

**BANGLADESH UPDATE**



**585**  
New cases in 24hrs



**5,46,801**  
Total cases



**8,416**  
Deaths



**8,97,797**  
Recoveries



**GLOBAL UPDATE**



**2,545,315**  
Deaths



**114,816,302**  
Total cases

## Make people aware of benefits of insurance

PM asks companies to take initiatives

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged insurance companies to take initiatives so that the level of awareness among people could be raised over the benefits of opening insurance policies.

"There is a lack of awareness among the people about the benefits of insurance. I hope that those who are involved in the insurance sector will take initiatives so that awareness among people could be increased," she said.

The PM was addressing a programme, held at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre, marking the National Insurance Day 2021. She joined the programme virtually from the Gono Bhaban.

The theme of this year's National Insurance Day is "Mujib Borsher Ongkar, Bima Hok Sobar".

Hasina said if awareness can be built then people would go for opening different types of insurance policies. "For this, widespread publicity is urgently needed."

She said there should be large health insurance facilities in the country as people are not much aware of such insurance activities till now.

"Once the coronavirus pandemic is over, I think such awareness will be created among people in this regard."

The premier put emphasis on building more confidence in the insurance sector through increased implementation of the steps taken by the Insurance Development and Regulatory Authority.

Hasina said the importance of



insurance would increase with the expansion and strengthening of the country's economy.

Stressing the need for appropriate settlement of insurance claims, she said the people concerned have to remain alert to false claims on insurance.

"There were some instances of claiming excessive money than the actual losses from the insurance companies...you must remain alert to this."

Talking about the development of the insurance sector, the PM said the government would send some people abroad to get academic degrees in actuary. The government will pay for their studies but they have to return home on completion of their studies and work.

"Five people have been selected for this and they will return and work for the development of the insurance sector," she said.

An actuary calculates the risk factors of clients by analysing their age, sex, occupation and health condition and the insurance company sets premiums for customers based upon the risk factors.

Hasina highlighted the involvement of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in the insurance sector. She said Bangabandhu had worked in the insurance industry alongside doing politics to meet his livelihood expenses.

After the country's independence, Bangabandhu had enacted necessary laws and formed institutional bodies to make the insurance industry more vibrant, she added.



Next to a sign saying "parking is prohibited" on the pavement, motorcycles are parked right on the Gulshan Link Road in the capital, obstructing movement of vehicles. Such violations of traffic rules continue unabated in the city. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## Govt going for lease to private

FROM PAGE 1

"If we don't get proper response in this [leasing] process, we might consider these options. We cannot comment on this issue any further," he said.

According to the BJMC chairman, the government will not spend any money to modernise the mills. At most, it can remove the old machinery if the investors want them to do so.

The BJMC will remain as a monitoring body to oversee whether the investors are complying with the terms and conditions. BJMC will also lay off 90 percent of its 2,900 staff officers and maintain a small workforce only to monitor compliance issues.

The BJMC had earlier been reluctant to lease the land that comes with the mills to private investors.

Also member secretary of the technical committee, Abdur Rouf had told The Daily Star in September last year, "BJMC had bad experience leasing out the entire mills to the private sector for a longer period of time. Many businessmen tried to grab land and misused the mills."

To prevent such a situation, the technical committee had recommended that only the mills might be leased to industrialists and all the land would be kept under government control.

When asked last month why the decision about leasing the land has changed when there is previous evidence of land grabbing, Abdur Rouf said, "Land adjacent to a mill will also be leased so that the investors can extend the plant if necessary or build necessary infrastructure."

"However, he added, "land that is not adjacent to the mill - like the land for workers' and officers' quarters - will not be leased out."

"For instance, one of our largest jute mills encompasses 113 acres of land. We have calculated that if we lease out the land adjacent to the mill, at most 50 acres will be leased out in the process. The remaining 63 acres will be under our control."

RESEARCH DIRECTOR AT CENTRE FOR POLICY DIALOGUE KHONDAKER GOLAM MOAZZEM SAID, "IT SEEMS THAT THIS PLAN HAS BEEN ADOPTED TO SUSTAIN BJMC'S REGULATORY POWER BY MAINTAINING LARGE-SCALE JUTE MILLS. TO ENSURE EFFECTIVE PRIVATISATION, BJMC'S ACTIVITIES SHOULD BE STOPPED IN THE FIRST PLACE."

INDUSTRIALISTS SAID THE DURATION OF THE CONTRACT IS TOO SHORT AND THEIR DEMANDS FOR BANK LOANS ON EASY TERMS HAVE NOT YET BEEN ADDRESSED.

CHAIRMAN OF BANGLADESH JUTE SPINNERS ASSOCIATION MD ZAHID MIAH SAID, "I HAVE BEEN SAYING IT FOR A LONG TIME THAT WITHOUT A LONG-TERM CONTRACT, LIKE FOR 99 YEARS, INVESTING IN THESE MILLS WILL NOT BE FEASIBLE. THE MILLS AND THEIR EQUIPMENT ARE SO OLD THAT AN INVESTOR WILL HAVE TO START FROM SCRATCH."

"GETTING BANK LOANS AND IMPORTING AND INSTALLING NEW MACHINERY WILL TAKE TIME AND IF EVERYTHING GOES IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION, THEN THE LEASE TERM WILL END JUST AT THE TIME WHEN THE INVESTOR WILL START TO MAKE PROFITS. THEY [BJMC] MIGHT TELL YOU THAT THEY WILL RENEW THE CONTRACT BUT THIS CAN NEVER BE SAID BEFOREHAND."

CHAIRMAN OF BANGLADESH JUTE MILLS ASSOCIATION MOHAMMED MAHBUB RAHMAN PATWARI SAID, "IF THE DURATION IS SO SHORT AND THE LAND IS NOT LEASED, NO BANK WILL BE INTERESTED TO GIVE LOANS. THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD TAKE SPECIAL MEASURES TO SANCTION LOANS FOR THE INVESTORS OF THESE MILLS ON EASY TERMS."

EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN OF BANGLADESH INVESTMENT DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY SIRAZUL ISLAM SAID, "THE LOCATIONS OF THE JUTE MILLS ARE VERY LUCRATIVE AND THERE IS A LARGE AMOUNT OF LAND ON THEIR PREMISES."

"IF THE GOVERNMENT WANTED TO USE THESE PROPERTIES FOR OTHER INDUSTRIES,

many Bangladeshi and foreign investors would have come forward. However, the decision so far is to lease out the mills exclusively for jute industries."

RESEARCH DIRECTOR AT CENTRE FOR POLICY DIALOGUE KHONDAKER GOLAM MOAZZEM SAID, "IT SEEMS THAT THIS PLAN HAS BEEN ADOPTED TO SUSTAIN BJMC'S REGULATORY POWER BY MAINTAINING LARGE-SCALE JUTE MILLS. TO ENSURE EFFECTIVE PRIVATISATION, BJMC'S ACTIVITIES SHOULD BE STOPPED IN THE FIRST PLACE."

"WE HAVE SAID PREVIOUSLY THAT THE LARGE MILLS SHOULD BE REPLACED WITH SMALL AND MEDIUM-SCALE PRIVATELY RUN MILLS. THE EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE AND REAL ESTATE CAN ALSO BE HANDED OVER TO BEZA [Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority] WHO CAN ESTABLISH ECONOMIC ZONES TO ATTRACT INVESTMENT IN MORE PROFITABLE INDUSTRIES."

HE ADDED, "THE GOVERNMENT CAN ALSO INCENTIVISE THE JUTE INDUSTRY IN THESE ECONOMIC ZONES WHICH WILL ATTRACT BUSINESSMEN TO INVEST IN THE JUTE MILLS."

INVESTORS ARE ALSO ALARMED BY THE UNSETTLED FINANCIAL LIABILITIES OF THESE MILLS - WHICH AMOUNT, AT PRESENT, TO MORE THAN Tk 1,000 crore in unpaid loans to various banks. The mills also owe more than Tk 250 crore to raw jute merchants who have been clamouring for their dues for a long time, according to BJMC sources.

CPD'S MOAZZEM SAID, "BEFORE LEASING OUT THESE MILLS, THE GOVERNMENT MUST CLEAR ALL OF THE UNSETTLED FINANCIAL ISSUES OF THE MILLS. OTHERWISE, THERE WILL BE LEGAL DIFFICULTIES IN GETTING BANK LOANS."

IN THIS REGARD, BJMC CHAIRMAN ABDUR ROUF ASSERTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL CLEAR THESE DUES BY THE NEXT FISCAL YEAR. HE ALSO SAID IT WILL BE MENTIONED IN THE CONTRACT, THAT THE INVESTORS WILL NOT BE LIABLE FOR UNSETTLED FINANCIAL ISSUES.

## TAQI MURDER CASE N'ganj court orders Rab to submit charge sheet soon

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

A local court in Narayanganj yesterday asked Rab to soon submit the charge sheet in teenage boy Tanwir Muhammad Taqi murder case.

Narayanganj Senior Judicial Magistrate Nurunnahar Yasmin passed the order after a hearing over a petition filed by the plaintiff's lawyer.

"With the latest petition, I have so far submitted four or five such petitions before the court seeking orders for the submission of the charge sheet and the arrest of the accused person," said the lawyer Ziaul Islam Kajol.

"Every time, the court issued directives to Rab to submit the charge sheet. But it did not fix any deadline. That is why we did not see any activities of the Rab in this regard," he added.

Taqi, 17, went missing after leaving his Shaista Khan Road home for Sudhijon Pathagar, a local library, around 4:00pm on March 6, 2013. He was a student of ABC International School.

On the morning of March 8, his body was found floating on the Shitalakkhya river.

Taqi's father Rafiur Rabbi filed a murder case with Narayanganj Kotwali Police Station the same day. He also submitted a complaint to the superintendent of police on March 18, accusing seven persons by name and 8-10 unnamed others.

Eight of the accused remain absconding while five have been arrested in the case.

Law enforcers, however, are yet to file charge sheet in the case, though seven years have already been passed.

## NARCOTICS CASE

### Trial of Papia, her husband begins

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The trial of a narcotics case, filed against expelled Juro Mohila League leader Shamima Nur Papia and her husband Mofizur Rahman Sumon, began at a Dhaka tribunal yesterday with deposition of the complainant.

Judge Md Amirul Islam of the Special Tribunal-8 of Dhaka recorded the statement of Md Shafiqul Islam, sub-inspector of Rab-1.

Amirul then set April 12 for cross-examination of the complainant on behalf of the couple.

In his statement, Shafique said that after getting information from a reliable source, a team led by him, along with a magistrate, conducted a drive at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport and arrested Papia, her husband and two of their accomplices at 12:40pm on February 22 last year when they were trying to leave the country.

"We recovered seven passports, Tk 2,12,270, fake notes worth Tk 25,600, US \$11,481, 420 Sri Lankan rupees, 301 Indian rupees and two debit cards from their possessions," Shafique said.

"Later, we raided Papia's flats in the capital's Farmgate and recovered a foreign-made pistol, two magazines with 20 bullets, five bottles of foreign liquor, Tk 58,41,000 cash, and credit and debit cards of different banks," he said in his statement.

Later, two cases were filed with Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station under the Arms and the Narcotics Control Acts, while another one with Biman Bandar Police Station under the Special Powers Act.

Apart from these, two more money laundering cases were also filed against the couple.

On September 10 last year, Rab pressed charges against the couple in the drugs case.

The tribunal framed the charges against the couple on January 12.

Earlier on October 12 last year, Papia and her husband were sentenced to 27 years imprisonment in an arms case.

## PK Halder

FROM PAGE 1

Halder, now in Toronto, is the director of P&L Hal Holding Inc., a Canadian corporation, according to Canadian media reports.

He came under the spotlight during the anti-casino drives in Bangladesh in 2019.

The ACC launched an investigation into the involvement of 43 people, including Halder, in the illegal casino business.

In January this year, the ACC filed five cases against 33 people, including Halder, for allegedly laundering over Tk 350 crore of International Leasing and Financial Services Limited (ILFSL).

The ACC is also looking into allegations that Halder and his associates laundered over Tk 10,000 crore from four non-banking financial institutions (NBFI) between 2014 and 2019.

## Celebrating our graduation

FROM PAGE 1

Our struggle for independence ended in 1971 but the more complex task of nation building began right after. We had many handicaps - huge population, limited land, rudimentary infrastructure, largescale illiteracy and hardly any capital not to mention frequent natural disasters and almost regular floods. We started with an exceptional constitution, a timely election and some farsighted policy formulation. The assassination of the Father of the Nation along with family, save two daughters, and the killing inside the jail of the four national leaders including the brilliant war time prime minister, Tajuddin, dealt Bangladesh a near mortal blow. The two military dictatorships derailed our march forward in many substantive ways, especially institution building and democracy.

It is the restoration of democracy in 1991 that relaunched our journey towards realising our dreams of 1971 - democracy, secularism and a society based on equality and social justice.

The journey of the last 30 years of democracy and development, in spite of the many ups and downs, has been uneven. Starting from early nineties to the beginning of the new millennium we had a greater play of democracy and freedom of expression including independent journalism than in the last decade. However, the last decade has the unique distinction of launching Bangladesh in a growth trajectory that belied all the doubters and forged the country in a new world of possibilities that it had never known before.

With the graduation to a developing country a new journey begins for Bangladesh. This journey will be of serious competition of producing goods and services both efficiently and economically making quality and pricing issues a central concern. We must remember that many of our global trading achievements have come due to special tariffs and preferential trading regimes. All this will be gone and we will be playing, so to speak in the real world.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has rightly emphasised the need for sustaining the present achievements through relentless effort. But the real challenge is achieving "efficiency", which is far easier said than done. It involves decision making, resource allocation, most efficient use of funds,

marketing and value chain efficacy. We have achieved many things but have never asked whether they were accomplished with the minimum resource required. The return on investment is a concept though popular among the private sector does not seem to exist in the public expenditure pattern repeatedly exemplified by the numerous times the date and budget of government projects are extended. As we graduate, we must make our financial sector more efficient and the whole administrative process transparent and accountable, the latter seems to exist nowhere in our system.

It was proper and correct for the PM to have given the credit to our people for graduation to ranks of developing countries. Our people have shown an extraordinary level of resilience and hard work. They have also surprised many of our development partners by their capacity to adopt new technologies and scientific methods in agriculture, making us the highest performers in many agri-products.

RMG sector is already globally known which has been added to by light engineering, ship building, pharmaceuticals, leather products and many FMCG items.

Our leaving behind the LDC status will obviously open up much greater prospects of FDI which, however will not be automatically so, unless we reform some of our governance system which includes the legal and regulatory regimes. Many of our institutions are still fundamentally politically driven which negatively influences foreign investors.

Corruption will remain a serious challenge to our future advancement. With global anti-corruption detection mechanism becoming more and more efficient, Bangladesh needs to seriously look into ways of reigning in the corrupt who now seem to have spread their wings everywhere.

Repressive measures and failures notwithstanding, this government and Sheikh Hasina as its leader deserve tremendous credit for leading the country to this level of development. Especially we credit her for having injected a "can do" feelings among the people and given the younger generation a new sense of confidence about the country and its future.

We have fought through our economic struggles well. Now let us handle our comparative economic success with diligence and maturity.

## Masterpieces left to decay

FROM PAGE 1

Some of Dhaka's landmark structures like Shahidullah Hall, SM Hall, Burdwan House and Ahsan Manjil were constructed following colonial style. All these buildings were built much above the ground having main gates, he added.

But the DU library and also the fine arts building, both designed by Muzharul Islam, have no such main gates and they are close to the ground. Openness is the key feature of both the buildings, constructed and designed keeping in mind the country's climate, according to Prof Sayeed.

"Nowadays, we see artworks on the walls of modern buildings. This trend began in this country with this library," he said.

In the library, ramps were used between ground floor and first floor; it was rare in the sub-continent but could be found in Europe back then, he added.

The Dhaka University authorities later constructed a new building connected to the library and the original structure was thus changed. Subsequently, multiple repairs also distorted the main design.

"Now the sculpture of Novera Ahmed has been kept in an environment which does not suit it. No sunshine comes through due to the construction of a new room in front of it," said Prof Lala Rukh Selim of the Department of Sculpture of Fine Arts Institute in Dhaka

University.

Several cracks have developed on different parts of Novera's sculpture - two can easily be noticed on the white elephant and seven on the white horse.

A wall has been constructed dividing the room on the first floor that houses "Fishermen's village". The mural was also got spotted with white paints when the library authorities painted the adjoining wall and roof.

The mural "Boat Composition" is surrounded by electric wires and circuit boxes. Several Cracks have developed on the surface and a portion of it has been discoloured because of unwanted paints.

The murals portray riverine life and fishermen's community of Bangladesh.

Another work of Hamidur Rahman, "Borak Duldul" is on the western part of the library building. A modern depiction of Islamic myth, it spans around 1,700 square feet area.

Of the four, this one is the worst affected. Around three feet area of the upper portion of the mural has decayed. Some portion of the work has been eaten by termites.

"In all the four artworks, we notice features of both folk and primitive art," said Dipti Rani Datta, assistant professor of the Department of Oriental Art of Fine Arts Institute of Dhaka University.

All these works carry the consciousness and style of the early era of modern art practices in Bangladesh, she added.

## Erfan cleared in narcotics case

FROM PAGE 1

The complaint mentioned that Rab officers found a black foreign pistol with two bullets, a magazine under a mattress, and 12 cans of beer in Erfan's room on the third floor.

But, Inspector Muhammad Delwar Hossain of Chawkbazar Police Station wrote in the probe report that that was not Erfan's room.

The report was submitted to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka on January 5.

It said the room was used by guests who are mostly political activists visiting him. Since Erfan is an elected councillor of Ward-30 and son of a lawmaker, vested quarters planted the firearms.

Contacted yesterday, Inspector Delwar said he mentioned a similar reason why the beers were in that room.

Earlier, Rab Director General Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun said the cases against Erfan were based on evidence officers found during raids at his house.

Lt Col Ashique Billah, Rab's legal

and media wing director, earlier said that Rab carried out the drive based on specific information and seized firearms and alcohol in presence of an executive magistrate.

The investigation officer also appealed to the court to clear Erfan in the cases.

However, Erfan cannot walk out of jail as he is yet to secure bail in an attempted murder case filed in October last year, his lawyer Pran Nath told The Daily Star.

In the attempted murder case, police found evidence to prove the charges.

Erfan was arrested on charges of attacking Lt Wasif Ahmed Khan of Bangladesh Navy in the capital's Dhanmondi on October 25 last year.

Rab conducted a drive at Haji Salim's house on Debidas Lane in Old Dhaka the next day.

A mobile court of Rab on the same day sentenced Erfan to six months in prison for keeping walkie-talkies illegally and six months for possessing illegal alcohol.

## Govt won't supply it to pvt hospitals

FROM PAGE 1

government involve privately owned hospitals in the immunisation campaign.

Pointing to this, Prof ABM Khurshid Alam said, "There has been a change on the primary discussion on giving vaccines to the private sector. Now, they have been encouraged to import vaccines [themselves]."

The health directorate chief, meanwhile, said they have asked for data of the teachers to be vaccinated from the ministry of education.

"Teachers will be inoculated as early as possible," he said, adding, "The government is planning to inoculate teachers first and then students. We already have included the teacher category in the online registration process."

Starting from February 7, the government has been inoculating frontline workers of different sectors and people aged 40 and above as priority basis in the first month.

Although the teachers were not primarily included in the priority list, the government in principle decided to include them after students of different universities demonstrated demanding reopening their institutions recently.

Against this backdrop, the government announced the universities and equivalent institutions will be reopened from May 17.

On Saturday, the government decided to reopen all primary, secondary and higher secondary educational institutions on March 30.

Meanwhile, the total number of people vaccinated rose to 32,26,825 as new 1,16,300 people were vaccinated countrywide yesterday.

Of those who were vaccinated yesterday, 21 reported side-effects.

As of 5:30pm yesterday, a total 44,13,892 people have registered for vaccines.

Meanwhile, the positivity rate of Covid-19 rose again yesterday.

Against a total of 13,748 tests

conducted yesterday, the positivity rate was 4.31 percent, which was 2.87 percent the day before.

Eight more people died from Covid-19 in 24-hours ending at 8:00am yesterday, said another press release from the DGHS.

With the latest fatalities, the total number of deaths has reached 8,416. The death rate was 1.54 percent.

At least 585 new infections were recorded in the same 24-hour period, taking the total number of infected people in the country to 5,46,801.

At least 873 Covid-19 patients have recovered during the same period. The total number of recoveries now stands at 4,97,797 and the recovery rate at 90.98 percent.

Among the eight deceased, four were males.

Two of the dead were aged between 41 and 50, three between 51 and 60 and three were above 60 years, said the DGHS release.