

BANGLADESH UPDATE



443
New cases in 24hrs



535,582
Total cases



8,137
Deaths



480,216
Recoveries



2,242,530
Deaths



103,731,725
Total cases

PM unveils 2 books on Bangabandhu

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday unveiled the covers of two books on Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

She unveiled the covers of the books titled "Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Janak Amar Neta Amar" and "Joy Bangla" at her Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban office, PM's Assistant Press Secretary MM Emrul Kayas told UNB.

The first book is a compilation of Hasina's write-ups about Bangabandhu, his family and the relevant issues, while the second one is a compilation of 1970-1975 interviews and conversations of Bangabandhu.

In the preface of "Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Janak Amar Neta Amar", the premier said the book is a rare gift for every Bengali reader in the birth centenary of Bangabandhu.

Former education minister Nurul Islam Nahid edited the book, published by Charulipi Prokashon.

Hasina, the eldest daughter of Bangabandhu, wrote the preface of the book "Joy Bangla", while Nahid and poet Pias Majid collected and edited its write-ups.

In its preface, the PM said this historic book needs to be read to fully understand the life and philosophy of the Father of the Nation.

Suu Kyi held as army takes over

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The military declared, via its own television channel, a one-year state of emergency and announced that former general Myint Swe would be acting president for the next year.

It alleged "huge irregularities" in the November polls that the election commission had failed to address.

"As the situation must be resolved according to the law, a state of emergency is declared," the announcement said.

The army later pledged to hold fresh elections after one year.

Suu Kyi had issued a pre-emptive statement ahead of her detention calling on people "not to accept a coup", according to a post on the official Facebook page of her party's chairperson.

The military moved quickly to stifle dissent, severely restricting the internet and mobile phone communications across the country.

In Yangon, the former capital that remains Myanmar's commercial hub, troops seized the city hall just ahead of the announcement, according to an AFP journalist.

Several trucks were seen in Yangon carrying army supporters, with Myanmar flags and blaring nationalist songs, and some NLD members reported that security forces had ordered them to stay at home.

People rushed to grocery stores to stock up on rice, oil and instant noodles. Banks were temporarily closed by the communications freeze, but some were expected to reopen today.

Elsewhere, the chief minister of Karen state and several other regional ministers were also held, party sources told AFP.

Myanmar's November polls were only the second democratic elections the country had seen since it emerged from the 49-year grip of military rule in 2011.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, the European Union, Britain and Australia were among others to condemn the coup.

China declined to criticise anyone, instead calling for all sides to "resolve differences".

The NLD won more than 80 per cent of the vote in November -- increasing its support from 2015.

But the military has for weeks complained the polls were riddled with irregularities, and claimed to have uncovered more than 10 million instances of voter fraud.

Myanmar has seen two previous coups since independence from Britain in 1948 -- in 1962 and 1988.

Suu Kyi, 75, is an immensely popular figure in Myanmar for her opposition to the military -- which earned her the Nobel Peace Prize -- having spent the best part of two decades under house arrest during the previous dictatorship.

But her international image was shredded during her time in power as she defended the military-backed crackdown in 2017 against the country's Rohingya community.

About 750,000 Rohingyas were forced to flee into neighbouring Bangladesh during the campaign, which UN investigators said amounted to genocide.

The Norwegian Nobel Committee said it was "appalled" by her arrest.

Suu Kyi was only ever de facto leader of Myanmar as the military had inserted a clause in the constitution that barred her from being president. But to circumvent that clause, she assumed leadership of the country via a new role of "state counsellor".

The 2008 constitution also ensured the military would remain a significant force in government by retaining control of the interior, border and defence ministries.

Viscera report

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Meanwhile, police may seek to exhume the body of an accused in the case -- Arafat, 28 -- who died at City Hospital in Mohammadpur on Saturday, two days after drinking with the same group at a restaurant in Uttara on Thursday.

On that day, another of the group fell sick at the restaurant and left the place immediately. Police said one member of the group had taken alcohol to the restaurant from the airport area. Police are searching for both of them.

According to the case statement, five, including the victim, went to a restaurant in sector-3 of Uttara on Thursday. There, they made her drink alcohol. As she fell sick, they took the girl to one of her friend's house in Mohammadpur. There the prime accused -- Mortuza Raihan Chowdhury, one of the two arrestees -- raped her.

The following day, the victim stayed at the friend's house and when the victim's physical condition deteriorated and she started vomiting, the students took her to the hospital, according to the statement.

The two arrestees -- Raihan, 21, and Nuhah Alam Tafzir, 21, -- were each taken into a five-day remand on Sunday. The arrestees went to the same private university as the victim.

Mohammadpur Police Station Officer-in-Charge Abdul Latif said the

youth who died at City Hospital was buried on the same day without the police being informed. He said they got the necessary information from the hospital.

The OC said the other two arrestees did not know that their male friend died on Saturday. Police contacted his family and may seek to conduct an autopsy after exhuming his body.

Police checked the CCTV footage of the restaurant in Uttara and Nuhah's house in Mohammadpur. They also scrutinised the mobile phones of the arrestees.

On the basis of preliminary interrogation of the two arrestees, Harun-Ur-Rashid, deputy commissioner of Tejgaon Division, said initially it seemed that it may have been a case of excessive drinking or something poisonous was present in the liquor. There might also be the possibility of rape under the influence of alcohol.

The actual reason can only be determined after the autopsy report is prepared, he said.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, the Tejgaon DC said they are investigating whether the incident of liquor poisoning has any links or similarities to the incident in a Gazipur resort last Friday, where three staffers of a private organisation died due to suspected liquor poisoning.

Threatened, MP files GD

FROM PAGE 1

Contacted, Rafiqul said three union parishad chairmen, including one ex-chairman, were detained from the Gouripur Govt College centre when they went there to snatch ballot boxes.

"Breaking election rules, the lawmaker had been staying in Gouripur and when he and his son attempted to enter Pilot Girls' High School, I informed the administration and police.

"In the afternoon, I phoned him saying he cannot do this and if any untoward incident takes place, he would be responsible. But I did not do anything to prompt the lawmaker to file a GD against me," he said.

About the Shuvra murder case, he said the people with ulterior motives falsely implicated to harass him and destroy his life and political career. As people voted for him for the third time, opposing people are now busy with fresh conspiracies against him, he alleged.

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Workers salvage goods from a truck that fell on its side while heading towards the capital near Aminbazar's Salehpur bridge in the early hours of yesterday. Locals said the accident took place when the overloaded vehicle hit a pothole on the highway. The photo was taken yesterday morning.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Points of frictions have narrowed

FROM PAGE 1

170 million people of Bangladesh and 1.2 billion people in India is most important. That is the Bangladesh that we will always be friends with.

Lastly, evaluating these 50 years, your achievement in 50 years has been remarkable, particularly in the last decade. Economic development has been tremendous, socio-economic progress has been brilliant. Bangladesh has lifted so much of its population out of abject poverty. These are major achievements. Sometimes, it is hard to see the progress around you. Of course, Bangladesh people will want more. We all want more. It is a normal instinct. I think there are good positives that help cement our relationship. We can do more trade, people to people connectivity -- all of those happen through progress.

TDS: Do you see any fault lines in the relationship between the two countries?

Doraiswami: No, I would not call them fault lines. I think sometimes people overstate the problems. There are issues -- we are neighbours, we share a 4,100km border. It is important to remember that it is not only your largest land border, but also our largest land border. At places, borders go through highly populated areas where people are fundamentally very similar -- sharing the same language, culture, and history.

So, there will always be some amount of friction and issues between any neighbors. The question is if those frictions are growing or not. I think over the last 10 or 15 years actually, the points of frictions have narrowed. They still exist and need to be addressed, but they are not obstacles to the growth of our relationship. So, I would call them points of attention. We need to pay attention to these issues to fix them.

TDS: The Teesta water sharing treaty has been pending for a decade. People are frustrated about it. Can we expect the deal anytime soon?

Doraiswami: Bangladeshi friends need to understand the complexity of our political system. The constitution puts certain power under states' hands. Those who are old can remember the Farakka Barrage Treaty. That required the government to bring West Bengal on board. We need to bring West Bengal and Sikkim on board [for the Teesta deal]. It is difficult for us to do even if the federal government wants. The government can't unilaterally do it -- this is the point we have been repeatedly saying. We understand Bangladesh's concern and we will do our best to address it, but it needs us to address the political discourse in India.

What we can do, however, in the interim is that we can work on some of our other rivers so there is a sense of progress on river water sharing. We have 52 other rivers on which we need to come up with arrangements. If we wait to do it one by one, God knows how long it will take. We can move with as many parallelly as we can. Towards that end, we had a technical-level meeting in early January. Good outcomes came out of that meeting. We now better understand the water data. A secretary-level meeting of the Joint River Commission will happen soon.

TDS: The Ganges Water Sharing Treaty is going to expire in 2026. Bangladesh is seeking a joint initiative, possibly a barrage, to best utilise the water coming to the Padma River. What's the progress on that front?

Doraiswami: Yes, we had discussed that, including the terms of reference on the joint study. So, that is moving forward now. It is important because we understand the priority you attach to the Padma River water. So, we should move forward faster.

TDS: Border killings has for long been a much-discussed issue between the two countries. How can it be brought to zero?

Doraiswami: Nobody wants to see people killed. But, there are some things that are not accurate in the discourse. First of all, it is not happening on one side only. There are Indian citizens who are also being killed on the border. There are BSF [Border Security Force] troops being maimed in the clashes with groups of smugglers. It is happening almost entirely between 10:00pm and 5:00am, which is not

a tourist time. It's all happening on our side of the territory. Not every act of killing has been done by the BSF. There are organised criminal gangs on both sides of the border. People on both sides of the border are involved in illegal activities. Sometimes they are working together and sometimes they are working against each other. Not all the people killed either on the Indian or on the Bangladeshi side are the result of BSF using force. That's sometimes not recognised. The numbers sometimes put out are way excess of what the BSF says. Remember that the border fence, on an average, is 150 yards from the zero line. So, it is not possible for the BSF to cross some 300 yards and kill. Why would they do so? That is not their job, they are not a military force. They are a border security force. So, that means somebody's understanding is wrong.

To eliminate the problem, it is very important that there is far more coordination between the two border security forces. That can include joint patrolling and sharing intelligence. If you can prevent the people from [illegally] crossing the border, there is less of a chance that people get hurt. It is not only the border-guarding forces' job. As governments, we also need to find the ways of telling people not to do these things. People do that not because that is their nature, but because they are desperate... they want economic activity, income. So, we should find ways in investing money in border development, creating border haats, cross-border economic activity, so that people can trade easily with each other, particularly in the Bengal frontier. We can even look into local food processing zones, so that people are habituated to positive economic activity. If we can do that, we can take away the pressure on the border. It is really unfortunate because it is poor people who are being killed.

Finally, ensuring that we understand not all the violence on the border is one-sided. If you look at the last 10 years, the number of Indians who were unfortunately killed on the border are almost the same as the number of Bangladeshis. In 10 years until December 10 last year, a total of 132 Bangladeshis and 95 Indians were killed in BSF firing on the Indian side. During the period, 17 BSF personnel died and 1,110 BSF members were injured in confrontations with smugglers. It is not a good thing. I don't want anyone to be killed. But, the impression that Bangladeshis [alone] are being targeted and shot is not just true.

TDS: When can we see these recommendations implemented?

Doraiswami: We have been pushing for these. Our border security guards and home secretaries meet annually, and our home ministers meet every two years. These processes need to be embedded and instructions needed that these must be done. If we can do this, we can save lives.

TDS: Bangladesh is upset that India has not created enough pressure on Myanmar for Rohingya repatriation. How do you respond to this?

Doraiswami: We want to facilitate the solution. It is to ensure that since we are neighbours to both, both countries see our role as positive and that we are able to create the atmosphere that facilitates your own efforts to reach a solution. We are not intermediaries in this. We do understand the sensitivity of the issue for Bangladesh. It also affects us. People need to remember that we fully understand that it has direct and indirect impact on us, not just the inflow but that the impact on Bangladesh also has an impact on us. People need to understand that just because we are not publicly saying anything doesn't mean we haven't invested in finding a solution. There is a different way of doing it. I was dealing with that relationship also. Every one of us meeting the leadership of Myanmar has made the point of safe, speedy and sustainable repatriation of the displaced persons to Myanmar. The only difference is that we are not doing it publicly. It is more helpful to help create the atmosphere for the people to go back to Rakhine. We will never do anything that is not in the interest of Bangladesh and the long-term stay

of one million displaced people is not in Bangladesh's interest. We genuinely want the problem to be solved. We will do what we can do to help find a reasonable solution.

TDS: We know that India is building houses in Rakhine. What else is India doing?

Doraiswami: We are facilitating larger economic development so that we can show the other communities of Rakhine that peace and stability have a positive impact. Our projects that are in Rakhine state are not just houses. There are socio-economic development projects in the three main districts where the problems happened. Those include building small bridges, community centres, and markets so that there is economic incentive for people to come -- not just houses. We have developed a port in Sittwe, which will create economic growth and jobs. We have also worked with Myanmar to create a sense of confidence for bringing people back and solving ethnic problems.

We might not have been able to do any of these if we were publicly vocal. So, somebody will also have to do this part so that there is a larger sense that a solution can be held, that it is reasonable to bring people back -- you have to find a solution. We have also shown up our own federal setup in India so that the peace process of various communities can happen. We think bringing the opportunity of a solution is a positive contribution that we can offer Myanmar.

TDS: Do you also talk about legal issues about the Rohingyas?

Doraiswami: We do discuss these issues. They say that they have a way forward that first of all, people need to go back and then move towards citizenship. We know that there are sensitivities in how they work. What we have been encouraging is that they should move forward. That's the conversation. We don't want to interject ourselves in the negotiation between Myanmar and the displaced people or Bangladesh. Nobody has asked us to do that.

TDS: What would your overall comment on the Bangladesh-India relationship be?

Doraiswami: This is the relationship that has the most material significance to the daily lives of ordinary people of our countries. Getting it right and having an approach that finds solutions rather than faults, we really need to work towards that end. Our region is one of the least connected regions of the world. See the benefits that have come to East Asia, to Southeast Asia from strong connectivity. Forget Europe. Just in our own neighbourhood in Asia, everybody was like us in the 1940s. We are missing the bus. Going ahead is everything for us.

Agreement must

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conductive for return as there was no guarantee of citizenship, safety, and basic rights.

Bangladesh has been trying in various ways to start the Rohingya repatriation, even by involving China and the international community.

Nearly a million Rohingyas fled a military crackdown in Myanmar's Rakhine state in 2017. Myanmar also faces genocide case at the International Court of Justice. Despite global pressure, the repatriation did not start and there was expectation that it would start in the second half of this year.

Minister Momen said in the 1980s and '90s, the military was in power [in Myanmar], but the Rohingya repatriation happened in large scale during those times.

"We have been persistent in developing mutually beneficial relations with Myanmar and have been working with Myanmar for the voluntary, safe and sustained repatriation of the Rohingyas sheltered in Bangladesh. We expect these processes to continue ...," said the foreign ministry in a statement.

It said as an immediate and friendly neighbour, Dhaka would like to see peace and stability in Myanmar. "Bangladesh firmly adheres to and promotes democratic ethos. We hope that the democratic process and constitutional arrangements will be upheld in Myanmar," the statement said.

12 die drinking

FROM PAGE 1

Meanwhile, the morgue sources said they have kept samples from the victims' bodies to find the reason behind their deaths.

In Mohammadpur, a private university student, whose father filed a rape case on Sunday accusing five other students of the same university, allegedly died from counterfeit alcohol consumption, police claimed.

On Saturday, an accused in the case, Arafat, 28, also died at Mohammadpur's City Hospital, Harun-Ur-Rashid, deputy commissioner of Tejgaon Division, told The Daily Star.

"We are suspecting both the victim and the accused died from the alcohol they consumed. We are looking into the incidents," he added.

Meanwhile in Bogura, around seven people, including a father and son, died, and five others got admitted to hospital, yesterday after allegedly ingesting toxic liquor on Sunday night, reports our correspondent.

Four of them -- Suman Rabidas, 38, his father Premnath Rabidas, 50, Saju Mia, 55, and Polash Hossain, 35 -- were confirmed at Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital.

The other three were Alamgir Hosain, 55, Ramjan Ali, 60, Mozahar Ali, 70.

Suman Rabidas's brother Sujon said his brother bought tampered spirit from a Homeo Hall.

Police and witnesses said some people bought tainted alcohol from a homeopathic medicine store in town and drank it after mixing other things into the night before the death for an special occasion at Premnath's house.

"We managed to have done the autopsy of Sumon, Saju and Polash by the evening confirming their deaths from alcohol poisoning. We found Premnath who died at 8.30pm drank liquor with his son," said Md Humayan Kabir, OC of Bogura Sadar police station, adding, "Another victim, Ramjan, died from cardiac arrest in the hospital but we have found that he also used to consume tampered alcohol."

Mozahar Ali had also bought tampered alcohol the night he died.

The OC said they have already started a drive against the Homeo halls that sell rectified spirit to these people. "A case is underway in this regard," he added.

Abdul Wadud, deputy director of Bogura Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital, said a total of five people are now undergoing treatment in the hospital after having toxic liquor.

Regarding death of other victims, he said they would be able to get clearer information after the autopsies.

In Rajshahi, deaths from tainted alcohol consumption have been a regular occurrence.

On January 1, at least 16 people were admitted to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital in this regard. Around six of them died after a couple of days.

Investigating the deaths, Rajshahi Metropolitan Police, on January 4, arrested four people and busted two dens where spurious liquor was being manufactured in Rajshahi city.

In Dhaka's Bhatara area, during the two hour long drive that began at 10:00pm, a team of the Detective Branch of Police (DB) busted a factory that was making counterfeit liquor. It seized around plastic bottles, several drum spirits, mineral water bottles and sugar syrup.

According to the law enforcers, the counterfeiters used to buy a gallon of spirit from the capital's Mitford area for Tk 10,000.

They then bought mineral water bottles, in which they would mix sugar, colour, and a portion of the spirit. They would pour their mixture in old bottles of alcohol from roadside shops and the "foreign liquor" would then be ready for sale.

Each bottles is being sold out in the market between Tk 7-8,000.

The DB yesterday arrested of six member of a syndicate involved with the process.

Mashiur Rahman, deputy commissioner of DB (Gulshan division), who led the operation, disclosed the details to The Daily Star at midnight.

He said they got information that in last two days, six people including a woman died after having foreign liquor in the city.

"Following the information, we started investigation and first tracked down the delivery person. Then we traced the supplier and then the whole seller

and finally got trace of the factory," he said.

The owner of the factory is Md Nasir, who used to sell foreign alcohol bottles after bringing those out from different warehouse. "We have already arrested Nasir," said the police official.

Md Jahangir, who basically used to sell old foreign liquor's bottles, became the chief chemist of the factory. The DB team also arrested him during the drive.

"We have already filed a case against these two masterminds and their four associates under special power act. Besides, murder cases will be also filed against the arrestees for intentionally selling harmful products," added the deputy commissioner.

Sources said a special instruction was issued from police to different warehouse of the city for not selling liquor to unauthorised persons from December 15 last year.