star.

The International Air Transport Association projected that passenger growth would be 2.0 per cent globally by 2036, but it would be 3.5 per cent for Bangladesh.