

BANGLADESH UPDATE



406

New cases in 24hrs



5,42,674

Total cases



8,337

Deaths



4,90,468

Recoveries



2,455,638

Deaths



110,988,014

Total cases

7 hurt as three-storey building topples

It was built on a pond in Keraniganj without authorities' approval

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least seven people were injured as a three-storey building, constructed on a pond without permission from the authorities, collapsed in Maddha Charail Playground area of Keraniganj yesterday.

Rahman, deputy assistant director of Fire Service and Civil Defence in Keraniganj, said the building came crashing down around 8:15am, trapping eight people inside.

Later, the members of Fire Service and Civil Defence rushed to the spot and rescued them around 9:30am, he added.

"Ideally, the building should have collapsed a long ago but it stood tall ghostly. Due to the weak soil underneath, the building collapsed," he said.

Meanwhile, the authorities vacated the surrounding five buildings which were constructed on or around the pond even without any foundation.

Utility connections, such as gas, electricity, and water, have been cut off from the buildings.

Kazi Mainul Islam, officer-in-charge of Keraniganj Police Station, said they conducted the evacuation to ensure safety to the residents of nearby buildings.

Talking to this correspondent, the

owner of the collapsed building, Jane Alam, 47, said he first built a two-storey building on his ancestral land in 2000.

A few years back, he increased it by another floor.

He also admitted that the building was not built following any building codes.

About yesterday's collapse, Alam said he was talking to a chef around 8:15am outside the building when it collapsed on the pond.

"It happened in just 15 seconds," Alam said, adding that four of his family members were injured in the incident.

Golam Rabbi, a second-year student of Dhaka College and also a nephew to Alam, said he came to the house to attend a feast yesterday, and then this happened.

The incidents of building collapse and fire are occasionally reported in Bangladesh because of poor planning and the use of substandard materials.

Experts attribute the frequent building collapses to faulty design, poor construction workmanship, product failure or lack of following building codes, and regulatory requirements.

Meanwhile, Keraniganj upazila administration formed a seven-member probe body in this connection.

The committee was asked to submit its report in seven working days.



Jahangirnagar University students administer first aid to a fellow student who was injured in a clash between students and villagers in Gerua Bazar near the campus yesterday evening. At least 30 people were hurt in the clash over a cricket match dispute. The photo was taken at the university medical centre. PHOTO: COLLECTED

Mother tongue neglected

FROM PAGE 1

Nowshin Tabassum Rupa, postgraduate student at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, said there is almost no use of Bangla in the study of medicine.

National Professor Rafiqul Islam said since Bangla is not the medium of education in higher studies, there are not enough good books.

He said according to the Quadrat-e-Khuda Commission which published the country's first education policy in 1974, the medium of education from primary to higher levels should be Bangla.

"But the recommendation was never implemented. The main reason behind that is our inferiority complex," said the eminent educationist and scholar.

Syed Abul Maksud said Bangla Academy could have played a role, but it was negligent.

"One of the key aims of establishing Bangla Academy was to make the use of Bangla as a medium of education easy. But the institution has obviously failed to do that," he said.

He added that the academy used to publish good Bangla books in the years preceding 1980.

"Had the Bangla Academy and education ministry taken sincere efforts, Bangla would have been established in higher education to a great extent by now," he said.

According to Bangla Academy Act

2013, it is one of the basic functions of the academy to make available and publish dictionary, terminology, grammar, reference books, bibliography and encyclopedia in Bangla. It should also widen and enrich the use of Bangla in science and technology.

The academy, established in 1955, has a division for translation.

In its latest catalogue, the academy has 1,418 saleable books. Less than 100 of those were translated into Bangla from a foreign language. And most of those were published in the early '90s.

A total of 21,527 books were published in the last five years' Ekushey Boi Mela. Of those, only 186 were translations.

Mohammad Mizanur Rahman, director of the division for translation, said, "We are going to launch a new project to publish at least a hundred translated books and we will publish a new yearly magazine titled 'Onubad' from next month."

National Professor Rafiqul said Bangla Academy alone would not be able to do much to ensure Bangla as a medium of education.

The academics and the university authorities will have to make sincere efforts to promote Bangla in higher education.

"We discuss the issue in February and tend to forget about it the rest of the time," he said.

BCB allows Shakib

FROM PAGE 1

Although the BCB mentioned that it was not a good example, the board granted Shakib's request stating that it would not "make any sense to force anyone to play if someone does not want to".

The BCB's decision remains an unprecedented one as it came from a board that had previously denied left-arm pacesman Mustafizur Rahman a No Objection Certificate (NOC) for last year's IPL. Mustafizur was denied an NOC for the same Sri Lanka tour back in September 2020 before the series was postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic and then postponed again when the two boards could not agree on quarantine protocols.

From a global perspective, players being allowed by their respective boards to miss series to play in the lucrative franchise T20 league is not new. Even though schedules have yet not been confirmed, the possibility is that the IPL will start from the second week of April and will run till the end of May.

Keeping that in mind and if players are required to head towards India for IPL sometime around mid-March or late March for adhering to quarantine protocols, even the New Zealand cricket board mentioned that they would allow players like New Zealand skipper Kane Williamson, Trent Boult, Lockie Ferguson, Mitchell Santner, Kyle Jamieson and Tim Seifert to miss out on the three-ODI and three-T20I series against Bangladesh next month.

The Tigers are scheduled to play the ODI series from March 20 and the T20I series from March 28 against the Kiwis.

These Kiwi players may also miss their two-Test series against England the following month with the dates possibly clashing with IPL.

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) also allowed the likes of Jofra Archer, Ben Stokes, Jos Buttler,

Jonny Bairstow and Moeen Ali to participate in the IPL during that time.

Meanwhile, yesterday, with news of Shakib opting out of national duty for IPL doing rounds on social media, cricket experts, pundits, journalists and fans in general seemed to have been divided into two groups -- one against Shakib's decision and the other supporting and justifying it.

"Shakib is a brand for us. I think that Shakib playing in the IPL will benefit Bangladesh going into the [T20] World Cup [scheduled for October-November in India]. Two or three players can take a team a long way and in that sense, I think that playing in IPL will be beneficial for Shakib," said former BCB chief selector Faruk Ahmed.

Some, however, thought differently, criticising Shakib for being reluctant to play for Bangladesh. The fact that Shakib's decision of choosing IPL over Test cricket came at a time when Bangladesh are reeling from a humiliating Test series defeat against a depleted West

Indies has only fuelled criticism.

Youth kills

FROM PAGE 1

One of Abad's relatives said Abad's first wife lives at their village home in Sylhet's Gowainghat upazila along with Abad, while Abad lived with Rubiya and the two children at the house in Mirer Mahalla.

"There has been a longstanding family feud over Abad's two marriages. We believe the murders have been committed over the issue," said the relative, wishing not to be named.

The OC also said Abad had admitted killing the three saying that he was furious since his stepmother "did not take proper care of him".

A case was yet to be filed when this report was filed around 6:00pm yesterday.

JS to decide fate of Papul soon

FROM PAGE 1

said when asked if the government was providing any legal assistance to Papul.

Kuwait's criminal court delivered the verdict on January 28, around eight months after Kuwait's Criminal Investigation Department arrested Papul, the managing director and CEO of Marafie Kuwaitia Group.

He was accused of human trafficking, money laundering and bribing Kuwaiti officials with millions of dollars to recruit Bangladeshi workers and get contracts for his company, labour exploitation and also violation of the residence law.

The others sentenced in the case include Kuwait interior ministry's Assistant Under-Secretary Maj Gen Mazen Al-Jarrah, and Nawaf Al-Mutairi, Hassan Al-Khader and Papul's associate Mohammad Rashidul Islam, a Bangladeshi.

Papul faces two more cases -- one on human trafficking and the other on money laundering -- in Kuwait.

He is also being investigated by Bangladesh's Anti-Corruption Commission over allegations of amassing Tk 1,400 crore by trafficking people to Kuwait and laundering money to different countries.

Asked whether Papul's parliament membership will be revoked, Zafar said Article 66 of the constitution says there are several provisions under which an MP will be disqualified from being a member of parliament.

One of the provisions says: "A person shall be disqualified for election as, or for being, a member of Parliament who has been, on conviction for a criminal offence involving moral turpitude, sentenced to imprisonment for a term of not less than two years, unless a period of five years has elapsed since his release."

"As he [Papul] has been sentenced to four years' imprisonment, the parliament will take decision in light of this," Zafar mentioned.

The same article says in case of any dispute over vacating membership of the respective MP, it shall be referred to the Election Commission to hear and determine it and the decision of the commission on such reference shall be final.

A top official of the parliament secretariat said according to the rules of procedure of parliament, if any MP is detained, sentenced, released on bail or otherwise released, the authorities concerned will inform the matter to the speaker of parliament.

The speaker will then inform the matter to parliament if it is in session. If parliament is not in session, the speaker will inform the MPs through a letter.

Zafar said it is the Speaker of the Jatiya Sangsad who will make the final decision in line with the constitution and the rules of procedure of parliament.

Asked whether the MP will be extradited from Kuwait, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan said, "It mostly depends on the Kuwaiti government and the court that convicted Shahid Islam".

"We are not thinking about this [bringing him home] at this moment," he told this newspaper yesterday.

He, however, said case proceedings against the MP in Bangladesh would continue and that the law would take its own course.

'CRIMES, POWER ABUSE' BY PAPUL

Quoting Arabic newspaper Al Qabas, Kuwaiti news portal The Times reported that Papul is estimated to have obtained KD5 million in assets in Kuwait. During investigations, all

his bank accounts and that of his company were frozen.

According to sources in Kuwait and Lakshampur, Papul went to Kuwait in 1989 as a worker and eventually started working as a recruitment broker and later established companies. He ran four companies involved in providing cleaners through government contracts in Kuwait, employing 9,000 workers.

Sources in Kuwait and Lakshampur said he had no involvement in politics back home before 2016, but had earned a huge amount of money by then through illegal means.

Papul invested crores of taka to prevent other potential candidates in the Lakshampur-2 constituency and became an independent MP in the 2018 national election. His wife Selina Islam did the same to become an MP from the reserved seats for women.

According to witness accounts in the case against Papul, he was part of an "organised gang" made up of two Kuwaitis and Papul. They used a company to recruit workers from Bangladesh by fraudulent means in exchange for payments ranging between KD2,500 and KD2,700 for each, reported The Times.

The trio occupied sensitive positions in three major companies that took over 20,000 Bangladeshi workers to Kuwait in exchange for more than KD50 million. Although the company was closed due to legal violations, the workers landed in Kuwait to discover their visas were fake. They were forcibly employed in another company owned by Papul.

Eleven Bangladeshis taken to Kuwait by Papul testified to the court about the exploitation. The workers were charged money for renewing residency visas and even forced to work against their will for long

working hours in inhumane working conditions without wages or were provided with inadequate housing facilities.

Papul also allegedly attacked those who objected to his views and threatened them with false cases.

Some Bangladeshis, who worked as Kuwait correspondents for media outlets in Bangladesh, told The Daily Star that they faced unlawful deportation for reporting on misdeeds of Papul. Papul played a part in their deportations, they claimed.

"Papul had very good ties with the then officials of the Bangladesh embassy in Kuwait," a Bangladeshi in Kuwait said.

Back home, in response to a complaint filed on February 16 last year, the Anti-Corruption Commission opened an inquiry into an allegation that Papul amassed Tk 1,400 crore by trafficking people to Kuwait and laundering the money to different countries.

The ACC said the inquiry was to look into the charges of loan forgery and money laundering by the NRB Commercial Bank Director Kazi Papul, his wife Selina, their daughter Kazi Wafa Islam and Selina's sister Jesmin.

On July 17 last year, the ACC imposed a ban on all of their foreign travels, saying the embargo would be implemented for Papul after his return to the country.

Later on November 11, the anti-graft watchdog filed a case against Papul, Selina, Wafa and Jesmin for allegedly laundering about Tk 148.41 crore. The inquiry is still pending.

On December 28, a Dhaka Court ordered the freezing of 617 bank accounts and 92 deeds of immovable properties of Papul, following a petition filed by the ACC.

TODAY IS THE 4TH DEATH ANNIVERSARY OF

Late Captain Syed Ali Asghar Rizvi
(22 April 1944 - 20 February 2017)

We request all relatives, friends and well-wishers to remember him in their prayers and to pray for eternal peace of his soul.

Mayhem in Noakhali

FROM PAGE 1

said Syed Mohiuddin Abdul Azim, resident medical officer of the hospital.

The clash ensued in front of the AL party office at Chaprashirhat East Bazar around 4:45pm, police said. It continued till 7:00pm, turning the area into a battlefield.

Meanwhile, Quader Mirza called a dawn-to-dusk hartal in Companiganj upazila today, "protesting the attack on his men".

Besides, he announced that he would hold a press conference at 10:00am today at Basurhat, while Badal called a press conference around noon at Chaprashirhat over yesterday's incident.

According to locals and police sources, Badal, also a former chairman of Companiganj upazila, asked his supporters to come to the Chaprashirhat party office at 4:30pm to exchange views over holding a press conference today against Quader Mirza's recent comments on party leaders.

But before that, supporters of his rival group, led by Charfakira Union Chairman Jamal Uddin Liton, a man of Quader Mirza, gathered there.

The supporters of the two groups got locked into an altercation. At one point, chase, counter-chase and clash took place between them. Bullets were also fired. At least 50 people of the two sides were wounded.

On information, Companiganj police rushed to the spot and fired blank shots to bring the situation under control.

Journalist Burhan Uddin was hit by bullets while covering the incident.

Shortly after the incident, followers led by Quader Mirza, mayor of Basurhat municipality, attacked Badal's house near Chaprashirhat Bazar. They went there in two minibuses and over 100 motorcycles, Badal alleged.

On the other hand, in a Facebook live, Quader

Mirza alleged that his men were attacked by the men of lawmakers Ekramul and Nizam. He claimed that at least his 50 supporters were hurt in the attack.

"If any of our leaders and activists dies, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader, Companiganj Upazila Parishad Chairman Shahab Uddin, MP Ekramul Karim Chowdhury, MP Nizam Hazari and former Upazila Chairman Mizanur Rahman Badal will be held responsible for this," Mirza Quader said.

He also alleged that his men were shot by his rival group in presence of police.

Mir Jahedul Haque, officer-in-charge of Companiganj Police Station, who was present on the spot, told reporters that during a procession led by Badal, there was a scuffle between the supporters of UP Chairman Jamal and Badal at Chaprashirhat.

After that, some followers led by Quader Mirza went to Chaprashirhat Bazar and another clash took place. At that time, police brought the situation under control by firing shots in the air, he added.

Md Alamgir Hossain, superintendent of Noakhali police, said the clash ensued over the political rivalry between Quader Mirza and Badal.

Police fired 10-12 bullets to disperse the clashing groups. Riot police have been deployed to fend off further untoward incident in the area, he added.

Quader Mirza has been making comments against corruption and misdeeds committed by AL men in Noakhali and Feni for the last two months. He even on multiple occasions came down heavily on government officials for their alleged involvement with corrupt politicians.

On February 18, Quader Mirza and his followers enforced a half-day shutdown in Companiganj upazila, demanding the transfer of some government officials and punishment of some party men for "their involvement in corruption".

US officially back in Paris accord

AFP, Washington

The United States yesterday officially returned to the Paris climate accord, with President Joe Biden's administration vowing to make the environmental battle a top priority.

Exactly one month after Biden took office and immediately moved to rejoin, the world's largest economy and second largest carbon emitter was formally back in the 2015 accord aimed at confronting the planet's dangerously rising temperatures.

The re-entry of the United States means that the Paris accord again includes virtually every country after Biden's predecessor Donald Trump made the United States the sole outlier.

"Climate change and science diplomacy can never again be 'add-ons' in our foreign policy discussions," Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement saluting the return of the United States.

"Addressing the real threats from climate change and listening to our scientists is at the center of our domestic and foreign policy priorities. It is vital in our discussions of national security, migration international health efforts, and in our economic diplomacy and trade talks."

While praising the Paris accord, negotiated by former president Barack Obama, Blinken said that upcoming climate diplomacy will be crucial.