

BANGLADESH UPDATE



619
New cases in 24hrs



5,30,890
Total cases



7,981
Deaths



4,75,561
Recoveries



2,107,768
Deaths



98,426,453
Total cases

ROHINGYA REPATRIATION

Committed to starting it in line with 2017 deal

Myanmar minister tells Bangladesh FM

UNB, Dhaka

Myanmar has said it is committed to beginning the Rohingya repatriation as per the bilateral agreement signed with Bangladesh in 2017.

International Cooperation Affairs Minister Kyaw Tin conveyed this message to Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen in a recent letter.

The Myanmar minister also said his country is committed to ensuring peaceful relations with all neighbours, including Bangladesh, and resolving any problems peacefully.

Kyaw Tin said they want to resolve any bilateral issues with neighbours through mutual partnership.

He hoped to begin the repatriation of Rohingyas to Myanmar soon through the tripartite talks held between Bangladesh, Myanmar and China on January 19.

The Myanmar minister agreed with Momen that the countries need solidarity and mutual cooperation in facing the unprecedented challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

He mentioned that his country took back Rohingyas in 1978 and 1992 through mutual discussions.

Kyaw Tin wished peace and prosperity for the people of Bangladesh and good health of Momen.

He thanked the Bangladesh foreign

minister for writing to him on January 1.

Kyaw Tin and Momen served as permanent representative in the UN for their respective countries and they developed an intimacy at that time, said the Bangladesh foreign minister.

Earlier, Momen had said Bangladesh has handed over a list of 840,000 Rohingyas to Myanmar for verification.

"Myanmar has verified a very few people. They're very slow. They verified only 42,000 people [5 percent]. There is a serious lack of seriousness," said the foreign minister.

More than three years ago, Myanmar's soldiers "targeted, killed, and raped" Rohingyas and burned their villages, as the United Nations, Refugees International, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the US State Department itself, and many others have documented.

Over 800,000 Rohingyas fled the "genocidal violence". Bangladesh is now hosting over 1.1 million Rohingyas.

Bangladesh and Myanmar had signed the repatriation deal on November 23, 2017. They then signed a document on "Physical Arrangement", which was supposed to facilitate the return of Rohingyas to their homeland.

But repatriation attempts failed twice in November 2018 and August 2019 -- clearly amid Rohingyas' "lack of trust" in the Myanmar government.



Two people, along with a child, ride a motorcycle without wearing crash helmets in the capital's New Market area, putting themselves in harm's way. The photo was taken on Thursday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Race against time

FROM PAGE 1

purchased another three crore doses from the Serum Institute of India. Fifty lakh shots are expected to arrive on January 25.

The government plans to roll out the vaccines early next month.

Officials said health professionals were being trained for the inoculation campaign.

DGHS Director General Prof Abul Bashar Mohammad Khurshid Alam said they were ready to conduct the piloting and were waiting for the announcement of the inauguration date.

Asked about training health professionals and volunteers for the inoculation campaign, he told The Daily Star that they were being trained and that the training would be completed before the start of the vaccination.

Talking to this correspondent, several health officials said they were expecting that the piloting would start on January 27 or 28 depending on approval from the prime minister.

They also said that they were planning to launch the mass vaccination on February 8.

"Preparation is on and everything will be completed before the start of the inoculation campaign countrywide. As the vaccination will begin at Dhaka city and then will be introduced elsewhere, we will have enough time [to complete all preparations]," Dr Farid Hossain Mian, director (hospitals and clinics), told The Daily Star yesterday.

Each vaccination team will have six members -- two vaccinators and four volunteers.

"The vaccinators will be assigned from the nurses or Sub-Assistant

Community Medical Officers (SACMO) while respective officials of vaccination centres will recruit volunteers locally," Dr Farid said.

On Thursday, the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) held a national level training session for civil surgeons, deputy civil surgeons and other health officials who will train the volunteers across the country.

"They [the trainees] will now provide training at the district level. We are hopeful that we will be able to recruit volunteers before the training starts in the upcoming weeks," said Mohammad Ibrahim Titon, civil surgeon of Rajbari.

Asked about the list of frontline workers who will receive the jabs first, Dr Hirobo Kumar Roy, civil surgeon of Rangpur, told this paper on Thursday night, "The list is yet to be finalised. But we will complete it within a few days... we have time for this."

Asked whether they have sufficient human resources to form vaccination teams, he said, "There will be only one team in each vaccination centre and we have enough nurses and SACMO for this."

Training for district and upazila level trainers is scheduled to be held from January 20 to 24 while training for the first line supervisors and vaccinators in upazilas and city corporations is scheduled to happen from today to January 26.

Orientations of the volunteers at district, upazila and city corporation levels have been scheduled to be held on January 26 and 27.

VACCINATION INAUGURATION DATE NOT FINALISED

According to health officials, the piloting of the mass vaccination will

start with 20-25 health workers and other professionals.

The prime minister is expected to inaugurate the event virtually -- likely to be arranged at Kurmitola General Hospital in the capital.

During a visit to the hospital yesterday, this correspondent talked to several employees. They said they heard that the piloting would be inaugurated by the PM, but added that they were not asked to submit their names for the piloting.

No official comment was available on the issue.

On Wednesday Health Secretary Abdul Mannan said a day after the inauguration, 400 and 500 people would be given vaccine shots at Dhaka Medical College Hospital, Kurmitola General Hospital, Mugda Medical College Hospital and Kuwait-Bangladesh Friendship Government Hospital.

"We will observe the recipients for seven days," Mannan said, adding that there would be 300-330 vaccination centres across Dhaka city for the mass vaccination.

Dhaka district civil surgeon, Abu Hussain Md Moinul Ahsan, said, "We are working. Training of teams will end soon and we will be able to start the vaccination within days if we are asked," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

"As per the plan, the vaccination will continue slowly since the vaccine is new. So hopefully there will be no issues," he added.

Dr Shamsul Haque Mridha, a director at the DGHS, told this newspaper last night, "We have trained the trainers. Hopefully, they will complete training their teams on the vaccination by Sunday or Monday."

TRUMP IMPEACHMENT TRIAL US House to deliver charge to Senate on Monday

Rejects Republican push for time

REUTERS, WASHINGTON

The Democratic-controlled US House of Representatives will deliver an impeachment charge against former President Donald Trump to the Senate on Monday, rejecting Republican Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell's request for a delay.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, who displaced McConnell as the chamber's leader after Democrats won two Georgia runoff elections this month, announced the move on the Senate floor but did not say when Trump's second impeachment trial would begin.

"The House will deliver the article of impeachment to the Senate. The Senate will conduct a trial of the impeachment of Donald Trump. It will be a full trial. It will be a fair trial," Schumer said on the Senate floor on Friday.

That came the morning after McConnell asked the House to delay sending the charges until next Thursday, and to agree not to start the trial until mid-February to give Trump more time to prepare a defense against the charge that he incited insurrection by his followers who stormed the Capitol on Jan. 6.

"This impeachment began with an unprecedentedly fast and minimal process over in the House," McConnell said on Friday. "The sequel cannot be an insufficient Senate process that denies former President Trump his due process or damages the Senate or the presidency itself."

The moves come as Schumer and

McConnell are struggling to assert control in a 50-50 chamber where Democrats hold now hold a razor-thin majority thanks to Vice President Kamala Harris' tie-breaking vote.

The trial could distract from Democratic President Joe Biden's efforts to push an ambitious legislative agenda through Congress, including nearly \$2 trillion in fresh COVID-19 relief for Americans and U.S. businesses, as well as the need to confirm his Cabinet nominees.

Trump last week became the first president in US history to be impeached twice, and when the Senate convenes for his trial will be the first president to be tried after leaving office, for his alleged role in urging his supporters to storm the Capitol in an attack that left five dead.

Ten House Republicans joined Democrats on Jan. 13 in impeaching him. The support of at least 17 Senate Republicans would be needed to convict him; a separate vote would then be needed to ban him from running for office again.

Such a vote could signal that senior Republicans were eager to remove Trump as the de facto leader of their party; he has said he may seek to run again in 2024.

Trump's fate ultimately could depend on McConnell, whose position is likely to influence other Republican lawmakers. The Kentucky Republican said this week that the mob was "fed lies" and "provoked by the president and other powerful people."

Dominant Tigers seal series

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seven-wicket win in the second ODI against an inexperienced West Indies side at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday, clinching the three-match series 2-0 with a game left to play.

For the first time, Bangladesh bundled out the opposition below 150 for the second consecutive game in ODIs, courtesy of Mehedi Hasan Miraz's four-wicket haul. West Indies were shot out for 148 and the Tigers chased the target with 16.4 overs to spare.

Skipper Tamim scored his 48th ODI fifty while Shakib AL Hasan remained unbeaten on 43 off 50 balls to guide the Tigers to a dominant win.

Shakib continued to make an impact in his second match back from an international ban as the champion all-rounder became the first player to score 2500 runs and pick up 100 wickets at a single venue during his unbeaten 43 knock yesterday.

Tamim on the other hand also reached a milestone -- becoming the first Bangladeshi batsman to score 1,000 ODI runs against the West Indies on his way to scoring a fifty.

With two wins, Bangladesh now have 20 points from two games in the ICC 2023 World Cup Super League qualifiers and stand in third position

in the table. It was also Bangladesh's seventh consecutive win against the West Indies in the 50-over format.

It was a rather sorry outing for the West Indies after skipper Jason Mohammed won the toss and elected to bat. It was left-arm seamer Mustafizur Rahman once again providing the early breakthrough when he squared up opener Sunil Ambris with a beautiful length delivery, which resulted in a catch at point.

Mehedi then joined the party and dismissed debutant opener Kjoorn Otley for 24 as the visitors kept losing wickets at regular intervals. West Indies were at one point struggling on 67 for six inside 24 overs.

Rovman Powell's 41-run knock helped the visitors go past the 100 mark while Nkrumah Bonner added 21 runs for the West Indies, before the innings folded in 43.4 overs.

Mehedi was the pick of the bowlers as the off-spinner registered his best bowling figures of four for 25 from 9.4 overs.

Shakib was once again instrumental with his left-arm spin, picking up two wickets for 30 runs from 10 overs.

Apart from Shakib, Mustafizur Rahman also bagged two and young pacer Hasan Mahmud took a wicket to complete a clinical bowling performance for Bangladesh.

Offering a new life to homeless

FROM PAGE 1

special initiative on the occasion of Mujib Borsho -- the birth centenary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

To implement the initiative, the government as of June last year made a list of about 2.93 lakh families which neither have their own land nor house, according to a handout of the government's Ashrayan-2 Project.

In the first phase, the government will give land ownership and houses to some 66,189 families.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is scheduled to inaugurate the handover ceremony via a video conference today.

One lakh more houses will be built by the end of February this year.

The Ashrayan-2 Project has been coordinating the initiative's implementation.

Mahbub Hossain, Ashrayan's project director, said the initiative is a unique one in the country.

He said each family will have the ownership of 2 decimals of land and a tin-roofed concrete house will be built on the land free of cost.

Each house comprises two rooms, a kitchen, a toilet, a balcony and a common space. The houses were built on khas land, he told journalists during a visit to a cluster of houses in Rugganj on Wednesday.

Building each house costs around Tk 1.71 lakh, he further said.

This correspondent, along with a group of journalists, recently visited at least two clusters of houses in Narayanganj and Kishoreganj, including the one in Rugganj, and talked to about a dozen people who became homeless due to various reasons such as river erosion.

They said having a house of their own will rekindle their hopes of overcoming various challenges and poverty.

Shetu Akhter, 35, a mother of two, said a house could save her about Tk 2,000 a month which the family would otherwise pay as house rent.

"We will have the opportunity to spend the saved money for children's education," said Shetu, whose husband drives a battery-run auto-rickshaw in Rugganj's Murapara.

Her family has been living in a rented house since Shetu got married. Nazma Begum, who lives in

Rugganj, said having a house of her own would mean she would not have to pay rent every month.

This money could be used for family expenses, she said, adding that her husband was unemployed currently and she earned about Tk 5,000 a month as a worker at a local spinning mill.

In Kishoreganj's Bajitpur, Momena, 45, lost her land, including her homestead, due to river erosion about two decades ago.

Initially, Momena and her husband had to endure severe hardship seeking refuge at neighbours' houses, none of whom would give them shelter for long.

Helpless, she even sought shelter at a local rice husking mill where she would work as a labourer.

Now, she dreams of a new life in a house of her own.

Momena said her one son and only daughter have separate families. Another son is unmarried and works at a local shoe factory.

Kishoreganj Deputy Commissioner Shamim Alam said of the 66,189 beneficiary families under the special initiative, some 616 families are listed in the district alone.

Rehabilitation of homeless people was arranged and land for them were selected following consent of the beneficiaries, he said, while addressing journalists at his office on Thursday.

Talking to reporters, Deputy Commissioner of Brahmanbaria Hayat-Ud-Dowlah Khan said the number of beneficiary families in the district is 1,091.

Officials and local public representatives were working tirelessly to make the effort a success, he said.

Ashrayan's Project Director Mahbub Hossain said the houses provided to the beneficiaries will boost their self-esteem and help them raise their children to benefit the nation in the long run.

He said the beneficiaries will be provided with basic facilities, including health, education, and utility services.

The beneficiaries' list was prepared with the help of DC and upazila nirbahi officer's offices and that elderly, widows, and persons with disabilities were given priority, said Mahbub.

Construction responsibility was

Obaidul Quader belongs to a razakar family

Says AL MP Ekramul on Facebook live

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

Ekramul Karim Chowdhury, Awami League lawmaker from Noakhali-4, has alleged that party General Secretary Obaidul Quader belongs to a razakar's family.

The lawmaker, also the general secretary of Noakhali district AL, came up with the allegation while speaking on Facebook Live from his verified Facebook account around midnight on Thursday.

"I will not talk about Mirza Quader. I will talk about Obaidul Quader. A man who belongs to a razakar's family has reached this level, but he cannot discipline his brother. I will talk on these issues within a few days. I will start with this if the district Awami League committee is not announced," Ekramul said in his 27-second Facebook Live message.

The footage, however, was removed from his Facebook account within a few minutes. But it later went viral on social media.

Talking to reporters yesterday, the lawmaker said though he removed the footage from his Facebook account, his statement against the AL general secretary's family was true and he spoke the truth.

"You will be able to know who were the razakars in his family if you, the media personnel, look into it," the MP said.

"MP Obaidul Quader is a freedom fighter. His younger brother Abdul Quader Mirza has been talking rubbish about Awami League leaders of different levels. But he [Obaidul Quader] cannot keep his brother under control. That's why I made such statements," Ekramul added.

Asked about the MP's allegation, Quader Mirza, also the mayor-elect of Basurhat Municipality, yesterday said, "He [Ekramul] has to provide proof about who is the razakar in our family. Otherwise, his trial would be held in people's court. If I am found guilty, my trial will be held."

He said his family and his father made significant contributions to the Liberation War. "Obaidul Quader was a frontline freedom fighter. Rather, members of Ekramul Chowdhury's family betrayed the party [Awami League] and its leaders time and again."

Quader Mirza said there were conspiracies going on against him and his family members as he spoke the truth. "I will continue speaking the truth until my death."

Meanwhile, Md Riaz Uddin, general secretary of Oshodia Union Jubo League in Noakhali Sadar upazila, on Thursday filed a petition with Noakhali Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court to record a defamation case against Quader Mirza.

But no action was taken in this regard that day as the magistrate was on leave, petitioner's lawyer Palash Chandra Shah said.

Also on Thursday, Companiganj upazila AL and its associated bodies brought out a procession and held a rally in the upazila town in the afternoon protesting the filing of a "false" case against Quader Mirza.

Supporters of Ekramul also brought out another procession in Majidi town early yesterday. They chanted slogans against Quader Mirza.

A tense situation was prevailing in Majidi and Companiganj following the protests.

15 more die from Covid, 619 infected in a day

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh's Covid-19 fatalities rose to 7,981 as the country's health authorities recorded 15 more coronavirus-related deaths in 24 hours till yesterday morning.

The Covid-19 caseload reached 530,890 with the detection of 619 new cases, said a handout from the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Bangladesh reported its first coronavirus cases on March 8 and the first death on March 18.

So far, 3,530,274 samples have been tested -- 14,924 in those 24 hours.

The DGHS handout said the daily detection rate was 4.17 percent while the overall rate is 15.04 percent.

Until yesterday morning, 475,561 patients -- 89.58 percent -- have recovered. "The mortality rate is 1.50 percent," the DGHS said.

UNSC fails to find common ground on Darfur

AFP, United Nations

The UN Security Council held an emergency meeting Thursday on recent deadly clashes in the Darfur region of Sudan, without agreeing on a joint declaration or a possible change of stance, diplomats said.

The meeting was held behind closed doors and had been requested by European members and the United States after inter-ethnic fighting earlier this week left more than 200 people dead.