

BANGLADESH UPDATE



584

New cases in 24hrs



5,30,271

Total cases



7,966

Deaths



4,75,074

Recoveries



2,087,252

Deaths



97,483,187

Total cases

REMEMBERING Mujibur Rahman Dilu

Noted actor Mujibur Rahman Dilu is known for his performance in popular television drama serials like "Songsotok" and "Laal Matir Kalo Dhoa". The actor recently passed away due to multiple health complications. His close friend and confidante, famed director Nasiruddin Yousuff, takes a walk down memory lane and relives their journey together.

NASIRUDDIN YOUSUFF

We shared a very intimate and personal bond. I still remember those days when newly-married Mujibur Rahman Dilu came to my Paltan residence with his wife. We used to live in a bungalow beside popular actor Raisul Islam Asad's house. Within just a few days, they became a part of my family.

Also, many do not know but he was an amazing cook, and my mother used to love him wholeheartedly for his humility and simplicity. Glimpses of him rehearsing his roles and the smell of his delicious dishes are still fresh in my memory.

Words fall short when I intend to describe his acting skills. His performance in the play "Ami Gadhya Bolchi", where the artiste not only surprised everyone with method acting but also managed to present a beautiful adaptation of the drama, had made him the talk of the town at that time. I had the privilege to enjoy his stage performance multiple times.

His observation and the ability to absorb his character within his being is what has always amazed me. He went on to impress me with his performance when we worked together on many other projects, including the famed BTV drama serial "Laal Matir Kalo Dhoa", originally written by Selim Al Deen.

We were both freedom fighters and



as I was a commander, he honoured and abided by me a lot. His patriotic conscience and love for art have been his driving force throughout his active years. He was never afraid to take up any work and his honestly and undaunted efforts to excel is what makes him unique.

Alongside acting, he served at Hotel Purbani and was also posted in Dubai for a while. However, that did not keep him from pursuing his passion for theatre. He was also the coordinator of the children's organisation Tunituni. We had arranged a big event on the 10th anniversary of this organisation where we had also invited foreign delegates from India. He balanced both sides perfectly and that's what I admire about him.

Dilu's punctuality was unparalleled. His sense of commitment and cultural attributes contributed to making every play or drama a rather memorable one.

The masses still remember him as Maalu from "Songsotok" and his flawless performance in the film "Agami" where he shared the screen with legendary actors Pijush Banerjee, Aly Zaker and Rowshan. Dilu believed it is a great privilege for any artiste to live through his work. Today, both Aly Zaker and Dilu rest in peace but their legacy lives on. Every time I walk by a stage or start rolling a camera, Dilu will accompany me in my heart.

'ATTACKS' ON FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Amnesty Int'l voices concern

Urges govt to release cartoonist Kishore, writer Mushtaq

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Amnesty International yesterday expressed deep concern over the recent arbitrary detention and other forms of harassment of artists who are facing increasing attacks on their right to freedom of expression in Bangladesh.

In a statement, the rights watchdog called on the Bangladesh authorities to immediately and unconditionally release all artists unlawfully detained, drop the charges against them, and guarantee people's right to freedom of artistic expression and creativity, as enshrined in domestic and international laws.

Amnesty called on the authorities to immediately and unconditionally release cartoonist Ahmed Kabir Kishore and writer Mushtaq Ahmed since they have been detained solely for the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of expression, and drop all charges against film director Anonno Mamun, actor Shaheen Mridha, folk singer Rita Dewan, cartoonist Kishore, and writer Mushtaq.

It also called on the authorities to urgently repeal the Digital Security Act 2018 or substantially amend its repressive provisions.

HC summons 280 defaulters

FROM PAGE 1
non-banking financial institution, of the loan defaulters.

Speaking to The Daily Star, PLFS's lawyer Mejbahur Rahman said the process of liquidation of the company was underway.

In this situation, the HC's company bench had sought the list of the loan defaulters and accordingly, the list was submitted to the bench.

The 280 individuals took loans amounting Tk 1,655 crore. The loan amounts ranged from Tk 5 lakh to over Tk 200 crore, said Mejbahur.

After examining the list, the HC bench yesterday issued show cause notices on the 280 loan defaulters and summoned them to appear before it on February 23, he added.

Meanwhile, another HC bench yesterday sought details, including names, addresses and status of the Bangladesh Bank officials who were in charge of overseeing financial institutions and money laundering issues from 2008 to 2020.

The bench of Justice Md Nazrul Islam Talukder and Justice Mohi Uddin Shamim passed the order after holding hearing on a suo moto (voluntary) rule issued in this regard.

The court also asked the central bank governor and other officials concerned to inquire if the then officials were responsible for the bankruptcy of the country's certain financial institutions and to submit reports to it on February 15.

The bench rejected a petition, filed by Md Asaduzzaman Khan, provisional liquidator of the PLFS and also the deputy general manager of the central

bank, to become a party in the case.

Lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan appeared for the Anti-Corruption Commission, while Deputy Attorney General AKM Amin Uddin Manik represented the state and lawyer Khan Mohammad Shameem Aziz appeared for the central bank.

Issuing the suo moto rule, the HC bench on November 19 last year wanted to know from the respondents what steps were taken to bring home Proshanta Kumar Halder, known as PK Halder, from abroad in connection with a money laundering case. **LAWYER, DAUGHTER PLACED ON REMAND**
In another development, the Senior Special Judge's Court in Dhaka yesterday placed a lawyer and his daughter on three-day remand each in a graft case filed against PK Halder, also former NRB Global Bank managing director.

Judge KM Emrul Kayesh placed Sukumar Mridha and his daughter Anindita Mridha on remand a few hours after they were arrested.

ACC Deputy Director Salah Uddin, also the investigation officer of the case, quizzed the duo for about three hours.

According to ACC sources, the two helped Halder amass illegal wealth.

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

Talking to journalists yesterday, Sukumar claimed that he was not involved in any misappropriation. "He [PK Halder] is only my client," he said.



Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen, left, and Health Minister Zahid Maleque receive a box containing Covid-19 vaccine from Indian High Commissioner Vikram Doraiswami, right, at a ceremony at the capital's state guest house Padma. India handed 20 lakh doses of Oxford-AstraZeneca's vaccine, manufactured by Serum Institute of India, to Bangladesh as a gift at the event.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Vaccination plan gets a boost

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"I'm thanking Prime Minister Narendra Modi for sending the vaccine as a gift," she said, addressing an event virtually. She also said the procured vaccine would arrive as planned.

The government has prepared a list of groups that would be prioritised during the first phase when 1.5 crore people would be inoculated. The campaign is likely to launch at over 300 centres across the capital.

The government is set to launch today an awareness campaign on vaccination. **'GOODWILL GESTURE'**
Officials said India gifted Bangladesh 20 lakh doses of the vaccine in a goodwill gesture, which can be seen as another step in further cementing the strong friendship between the two countries.

A chartered plane of Air India carried the vaccine, branded Covishield, from Mumbai Airport to Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport. The plane arrived shortly after 11:00am.

The doses were transported in cold boxes from the airport to a vaccine storage facility in Teigaon under the supervision of officials from the Directorate General of Health Services and the Directorate General of Drug Administration.

Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh, Vikram Doraiswami, formally handed the shipment to Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen and Health Minister Zahid Maleque at a ceremony on the premises of the state guesthouse Padma around 1:30pm.

The world is struggling to tackle the coronavirus pandemic and only a few countries have begun vaccination programmes.

The confirmed Covid-19 death toll in Bangladesh reached 7,966, while the number of detected infections was 5,30,271 as of yesterday.

A video conference for Saarc leaders was organised on March 15 last year at the initiative of the Indian PM. There, Hasina called for collaboration through utilisation of collective capacity, expertise and resources. The Saarc Covid-19 Emergency Fund was set up

Govt launches vaccine awareness campaign

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first shot of the Covid-19 vaccine in the country.

Prof Khurshid said the DGHS has already produced a documentary to make people aware of the vaccination and that will be aired soon, adding that a vaccine bulletin will also be aired regularly to remove any confusion.

"Every vaccine has some side effects. So, side effect for this vaccine is normal. That's why this time vaccines will be administered only in hospitals. After vaccination, every person has to wait for 15 minutes. If there is any side effect it will be addressed immediately," said the health DG.

Institute of Epidemiology Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) consultant Mushtaq Hussain said there will be newspaper advertisements, television scrolls, small documentaries, posters and brochures to reach out to the masses.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has already termed overabundance of information and the rapid spread of misleading or fabricated news, images, and videos as an "infodemic".

"We're not just battling the virus," said WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus on August 25 last year. "We're also battling trolls and conspiracy theorists that push misinformation and undermine the outbreak response."

In that context, public awareness

soon after that.

Addressing the handover ceremony yesterday, Doraiswami said the tranche of the vaccine was part of India's commitment at the highest level to its Neighbourhood First Policy.

"Together, India and Bangladesh, we will be able to fight the disease most effectively when we cooperate," he said.

Bangladesh received the vaccine shots four days after vaccination was launched in India on Saturday. This is among the fastest deliveries of vaccines that India has planned for anybody primarily because of the importance of ensuring that its friends receive immunity along with the Indians, he noted.

On Wednesday, India delivered the consignments of 1,50,000 doses of Covishield vaccines to Bhutan, 100,000 doses to the Maldives, and one million to Nepal yesterday.

Doraiswami said they hoped Bangladesh could kickstart the vaccination with this tranche of vaccine that would help improve immunity and resistance, and wished a good health of all Bangladeshis.

The foreign minister, the health minister and State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam expressed gratitude to the Indian PM and Indian people for the gift.

"Today is a historic day," Momen said, adding that India fought a war against Pakistan, helping Bangladesh achieve its independence in 1971, and has now gifted 2 million vaccine doses during the difficult times stemmed from the coronavirus pandemic.

The gift from India is also significant as Bangladesh celebrates Mujib Borsho, marking its 50th anniversary of independence, and 50 years of diplomatic relations between the two nations, he said.

Momen said Bangladesh was one of the countries which are beginning vaccination early. He claimed that Bangladesh had been number one in South Asia in successfully tackling the pandemic both in health and economy-wise.

Shahriar Alam said the relations

between the two countries would improve further, and this message had been delivered to the people of Bangladesh and India through the gift in this difficult time.

Zahid Maleque said three crore more shots from Serum Institute of India, which is manufacturing the vaccine, would be arriving in Bangladesh in six months under a contract between the SII, Beximco Pharmaceuticals and the Bangladesh government.

He requested India to make sure that the 3 crore doses are delivered smoothly.

"We are supposed to get 50 lakh vaccines on January 25 or 26, but we can let you know the final date only after the flight schedule is confirmed," Maleque said.

He said the government's plan was almost final on starting the vaccination programme.

"We hope in the next six to seven days, we will conduct a trial. Prime Minister Hasina will let us know the date. She will join the inauguration through videoconference," the health minister said.

He called upon all not to do politics over vaccine, and not to spread any rumour on the vaccine import, vaccination and any possible side effects.

"It is a life-saving drug. We would call upon all not to confuse people. Those who go for conspiracy and politics with human life are not good people... we are saving lives, tackling Covid," he said.

The minister said the national committee on Covid-19 vaccine has prepared a rigorous plan, which is expected to be effective.

Bangladesh has a lot of experience in immunisation programme, and has eliminated a number of diseases, including polio and tetanus, through vaccination. Every year, crores of children are vaccinated in the country.

"We hope people are aware of it. They know vaccines might have some light side reactions. AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccine is a good one. It has no serious side reactions. If there is, the government will provide all treatment."

PADMA BRIDGE

PM does not want it to be named after her

2 AL MPs proposed it in JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday disapproved two lawmakers' proposal to name the under-construction Padma bridge after her for her contributions to the country's development and progress.

She expressed her disapproval by waving her hand and shaking her head while two ruling Awami League MPs placed their proposal before parliament in this regard.

Lawmakers Pankaj Debnath and Mohammad Iqbal Hossain placed the proposal while taking part in the discussion on thanksgiving motion on the president's speech in the House.

"I want to propose that Padma bridge should be named after our prime minister who is the symbol of development and initiative," Iqbal said.

"The prime minister is a modest
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ACC arrests land officer over graft in dev work

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chattogram

The Anti-Corruption Commission yesterday arrested a union-level deputy assistant land officer after he was found making a fortune out of land acquisitions for the government's development work in Cox's Bazar's Moheshkhali upazila.

After months of investigation, the ACC arrested Joyal Abedin, deputy assistant land officer of the upazila's Kalamarchora union, from the port city's GEC circle in the afternoon. He was sent to jail.

Mohammad Sarif Uddin, deputy assistant officer of ACC Chattogram Integrated Office-02, told The Daily Star that Joyal's name appeared when he opened investigation into the irregularities in land acquisition process in February last year.

Sarif said Joyal had deposit schemes worth crores in the name of his wife, brother, sister-in-law and himself.

He also bought 20 decimal land worth Tk 2 crore at a prime location near Cox's Bazar Medical College. He was also the owner of a four-storey building at Peskar para of Cox's Bazar town.

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3 killed, 4 injured in Bandarban road crash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Three people were killed and four others critically injured as a jeep, popularly known as Chander Gari, fell into a ditch in Bandarban's Thanchi upazila yesterday.

Officer-in-charge of Thanchi police station Saifuddin Anwar said the vehicle plunged into a ditch around 10:00am after losing control leaving the three people killed on the spot and four others critically injured.

The dead were identified as Md Hossain, 60, of Cox's Bazar's Chakaria area, Payel Bawm, 27, of Baklai area, and Ashraf Ali, 50, of Chattogram's Bazalia area, he said, adding that the vehicle was headed for Thanchi from Baklai.

The injured were taken to Bandarban Sadar hospital, the OC said.

16 more die, 584 test positive for Covid in a day

Bss, Dhaka

Bangladesh recorded 16 coronavirus deaths and 584 fresh cases overnight.

The recovery count rose to 475,074 after another 602 patients were discharged from the hospitals during the period, a Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) press release read yesterday.

"Sixteen more Covid-19 patients died in the last 24 hours, increasing the death toll from the pandemic to 7,966," the release read.

It said the tally of infections has surged to 530,271 as 584 new cases were confirmed in those 24 hours.

A total of 14,761 samples were tested at 200 authorised laboratories across the country during the time.

Of the total sample tests in the past 24 hours, 3.96 percent tested positive, while 15.08 percent cases were detected from the total tests conducted so far, the release added.

Among the total infections, 89.59 percent patients have recovered, while 1.50 percent died so far since the first Covid-19 positive cases were reported in the country on March 8.

PM greets Joe Biden

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Paris Climate Agreement.

"You know that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is the president of Climate Vulnerable Forum. We thanked Joe Biden especially," Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen told reporters after the handover ceremony of India's vaccine doses as gift at the State Guest House Padma yesterday, reports UNB.

Momen said he was very happy to see Biden as the US president.

In a statement, the foreign ministry later said Bangladesh has welcomed new US President Joe Biden's important announcement on Wednesday to re-

enter the Paris Climate Agreement.

"Bangladesh also appreciates President Biden's promise to put the United States on a track to net-zero emissions by 2050 and his call to reestablish the US as global climate leader," it said.

On June 1, 2017, the then US president Donald Trump announced that his country would exit the Paris accord and re-enter only on terms that are "fair to the United States".

Bangladesh, as the current president of the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF) and the Vulnerable Twenty Group (V20), plays a leading role in climate discourses and focuses on the urgent

need to strengthen climate action and adaptation efforts by enhancing nationally determined contributions, the ministry said.

It said Bangladesh hopes that US's re-joining the global climate accord and re-prioritisation of climate change issues would encourage other leading emitters to reduce global emissions and to make investment in clean energy.

"On re-entering the Paris Agreement, the US government also acknowledged that the Paris Agreement created an unprecedented framework for global action to avoid planetary warming and to build global resilience."