

BANGLADESH
UPDATE



528

New cases in 24hrs



5,33,444

Total cases



8,072

Deaths



4,77,935

Recoveries

GLOBAL
UPDATE



2,177,674

Deaths



101,240,424

Total cases

Govt to launch technical edu TV

PM tells House; 5G for Teletalk in 2023

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will set up a dedicated television channel for technical education.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday told parliament that an initiative has been taken to set up Karigari Shiksha Television for the technical education sector.

She also said the government is considering reopening educational institutions while observing the spread of Covid-19.

Candidates of SSC and HSC exams will get priority when in-person classes resume and steps will be taken to bring as many students as possible to classes maintaining social distance, Hasina said while answering a lawmaker's query.

The PM's answer was tabled at the beginning of the day's sitting at the House.

She said giving assignments to students and submission of the same to teachers may continue as the process has proved to be effective.

The PM's comments come against the backdrop of the education ministry and primary and mass education ministry had instructed all schools and colleges to complete their reopening preparations by February 4.

Zakir Hossain, state minister for primary and mass education, on Sunday said, "We are planning to reopen primary schools on any day of February."

"Schools may reopen on the first or second week of February with the permission of the prime minister."

The government will decide when to reopen schools after analysing the situation and consulting with the National Technical Advisory Committee on Covid-19, Education Minister Dipu Moni told parliament on Sunday.

On March 17, the government closed all schools to contain the spread of coronavirus.

The closure, which led to cancellation of exams and left academic calendars in disarray, has recently been extended to January 30.

WORK ON TELETALK'S 5G IN PROGRESS

The prime minister today said state-owned mobile phone operator Teletalk is working on network expansion, upgradation and modernisation projects to provide quality voice and mobile broadband internet services in villages and remote areas.

A new project is underway regarding modernisation of Teletalk's core transmission network, aimed at preparations for offering 5G services in rural areas and others, she said while answering a query of a lawmaker.

Sheikh Hasina said the new project for expansion of Teletalk's network at village level and modernisation for offering 5G services is expected to be implemented by September 30, 2023.

Shahnaz Rahman

FROM PAGE 1

The NBR also named Mediaworld, Mediastar and Transcraft -- the three owning companies of The Daily Star, Prothom Alo, their printer Transcraft -- as the top tax paying firms in the print and electronic media category.

These three companies -- sister concerns of one of the largest Bangladeshi conglomerates Transcom Group -- are getting the recognition from the tax authority since fiscal year 2015-16, when the NBR expanded the list of the awardees to include various professions and areas.

The NBR began to honour the highest taxpayers since the fiscal 2010-11 initially in two categories



Mahfuz Anam



Matur Rahman

-- individuals and companies -- with the objective of motivating people to deposit due taxes.

The idea was to encourage compliance and bring more people in the tax net in a country where just over one percent of the population file returns regularly and tax avoidance is believed to be high.

Among journalists, Editor of Chattogram based daily Dainik Azadi MA Malek, Director and Head of News of Channel i Shykh Seraj and Editor-in-Chief of TV Today Monjurul Ahsan Bulbul have been named the highest taxpayers.

East West Media Group is another highest taxpayer in media category, according to the NBR notification.

A historic day

FROM PAGE 1

campaign. Of the South Asian countries, Bangladesh has the highest number of vaccines in hands -- 70 lakh doses -- after India.

The PM said Covid-19 emerged at a time when the country was moving fast on the path of development.

She thanked the doctors, nurses, other health-care workers, health ministry officials and civil administration, and law enforcement agencies for coming forward to fight the pandemic since its outbreak in the country on March 8 last year.

Praising their efforts, Hasina said, "Everybody has worked cordially. For this, I thank them all."

She also mentioned different initiatives of her government, including the announcement of financial stimulus packages.

She, however, turned critical about those who have a "negative attitude" towards any measures of the government.

She said though the vaccination programme has been taken following the protocols of the World Health Organization, some people are out to criticise the initiative.

Despite that, she said the government is ready to press on with vaccination as the criticism spurs it to work with further urgency in procuring the vaccine.

The PM said the government has signed a tripartite agreement to bring 3.40 crore doses of the vaccine developed by the University of Oxford and AstraZeneca, manufactured by Serum Institute of India (SII).

Of those, 50 lakh shots have already arrived and the rest will reach soon. The Indian government has also sent 20 lakh doses as gift, she said.

The prime minister thanked her Indian counterpart Narendra Modi in this regard.

INAUGURATING THE VACCINE

After Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina announced the inauguration, Runu Veronica Costa was the first to get vaccinated.

Four others who took the shot in the virtual presence of the prime minister include Dr Ahmed Lutfun Mobin, a physician of the hospital, Prof Dr Nasima Sultana, additional director general (admin) of the Director General of Health Services, Brig Gen M Imran Hamid, an official of Bangladesh Army, and Didarul Islam, a member of traffic police (Motijheel Zone).

Immediately afterwards, 21 more frontline Covid-19 fighters, including physicians, nurses, health workers, journalists and members of law enforcement agencies and army, were inoculated.

Each vaccine recipient was observed for a while at the observation room in the hospital.

None of them reported any adverse effects over the next two hours while this correspondent was present in front of the observation room.

"We have successfully concluded the inauguration today [yesterday]. None of the recipients reported any adverse effect," Brig Gen Jamil Ahmed, director of the hospital, told reporters.

At the event, Health Minister Zahid Maleque said 70 lakh doses of Covid-19 vaccines are currently available in the country. Bangladesh first received two million doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine from India as a gift and then received five more million doses from Serum Institute of India.

He said Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine is so far the safest in the world. Treatment facilities are available if any side effect is reported.

About whether high-ups of his office will be vaccinated, he said, "We will take the vaccine after we are able to vaccinate the people."

Lifelong AL activist 'denied' his vote

So-called helper casts his vote for him

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN, Ctg

"Why did you cast my vote? It's my right. Who are you?"

This was what Awami League activist Jasim Uddin asked a Chhatra League man who allegedly cast Jasim's vote using an electronic voting machine.

People present in the polling booth became awkward after the two men working for the same camp started yelling at each other during yesterday's Chattogram City Corporation election which was marred by allegations of voter fraud.

"I have spent my life working

for the Awami League. You should have asked me before pressing that button. Do you know me? I am the joint convener of the polling centre committee of Awami League nominee Rezaul," Jasim was seen saying in a video footage.

The incident happened yesterday at booth-2 at Bakalia Teachers' Training College around 10:00am.

Jasim Uddin is the joint convener of the polling centre operation committee of the Awami League.

"Why are you doing that? I was going to vote for Boat [AL symbol] but you pushed it without my permission," he was heard saying.



A broken electronic voting machine lying on the floor at Patharghata Girls' High School in Chattogram after the polling centre got ransacked during a clash between the supporters of Awami League- and BNP-backed candidates yesterday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

AL wins big amid big irregularities

FROM PAGE 1

Briefing journalists at the Election Bhaban in the capital, Md Alamgir Hossain, senior secretary at the Election Commission, said that apart from some stray incidents, the CCC election was held peacefully in a free and fair manner.

"Some unruly people who opposed voting through EVMs attacked two polling stations. Voting was suspended there. Except for these two, polling in all other centres was held in a fair manner," he said.

Earlier in the morning, one person was killed and more than a hundred were injured in sporadic clashes in at least eight wards during voting in the port city.

Supporters of an AL-backed councillor candidate clashed with followers of an AL rebel councillor candidate in the city's Ambagan area around 9:00am, leaving Md Alauddin, 28, dead.

Voting was postponed at two polling centres in Patharghata area following clashes, vandalising of electronic voting machines (EVMs) and the capture of polling booths.

BNP-backed councillor candidate Mohammad Ismail was detained from the area over links to the clashes.

Meanwhile, a 28-year-old man was killed allegedly by his brother near a polling station. Locals said it was the outcome of rivalry between the siblings over the polls. But police said the killing had nothing to do with the election, rather it was a family feud.

The man, Nizam Uddin Munna, was murdered in the port city's Bara Quarter area around 8:15am, said police.

VISIT TO POLLING CENTRES Eight reporters and photojournalists of The Daily Star visited 45 of the 735 polling centres and found a very low turnout of voters at those centres.

Two reporters stayed at two polling centres throughout the polling from 8:00am to 4:00pm and saw the same picture.

Prior to the polls, the Election Commission on several occasions said the entire city area had been covered in a security blanket to ensure that voters can cast ballots freely without any fear.

But violence and irregularities spoiled the election atmosphere. There were clashes between supporters of AL-backed councillor candidates

and followers of AL rebel contenders.

In some areas, clashes broke out between activists of AL-backed councillor candidates and those of BNP-backed ones.

This discouraged voters, by and large, from going to the polling centres to cast ballots. Even in some areas, local AL leaders and their family members did not show up at the polling centres.

The polling agents of the BNP-nominated mayoral candidate were driven out of almost all the 45 polling centres visited by The Daily Star Correspondents.

Wearing badges of AL-nominated mayoral candidate and AL backed councillor candidates, several groups of people were seen in front of almost all those polling centres. They were enquiring about the identity of those whom they suspected as loyal to BNP candidates.

MAYORAL CANDIDATES AL mayoral candidate Rezaul cast his vote at Ekhlashur Rahman Government Primary School in Bahaddarhat area around 8:45am.

Later, he told journalists that he was confident about his victory. He, however, said he would accept the outcome whatever it may be.

BNP mayoral candidate Shahadat cast his ballot at Teachers Training College, Chattogram around 10:00am.

Later, he alleged that all his polling agents were driven out of the polling centres.

Around 2:30pm, he went to the RO's office to make complaints of irregularities in the polls.

A number of BNP-backed councillor candidates alleged that members of police, Rab and BGB as well as executive magistrates were virtually inactive in keeping the election atmosphere free and fair.

CONTROL OF EVMS BY AL MEN AL men had taken control of the EVMs at all the 45 polling centres visited by The Daily Star correspondents.

Many voters at those centres alleged that they could not cast ballots as the ruling party men drove them out of the polling booths after getting their fingerprints on EVMS.

One of the correspondents stayed at Shahid Nagar City Corporation Girls' High School for eight hours and saw AL men wearing party badges take control of the EVMS there.

Around 9:00am, a young woman

was seen shouting outside a booth at the centre, alleging that despite being a voter, she was not allowed to enter the booth to cast ballots.

Asked, Bashir Ahmed, presiding officer at the centre, said he did not get any complaint from anyone.

A section of polling officials were seen cooperating with the AL men, allowing the ruling party loyalists to take control of the EVMS at the centre.

At the Teachers Training College, Jasim Uddin, an AL activist, complained to several local AL leaders that he could not cast ballot despite giving fingerprint on EVM.

He alleged that BCL activists pushed the button on the EVM before he could enter the enclosed space inside the booth to cast vote.

Around 11:00am at the same centre, one of the voters, Fahima Sultana, alleged that her vote was cast by another woman inside the polling booth after she put her fingerprint on EVM.

She shouted at the AL men while leaving the polling centre.

NO AGENT OF BNP CANDIDATES The Daily Star correspondents found no polling agents of BNP candidates at 44 polling centres. Only one agent of the BNP mayoral candidate was at the CDA Public School and College in Chandgaon area.

The agent, Saidul Haque Shikder, claimed that when he along with 17 polling agents of the BNP candidate arrived at the centre around 7:30am, AL men swooped on them. He managed to enter the centre while the other agents were chased off.

"I took shelter at the room of the presiding officer. He then took me to a booth adjacent to his room," he told The Daily Star.

Contacted, Presiding Officer Morshed Alam said he was unaware of what happened outside the polling centre.

"Only one agent of the BNP mayoral candidate came to me and I took him to a booth."

Talking to this newspaper, Nazma Begum, an agent of the BNP mayoral candidate at Teachers Training College, claimed that she along with another polling agent of the BNP candidate went to the centre in the morning but ruling party men drove them away from the gate, hitting them with sticks in front of law enforcers.

Schoolboy abducted, murdered in Habiganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Police have recovered the body of a schoolboy from a ditch in Habiganj's Shayestaganj upazila town on Tuesday evening.

Law enforcers said the victim, Tanvir Hossain, 15, was killed after abduction.

Yesterday, a Habiganj court sent two arrestees to jail after they were produced before it in connection with a case filed over the incident, said OC Ajay Chandra Dev of Shayestaganj Police Station.

According to police, Tanvir, a resident of Nasratpur village in Shayestaganj, was a student of class-9 at Habiganj Technical School and College. He went missing on Sunday evening.

Around 10:00pm that day, Tanvir's father received a call from his son's mobile phone. The caller told him that Tanvir was abducted and that he would have to pay the abductors a ransom of Tk 60 lakh to have his son back.

Shortly afterwards, the victim's father went to the police station and reported the incident.

Intra-party

FROM PAGE 1

According to the party sources, at least 22 rebel councillor candidates took part in yesterday's polls, defying repeated directives from the AL central leaders to quit the race since the campaigns started on January 8.

Among the 22 candidates, at least 12 are said to be loyal to immediate-past CCC mayor AJM Nasir, who failed to get the party ticket to contest the mayoral election.

Rivalry between supporters of Nasir and deputy minister for education Mohibul Hasan Chowdhury, son of former mayor late ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury, was a much-talked issue during the run-up to the CCC polls.

It was feared by many locals, political leaders and law enforcement agencies that this intra-party feud might ruin the elections atmosphere.

Soon after the campaign began, two Awami League men were killed in clashes between the party-supported and rebel candidates. Besides, many were also injured ahead of the election.

The AL high-ups apparently tried to deter the rebel candidates from running and repeatedly warned of stern actions for defying the party decision.

A section of AL leaders, however, questioned the seriousness and sincerity of the central leaders who were given charge to resolve the conflict.

For example, they said, not a single AL man was expelled or served any show-cause notice for going against the AL central's directives.

There is a provision in the party charter for expelling anyone even without issuing any show-cause notice but the party high-ups didn't do so, local AL leaders said.

Sensing possible untoward incidents, law enforcement agencies and the Election Commission had taken some measures.

Around 15,000 members of law enforcement agencies were deployed apart from teams of executive and judicial magistrates to maintain law and order.

But nothing worked and the apprehension came true as the AL-supported councillor candidates and rebels from the party were locked in sporadic clashes in some eight wards, leaving at least one killed and around 100 injured yesterday.

The deceased has been identified as Alauddin, 28, who was killed during violence in Ambagan area of CCC ward-13 (Pahartoli).

Alauddin suffered bullet injuries when a clash erupted in front of USEP Technical School between the activists of AL-backed councillor candidate Wasim Uddin Ahmed and that of rebel candidate Mahmudul Karim around 9:00am.

Besides, another person identified as Nizam Uddin Munna, 28, was also killed in Bara Quarter area in ward-12 (Saraipara) allegedly by his brother near a polling station.

Locals termed it an outcome of the conflict over polls as the siblings were loyal to two rival councillor candidates in CCC ward-12 (Saraipara). But police said the killing had nothing to do with the election and it was a family feud.

Temperature

FROM PAGE 1

In the forecast, the Bangladesh Meteorological Department predicted that the weather may remain dry with temporary partly cloudy sky over the country.

Moderate to thick fog may occur over the country between midnight and noon, said a Met office release yesterday.

Ferry services resumed on the Shimulia-Banglabazar route after being suspended for four and a half hours due to fog.

More than 600 vehicles were stranded at both the ends to cross the Padma.

Mohammad Faysal, BIWTC assistant manager (Trade) at Shimulia ghat, said they suspended the ferry services at 2:30am and resumed at 7:00am.