

**BANGLADESH UPDATE**



**7,087**  
New cases in 24hrs



**6,37,364**  
Total cases



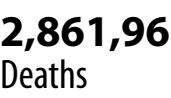
**9,266**  
Deaths



**5,52,482**  
Recoveries



**2,861,967**  
Deaths



**131,553,128**  
Total cases

## 3 teens raped in three districts

STAR REPORT

Three teenage girls were raped in Noakhali, Jamalpur, and Sylhet. Police so far arrested two youths in these connections.

In Sonaimuri upazila of Noakhali, a 14-year-old girl was raped allegedly by a youth on Saturday night.

Police yesterday morning arrested the youth -- Noor Hossain, 20, of Khajuria village in the upazila -- after the elder sister of the girl filed a case with Sonaimuri Police Station.

The youth came to the girl's house to attend a marriage programme, the victim's relatives said.

At one stage, he took the girl to a cowshed and raped her, they added.

The youth fled the scene, leaving the girl injured. Later, relatives rescued her.

The youth was arrested immediately after filing the case, said Mohammad Giyas Uddin, officer-in-charge of Sonaimuri Police Station.

Medical examination of the girl was complete, he said.

Another 14-year-old girl was raped in an under-construction building of Ansar and VDP office in Bakshiganj upazila of Jamalpur early yesterday.

The father of the girl filed a case in this regard with Bakshiganj Police Station yesterday morning.

According to the case statement, Robin Mia, of Dapunia area in Mymensingh Sadar upazila, worked as a day labourer at the construction site.

He developed good relations with a local girl and asked her to meet him at the night at the construction site. As she came, Robin raped the girl.

The girl was sent to Jamalpur Sheikh Hasina Medical College Hospital for examination and police were trying to arrest the accused, said Sub-inspector Sharif Ahmed of Bakshiganj Police Station.

Meanwhile, in another development, police arrested a man at Kurbanitila in Sylhet Sadar upazila for kidnapping and raping a 15-year-old girl.

The arrestee is Rubel Miah, 28, of Bagbari area in Sylhet city.

BM Ashraf Ullah Taher, additional deputy commissioner (media) of Sylhet Metropolitan Police, said, "The arrestee somehow influenced the victim to go on a trip with him by an auto-rickshaw and took her to Dakshin Surma upazila's Technical College area on April 1. There, he raped her several times.

"On Saturday, the victim's family members traced her location, contacted the accused, and convinced him to come to Baishitla area with the victim. There, they detained the man and informed police via a 999 call."

## MBBS admission test results released

STAR REPORT

The Directorate General of Medical Education (DGME) yesterday published the results of the MBBS admission test for the academic session 2020-21.

A total of 48,975 students passed against 12,690 seats in 47 public and 70 private medical colleges across the country for the academic year 2020-21.

There are 4,350 seats in public medical colleges while 8,340 in private medical colleges.

Ali Nur, secretary of the Health Education Department under the health ministry, announced the result around 7:00pm from the health directorate.

On April 2, a total of 116,792 aspirants appeared in the admission test of the MBBS course for the academic session.

A student has stood first in the exam securing 87.25 marks in the tests.

## Second wave

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showed a sudden surge from March 29 to 31, and since then, it has been rising," Hasina said in her winding up speech in the 12th session of 11th parliament which was prorogued yesterday.

About the new restrictions, the PM said, "I know everyone will face difficulties. Despite this, I say people's lives should be given preference over everything."

The situation will be under control if people follow the rules and health guidelines.

The PM further said tourism and domestic flight operations will remain suspended for a week while shopping malls will be closed.

The PM advised everyone to inhale hot water vapor at home. "It is not clear how bad the virus is this time. The situation got worse all of a sudden."

She urged people to wear facemasks, maintain social distancing, and stop social gatherings including wedding ceremonies.

She asked the authorities to make sure people arriving from abroad are quarantined.

"Take special care of children and the youth as Covid-19 infection rate is much higher among them, although the elderly people were infected with the virus during the first wave."

Mentioning that several lawmakers died of coronavirus, she mourned the deaths of the people from Covid-19.

She said development projects would continue.

The government has been working to make Bangladesh self-reliant in every sector. She hailed the development of a new variety of onion.

Hasina urged people to farm on every inch of land to prevent food shortage due to the pandemic.



**There was a massive rush in the capital yesterday, on the eve of the government's 7-day restrictions to curb the recent spike in coronavirus cases. With public transport set to be suspended from today, clockwise from bottom left, hundreds of city dwellers rushed to Gabtoli Bus Terminal to go back to their home districts; others crowded at the Sadarghat Launch Terminal. There was near gridlock in Banani as people scammed in their vehicles to get their errands done and a similar scenario played out in Karwan Bazar kitchen market. A common theme in all the photos taken yesterday is that health guidelines -- social distancing and wearing masks -- were flouted.**

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN/RASHED SHUMON/SK ENAMUL HAQ

## Govt working to tap other sources

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at the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, told The Daily Star yesterday.

The government has signed an agreement of purchasing three crore doses of vaccines from Serum Institute of India through its local agent Beximco.

As per the agreement, the government was supposed to get 50 lakh doses of vaccines each month.

But till yesterday, the government has only received 70 lakh doses of vaccines in two instalments.

In the meantime, New Delhi reportedly imposed a temporary restriction on all major exports of the AstraZeneca vaccine made by SII

to meet demands at home, reported global media.

Apart from these, on January 21 Bangladesh received 20 lakh doses as a token of friendship from India while Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi brought 12 lakh doses with him when he came to join the country's golden jubilee celebration.

However, the third shipment of the doses purchased by Bangladesh from SII is still uncertain.

Contacted, Nazmul Hassan Papon, managing director of Beximco Pharmaceuticals Ltd, said, "We are yet to get any date of the vaccine shipment's arrival. We are expecting that by next week we will be able to get

details of the next consignment."

Besides, the Covax programme, led by the World Health Organisation and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, has committed to give Bangladesh a total of 6.8 crore vaccine shots. As part of the commitment, the country is expected to receive 10,908,000 shots of the Oxford vaccine by May.

Asked about the current status, the health minister said they were yet to get any update from Covax.

With the vaccine stock depleting and uncertainty looming over getting the purchased vaccine from SII as scheduled, the on-going vaccination campaign appears set to suffer.

But the government has decided

to continue the mass inoculation campaign as planned.

"We had a meeting to discuss the inoculation programme and have decided to continue the way it is across the country. There is no change in the plan. We will keep on administering the first dose," Prof Dr Meerjady Sabrina Flora, additional director general of Directorate General of Health Services, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Meanwhile, health officials said injecting the second dose of the vaccination will start from April 8.

The government has so far inoculated 54,98,172 people, while 69,15,222 people have gotten registered with Surokha app for vaccination.

## Another new record in daily Covid cases

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operational from 8:00am to 4:00pm.

The government has, however, kept the ongoing Amar Ekushey Book Fair open.

Although experts said there was a need for complete shutdown, they said the current measures will still help reduce transmission, but it will depend on successful enforcement.

"These are very good measures and will reduce the deaths, I think. But it will depend on how successfully those are enforced," Prof Ridwanur Rahman, an infectious disease specialist, told The Daily Star yesterday.

About the book fair, he, however, said, "This is a bad example. It will create dissatisfaction among other businesses. Nothing should be more important than lives."

According to the World Health

Organization, the transmission will be considered under control if the positivity rate remains stagnant below five percent continuously for at least two weeks.

After the second spike in November and December last year, the positivity rate started going down from January. Throughout February, this rate was below three percent but started rising early last month.

For nearly a month now, hospitals, especially in Dhaka city, have been struggling with the rising number of critical patients.

As of noon yesterday, only two ICU beds out of 118 in Dhaka's Covid dedicated public hospitals were vacant.

Only 113 out of 2,515 general beds in those hospitals were vacant.

Dr Sarwar Ul Alam, director of Kuwait-Bangladesh Friendship Hospital, the country's first Covid dedicated hospital, told The Daily Star yesterday, "The surge in number of patients is on the rise again. We have 15 ICU beds, but the number of those in need of the ICU is very high."

With the latest count, the total number of confirmed cases is now 6,37,364.

In the last 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, 2,364 patients recovered, raising the number of recoveries to 5,49,775, which is more than 87 percent of all cases detected so far.

On March 8 last year, the DGHS reported the first three cases while the first death was reported on March 18.

Of those who died yesterday, 38 were males and 20 females.

## Surveillance data key to fighting Covid

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of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA).

The group's primary role will be to advise and support efforts to assist WHO and UN member states to obtain accurate estimates of the number of deaths attributable to the direct and indirect impacts of the pandemic.

Nazrul Islam is the only Bangladeshi among the 31 members of the advisory group.

In line with the broader objective of the group, Nazrul and two other members from the advisory group have been analysing all reported deaths since 2016 from 29 countries across the globe.

"We have selected those countries because they have accurate and robust data on vital statistics. Using a newly developed model, we will analyse the trends and patterns of deaths over the past few years, and will compare with the deaths during the Covid-19 pandemic," he said.

In this way, the team aims to assess the deaths that were, directly or indirectly, caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

He informed The Daily Star that Bangladesh was not among the 29 countries under their study.

"Our statistical model requires detailed weekly mortality data by age and sex. For an accurate examination of the historical trend of mortality, we also need detailed data for the last few years. To my knowledge, such data is not yet available from Bangladesh," Nazrul said.

According to Nazrul, more detailed data is also required to have a proper understanding of viral transmission.

"For example, test positivity rate could be very misleading in measuring the level of transmission. It depends on how accurate the diagnostic test is. But more importantly, it depends on the population who are being tested for Covid-19. If we test 1,000 frontline workers, we may see a higher test positivity rate compared to the positivity rate of another 1,000 people who are safely working from home," he said.

Lauding the countrywide vaccination programme in Bangladesh, he also warned that the vaccine alone will not

be enough to control the pandemic.

"I am not yet eligible for a Covid-19 vaccine here in the UK. Bangladesh has done an extraordinary job in the Covid-19 vaccine rollout. However, since the Covid-19 vaccine does not offer immediate protection against the disease, we need to continue to adhere to other protective measures such as personal hygiene, wearing masks properly, and maintaining physical distancing."

He, however, stressed on kindness and compassion for everyone at this critical time.

"I am inside my house for the last one year -- maintaining physical distancing and other health safety guidelines. I understand it can be challenging for many. But this is for the greater good of everyone. It is our shared responsibility to keep each other safe," Nazrul Islam concluded.

In the context of the recent surge of Covid-19 in Bangladesh, he said, there are many things to do in terms of a public health campaign.

"Several issues are very important simultaneously -- ensure vaccine

rollout, reaching out to the people to be serious about Covid-19, and proper surveillance. It you ask me, I would invest more in a public health campaign and surveillance," Nazrul Islam said.

Nazrul received his Master's and PhD degrees in epidemiology and biostatistics at Harvard University and the University of British Columbia respectively following his medical training as a general practitioner.

He then moved to the University of Cambridge as a quantitative research associate to work on randomised clinical trials and large observational studies on cardio-metabolic disorders.

Much of his recent research has been dedicated to a better understanding of Covid-19.

His current work at the University of Oxford involves a combination of research methodology, medical statistics, and machine learning to examine cardiovascular disease burden using integrated electronic health records and large prospective health studies.

He is also a research editor at the British Medical Journal.

## They've right

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people against whom enquiries or investigations are running in connection with corruption allegations or cases from leaving the country, and they have the right to free movement according to the constitution, the court had said on March 16.

A citizen's liberty of movement involves his or her personal independence, which is universal, the HC said in the full-text verdict released yesterday.

If such a liberty has to be restricted, it has to be done within the prescribed rule or procedure of the relevant law, which means that no one should be condemned unheard before any action is taken against him or her, the HC bench said in the full text of the verdict.

"We have no hesitation in saying that controlling and restricting citizens' constitutional right to movement by any individual or authorities on whimsical desire is unconstitutional," read the verdict.

The HC bench came up with the judgment following the writ petition filed by one Ataur Rahman from Narsingdi challenging the Anti-Corruption Commission's (ACC's) action to restrain him from going abroad as a graft allegation against him was being inquired.

The HC declared the ACC's action illegal and allowed Ataur to go to Sweden where he lives with his family.

The ACC issued a notice on August 24, 2020, asking Ataur, known as Sweden Ataur, to submit his wealth statement to the commission.

After he submitted the statement, the anti-graft body started an inquiry into his wealth and on December 20 that year, issued a letter to immigration police to refrain Ataur from going to Sweden.

Ataur then filed the petition with the HC challenging the ACC's action.

In the full text of the verdict, the HC bench observed, "It is the reality that enquiry or investigation of corruption or money laundering cases is a matter of time, though there is a time limit under the relevant rules.

"Our judicial experience says the commission [Anti-Corruption Commission] or other investigation agency or authority cannot complete enquiry or investigation within the stipulated period.

"It is also a reality that many corruption suspects or accused are leaving the country at the enquiry or investigation stage and cannot later be put before the law and courts.

"Considering these realities, it has become indispensable to formulate necessary laws or rules in order to restrain or control the movement of people involved in enquiries or investigations related to corruption or money laundering cases..."

"Provisions of assigning reasons for restricting the suspects from leaving the country and scope for placing their [aggrieved persons] statements or objections have to be included in the law or rules.

"Imposing such embargo on a person for an indefinite period is an unconstitutional and antihuman measure and therefore, specifying a time limit to this effect will be justified," reads the verdict.

In the full text of the verdict, the HC bench also observed that the competent courts concerned will have the full jurisdiction to pass necessary orders on whether such people against whom inquiries or investigations are underway can go abroad until a law is enacted or rules are framed to this effect.

"The competent courts can permit the enquiry or investigation agencies can impose embargo on suspect persons from leaving the country and it [embargo] cannot be more than 60 days," the HC said in the verdict.

The ACC on March 21 filed the petition with the Appellate Division seeking stay on the HC verdict. The stay petition is pending with the apex court.

## Rush, chaos on

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transport services -- road, waterway and railway -- and domestic flights will remain suspended. CNG-run auto-rickshaws and vehicles running under ride-sharing services will also fall under the restrictions.

Vehicles used for carrying goods as well as emergency services will remain out of the purview of the restrictions. People returning from or going abroad will not fall under the restrictions.

No one can go out from 6:00pm to 6:00am except for emergencies, including medicine, daily essentials, treatment and burial or cremations. Shops and malls will remain closed. Restaurants can sell foods online and offer takeaway services.

However, the restrictions will not be applicable to offices, employees and transports involved in maintaining law and order and emergency services, relief distribution, health services, electricity, water, gas, fire service, activities at port, telephone and internet services.

Banks will operate from 10:00am to 12:30pm. Public, private and autonomous offices can facilitate commute of their employees to workplaces, using their own transport on a limited scale. Industries and factories can do the same for their workers. Construction works would continue.

Ekushey Bôi Mela will also continue from noon to 5:00pm every day.