

BANGLADESH UPDATE



391
New cases in 24hrs



5,42,268
Total cases



8,329
Deaths



4,89,932
Recoveries

GLOBAL UPDATE



2,443,374
Deaths



110,549,326
Total cases

FOOD ADULTERATION

Clamp down on it with an iron hand

PM orders authorities

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday directed authorities concerned to curb food adulteration in Bangladesh with an iron hand alongside creating awareness among businesspeople against such offences.

"You will have to make them [unscrupulous businesspeople] understand about such offences on one hand and curb that with an iron hand on the other hand. It's essential to take both measures simultaneously," she said.

The PM was addressing a programme at the city's hotel InterContinental Dhaka, marking the National Food Safety Day-2021. She joined the event virtually from the Gono Bhaban.

This year, the day is being observed with the theme of "Teksoi Unnyan-Somridhho Desh, Nirapod Khadyer Bangladesh" (Bangladesh: A country of sustainable prosperity and safe food).

Hasina said unscrupulous businessmen sell adulterated or rotten food to earn extra money harming the public health.

"But it is needed to make them realise that they can make the same profit by spending money on the sale of safe food."

Mentioning that a central food testing laboratory is being set up in the country, the premier instructed the relevant authorities to take steps for setting up one food testing laboratory in every divisional city as well.

She said it is also essential to set up a food-testing laboratory in every divisional city as the government is developing 100 economic zones giving importance to food-processing industries.

Laboratory testing certification is essential to export agricultural products, most importantly the food items, Hasina said, adding that there will be a scope for setting up food-testing systems up to rural level.

Referring to the safe food plan being implemented in 100 food-

related industries, the PM asked the authorities concerned to execute it throughout the country gradually. "It will have to be taken up to the village level."

EMPHASIS ON BALANCED DIET
Mentioning that the government is giving importance to ensuring nutrition, the PM directed the Bangladesh Food Safety Authority to go for a massive awareness campaign over balanced diet in the country alongside conducting laboratory testing.

She stressed the importance of safe transportation of processed food items. She said the government would develop the postal services further so that it can get food items safely to different destinations.

Hasina urged the people not to keep even a single inch of land uncultivated so that no food crisis can hit the country under any circumstances.

She also asked the authorities concerned to expand their activities to use grading stickers at hotels and restaurants across the country.

The PM highlighted her government's various activities and successes in the food sector. She said the previous governments never wanted Bangladesh to be self-reliant in food as they were more interested in food import to help some of their people to make money from the import.

"I would like to say unequivocally that the Awami League government is not in power to do business but to serve people as their assister."

Agriculture Minister Muhammad Abdur Razzaque and Fisheries and Livestock Minister SM Rezaul Karim also spoke at the function, presided over by Food Minister Sadhan Chandra Majumder.

The PM distributed prizes among the winners of a quiz contest and essay competition arranged marking the 4th National Food Safety Day. On behalf of the premier, the food minister handed the prizes to the winners.



Young Red Crescent volunteers at work at the capital's Mugda Medical College Hospital yesterday. The volunteers performed a valuable service by helping out people who went to the hospital to get inoculated against Covid-19.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

15 more die from Covid, 391 infected

UNB, Dhaka

Fifteen more coronavirus-related deaths and 391 new cases were recorded in the last 24 hours till yesterday morning.

The numbers are slightly lower than Wednesday's when the health authorities reported 16 deaths and 443 fresh cases.

So far, 542,268 Covid-19 cases have been confirmed with 8,329 fatalities, data released by the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) showed.

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

The daily coronavirus infection rate rose to 2.68 percent yesterday which was 2.67 percent on the day before.

According to the latest figures, the overall infection rate stood at 13.87 percent which was 13.97 percent on Wednesday, and expected to fall further as a mass countrywide coronavirus vaccination drive is underway.

But the mortality rate remained at 1.53 percent, said the DGHS handout.

So far, 489,932 patients -- 90.35 percent -- have recovered.

The authorities have tested 3,908,257 samples until yesterday, and 14,603 in the past 24 hours.

Three arrested over murder of madrasa student

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Police yesterday arrested three people in connection with the murder of a Madrasa student in Jashore's Manirampur upazila.

The student, Mamun Hasan, 18, a second-year student of Manirampur Aleya Madrasa, was beaten to death on suspicion of stealing a mobile phone.

His father Moshir Gazi filed a case against 12 named and six unnamed people with Manirampur Police Station on yesterday.

Of them, three -- Lavlu Hossain, 25, Altaf Hossain, 30, and Sohag Hossain, 19 -- were arrested.

Mamun died while undergoing treatment at Manirampur Upazila Health Complex on Wednesday. His family alleged that his hands and feet were tied before he was beaten to death on Tuesday night.

The case statement said Mamun had left for his aunt's shop around 11:00pm that night, after having dinner with him family at home.

His friend Arman then took him to the bank of Harihar river, when a group

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Syndicate teams up with officers

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February 11, 2019, and three days later, both of them boarded a flight to UK going through immigration with no issue.

CID officials told The Daily Star this too would have required involvement of the immigration police personnel.

Zain and the woman reached Heathrow where the immigration police quickly identified that she was carrying a fake passport. They sent her back on February 17, 2019.

Immigration police at Heathrow did not stop Zain as he had a valid UK passport.

On her return, the Sylhet airport authority informed the woman's family members and asked them to take her away paying Tk 2.60 lakh plane fare, the woman said in her case filed on February 22, 2019, with the Airport Police Station of Sylhet Metropolitan Police (SMP).

She accused Zain, Mokarram, and Ashraf, a tenant of Zain's relative in Sylhet.

A CID high official, involved in the investigation, told this newspaper, "We have already identified some immigration officials involved in the crime but we need Zain's statement to

get something concrete."

The officer, however, refused to disclose the identities or details of the immigration officials concerned.

Sources, however, said the CID's THB squad already interrogated six immigration officials.

Sayful Islam, officer-in-charge of Immigration Police at the Sylhet airport, said the policemen on duty at the airport then were transferred as part of a routine.

"I do not know anything about the incident as I was not on duty at that time," he said.

Asked how could someone slip through the immigration with a forged passport, and how could a passport get stamped without a bearer, the OC refused to comment.

Ezaz Ahmed, special superintendent of immigration police at Osmani airport, suggested contacting the investigating agency. "I have taken charge recently," he said.

CID officials said they wrote to National Central Bureau (NCB) of Bangladesh Police seeking assistance of the UK police for interrogating Zain via a video conference two months ago.

In response, the UK police on

Monday sought evidence on how Zain was involved in the crime.

On Tuesday, the CID sent documents and closed circuit television (CCTV) camera footage that shows Zain was with the woman and they left Bangladesh together, sources said.

AKM Akteruzzaman, additional special superintendent of the CID, told The Daily Star that they were trying to reach Zain.

"We have got some more evidence which we are now analysing. Once we get Zain's statement, we would be able to say what and how it actually happened."

This newspaper talked to Md Asraf Miah, the third accused in the case now out on bail.

He said, "I am a tenant of Zain's brother in Kharadipara area of Sylhet. Zain uses my mobile phone when he visits Bangladesh."

"I have no involvement in the case but I was named as Zain used my number."

"I have never met the plaintiff before."

"After he left the country on February 14, 2019, with the girl, Zain stopped contacting me," added Ashraf.

HC blasts police, doctors for flaws

FROM PAGE 1

medical certificates from hospitals where there is a serious anomaly regarding the time of the incident.

SP Anisur Rahman told the court that he was sorry and that the investigating officer made a mistake. Police will be cautious in the future, he added.

Rebuking the doctors, the HC bench said, "You remain busy with private practice, leaving [matters relating to] our lives to the peons and staff members, which is not expected [of you]."

The court then asked Brahmanbaria Civil Surgeon Dr Ekram Ullah why the results of capability tests of the boy and girl had been mentioned in the same column of a prescribed form.

The civil surgeon also apologised unconditionally to the HC.

Twelve officials were present before the HC bench in line with a summons order issued on January 17.

Yesterday, the HC exonerated them from having to appear in person at the court for future hearings. But they might again be ordered to appear in

person if the court felt that that was necessary.

Besides the civil surgeon and the SP, Officer-in-Charge of Nasiragar Police Station ATM Ariful Haque, Resident Medical Officer of Brahmanbaria Sadar Hospital Dr Ekramul Reza, medical officers Fahmida Akter, Zinan Reza, Tofayel Haque, Farida Yeasmin, and Nasiragar Upazila Health Complex medical officers Syed Md Shahriar, Tasnim Tamanna, and Md Shafiqul Islam were present at the court.

On September 11, 2020, a case was filed with Nasiragar Police Station accusing a boy of raping a seven-year-old girl.

On November 3, following a bail petition filed by the accused, the HC bench granted six months' anticipatory bail to the boy and ordered the investigator to complete the investigation and submit a report to the court in a month.

The officer submitted a report to the HC, stating that the victim was admitted to Brahmanbaria Sadar Hospital on September 6, the day after

she was raped.

The officer annexed three separate medical statements to the investigation report.

After examining the documents, the HC bench on January 17 summoned the police and medical officers and asked them to explain their roles in connection with the issue.

The HC also ordered the health secretary and inspector general of police to launch separate probes into the matter and to submit the probe reports by a month.

The HC yesterday fixed March 11 for passing further orders.

Deputy Attorney General Md Monirul Islam told The Daily Star that the office of the inspector general of police submitted a report to the HC mentioning that the police officers of Nasiragar Police Station were negligent in discharging their duties in connection with the rape case.

He said the health secretary has yet to submit any report.

Attorney General AM Amin Uddin represented the state while Bakir Uddin Bhuiyan the doctors.

Anis, Haris given pardon in line with the rules

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Puzzlingly, however, it reappeared on the list on February 15 and was still there as of 9:00pm yesterday.

Asked, PHQ spokesperson Md Sohail Rana said, "The 'wanted' list is updated according to specific rules upon directives from the relevant authorities of the government. In the case of removing a name, there is scope to drop any name from the list depending on directives from the authorities based on an application in accordance to the rules."

The pardon notification was issued by the jail wing of security services division at the home ministry.

Contacted, Sayed Bealal Hossain, additional secretary (Jail), and Mohammad Abu Sayed Mollah, deputy secretary (Jail-2), of security services division, said they were not at their current positions when the notification was issued and cannot comment on the matter.

Md Shahiduzzaman, senior secretary at the security services division, told The Daily Star yesterday that he could not recall whether the notification issued on

March 28, 2019, was forwarded to the police headquarters.

"It's an old file and I can't make a comment on it now. I have to see the files first. Also, I can't say over the phone. You have to come to the office," he said.

According to a recent Al-Jazeera documentary, Haris and his two brothers -- Anis Ahmed and Tofail Ahmed alias Josef -- were found guilty of involvement in the murder of Mustafizur Rahman Mustafa, member of a political party, in 1996.

Haris and Anis were referred to as fugitive convicts in the documentary titled "All the Prime Minister's Men" aired by the Qatar-based television channel.

Haris went into hiding in India after the killing and then fled to Budapest, Hungary, the documentary said. He has been living there with the name Mohammad Hasan, the documentary mentioned.

Haris's name was also struck off the Interpol's list of wanted people sometime in 2019.

In May, 2018, Josef was granted presidential clemency, according to media reports.

Mobile app

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After the inauguration, however, it was learned that the app was not for vaccine registration. It was the "Surokha Covid-19 Vaccine Prodan App" for nurses to use at the vaccination centres.

Using the app, the nurses at the vaccination centres can scan the QR codes on vaccine cards after vaccinating people, and the report will automatically be uploaded to the server.

While inaugurating the app, the minister said, "Through this app, our Covid-19 vaccination programme's capability has gone one step further."

Contacted with the official concerned of the DGHS, he said, "The app is for the employees involved in the vaccination campaign. On the other hand, the work of the Surokha vaccine registration app is not complete yet."

According to the officials, the DGHS has provided necessary additional information again on Wednesday as per Google's requirement.

Once Google approves, the app will be available on its Play Store.

Earlier, officials said the app would be available on February 4 for mass use.

Now, people are registering on www.surokha.gov.bd website to get Covid-19 vaccines.

As of yesterday afternoon, more than 28 lakh people registered to get vaccines.

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