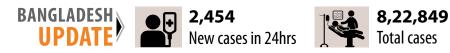


13,032

Deaths

3,791,779

Deaths



Lightning killed 177 in last four months

Says a survey based on media reports; most of the victims were farmers

#### STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 177 people were killed by lightning strikes, mostly farmers at different parts of the county while 47 others were wounded in the last four months since March.

This was disclosed by Save the Society and Thunderstorm Awareness Forum (SSTF) after a survey carried out from March to June based on information of both print, electronics and online portals.

"At least 122 farmers were killed by lightning strikes while doing work in farmlands while 15 people were killed while they went to collect mangoes under trees during Nor' westerly," said Rashim Mollah, secretary of the SSTF.

According to the survey, 149 people were male and 28 others were female among the dead.

At least 65 people were killed by lightning strikes in the first week of June, according to the survey.

Among the dead, 18 people were killed in Sirajganj, 14 in Jamalpur, 13 in Netrokona, 16 in Chapainawabganj, and 10 in Chattagram, the report said.

"Due to the nature disruption global climate change is going on for which the world is becoming warmer day by day and the number of thunderstorms is also increasing accordingly," said president of SSTF Kabirul Bashar.

He said once upon a time there were many big trees like palm trees, betel nut trees, coconut trees beside roads in rural

areas which would absorb the lightning but the number of these kinds of trees is being reduced drastically over years for which the number of lightning has increased.

The government needs to take initiative to plant these kinds of trees so that it can protect people in rural areas from the strike of lightning, he said.

The SSTF demanded the government to take initiative to inform people through mobile messages just before the strikes as the Met office can know about the possible strike of lightning 15 minutes ago.

Their other demands include giving more allocation on this side as Illocation in this sector is very poor, building shelter centres near open fields, farmlands, haor and baor along with necessary anti lightning equipment so that people can take shelter during lightning.

They also demanded to make all the products of the thunder protection system duty-free, government will have to make it compulsory through a gazette notification to set up anti-lightening equipment in every building.

Among others lightning expert unir Ahmed, Munir Hossain, Munir research fellow of IDEB Research and Technological Institute engineer, Abdul Alim, chief executive of Research Cell of SSTE, and Emdad Hossain Miah, vice president of SSTF, were present at the press conference.

# Tk 284cr project

committee is underway. After getting the approval, the NGOs will start working," he said.

Experts and child rights activists said the project could have made a tremendous contribution to the government's objective to get children out of hazardous child labour at a time when children's involvement in such risky work increased due to the pandemic

According to a recent survey of Manusher Jonno Foundation, some 7.800 out of 30,313 child labourers who were involved in risky jobs have switched to "riskier jobs" in eight districts between July and September 2020.

The report said some 5,600 child labourers migrated in search of a job in the past three months, and 2,400 have been forced to join new work at nominal wages.

Another MJF survey found that many parents, who were unemployed for quite some time, took advantage of the Covid-induced school closure and sent their children to work in the hope of getting some extra money.

More and more children joining

The list was then reviewed by another five-member committee and the reviewed copy was sent to the Prime Minister's Office early last year.

"In May 2020, we asked for a request for proposals (RFP) from the shortlisted NGOs and by June, we received the proposals from them," the PD said.

After scrutinising the proposals, we have prepared an initial list of 112 NGOs, which will be later approved by the cabinet committee on purchase. We are hoping that we will receive the approval soon and start our work shortly," he added.

Former Labour and Employment State Minister Mujibul Haque Chunnu, who made the declaration of eradicating hazardous child labour in 2016, said it was frustrating that even after the extension period, those implementing the projectcould not yet finalise the list of NGÓs.

Chunnu, who is the chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on labour and employment ministry, said, "As the standing committee chairman, I've raised the issue in several meetings, but didn't find any particular progress."

MJF Executive Director Shaheen Anam said there were allegations that some of the NGOs who do not have experience on working with child labour issue have submitted proposals in the project.

7,61,916

Recoveries

GLOBAL

With her broken arm in a cast, an elderly woman lies on a dinghy on the Sandhya river while a younger woman holds an umbrella over her as they return from a hospital in Barishal city to their home in Banaripara.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

# Districts grappling with Covid surge

### FROM PAGE 1

At the same time, the government should immediately increase the number of beds as well as manpower in Covid units and improve facilities in those hospitals to tackle the crisis, they said.

Infectious disease expert Dr Be-Nazir Ahmed said the situation would be dire in the coming days if it is not contained without any further delay.

"We always act late. If we had acted timely, the transmission rates would have been much lower in the districts along the border.

does not synchronise with the reality. It is a half-hearted lockdown. So, we have to behave in a way that can help achieve our desired goals," said Be-Nazir, former director (Disease Control) at the Directorate General of

the country crossed the grim milestone of 13,000 confirmed deaths from

hours till 8:00am yesterday.

day and 36 the day before.

shares border with India.

Also, 2,454 new cases were recorded

yesterday. And the overall positivity operations from Rajshahi to other parts

suspended admission of new patients. In Khulna Medical College Hospital (KMCH), 143 Covid patients were being treated till yesterday afternoon. The Covid unit at the hospital has 100 beds, including 61 general beds and 20 ICU beds, said officials there.

"The hospital authorities will resume new admission once beds become vacant," said Dr Suhash Ranjan Halder, residential medical officer of the KMCH. The positivity rate in the district was

40.67 percent yesterday. Six people died in 24 hours till 8:00am, taking the death toll in the district to 701.

Meanwhile, the authorities have decided to turn the Khulna Sadar Hospital into a Covid-dedicated hospital to treat more patients.

The situation in Rajshahi is also alarming. At least 15 people -- seven coronavirus patients and eight with Covid symptoms -- died at Rajshahi

Medical College Hospital in 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, said hospital sources.

The current positive rate there was 38.34 percent while it was 50 percent in Naogaon, and 39.19 percent in Chapainawabganj, shows DGHS data.

Civil Surgeon of Rajshahi Md Quiume Talukder told The Daily Star that a number of measures, including lockdown, were enforced in the district to curb virus transmission.

As a preventive measure, Bangladesh The positivity rate was 13.24 percent Railway yesterday cancelled all rail

June 17 as the coronavirus transmission was on the rise.

Authorities of Satkhira Medical College and Hospital said healthcare professionals were struggling to tackle the rush of patients.

"A total of 136 Covid patients are undergoing treatment in the hospital. We could not provide services properly due to an acute shortage of healthcare professionals," said Kudrat-e-Khuda, superintendent of the hospital.

In that 24 hours, one positive patient died while three others died with coronavirus symptoms there, he said In the northern bordering district of

Lalmonirhat, the positivity rate stood at 40 percent yesterday.

Health officials said out of 1,146 people tested positive, 17 died so far there.

Civil Surgeon Dr Nirmalendu Roy of Lalmonirhat said the infection rate in the district was on the rise and if it continued, the situation would be dire. "The situation will slip out of our hands if people don't follow the health

guidelines," he warned. In Natore, the covid-19 positivity rate is 53.24 percent yesterday while on Thursday it was 33.7 percent. The positivity rate went up despite enforcing a lockdown.

The situation in Kushtia is a bit better, but not something to cheer about

The positivity rate witnessed a decline -- from 35.09 percent on Thursday to 14.01 percent yesterday.

In Dinajpur, the current positivity

**R**USSIA WARNINGS Italy sets up cybersecurity agency

### AFP, Rome

Italy has created a national cybersecurity agency following warnings by Prime Minister Mario Draghi that Europe needed to protect itself from Russian "interference."

Total cases

The new agency was approved in a cabinet meeting late on Thursday.

It will need to "protect national interests and the resilience of services and essential functions of the State from cyber threats," the government said in a statement.

Speaking in Brussels on May 25, following a European Union summit, Draghi said urgent action was needed against digital threats.

"We need to strengthen ourselves, we need to strengthen ourselves a lot, especially in terms of cybersecurity, all of us, at national level and at EU level... because the level of [Russian] interference both with spies and with manipulation of the web has become truly alarming," he said.

Éarlier this year, an Italian navy captain was caught red-handed by police while selling confidential military documents, leaked from his computer, to a Russian embassy official.

The Italian government tasked the new agency with developing strategies to prevent, monitor, detect and mitigate cyber attacks, and stepping up national defences.

The agency, which according to media reports will employ around 300 people, will be controlled by Draghi and his security services advisor, expolice chief Franco Gabrielli.

Draghi, a former European Central Bank chief, has been quite active on intelligence matters since he was appointed in February to lead a national unity government.

# Bangladesh to get FROM PAGE 1

The Serum Institute of India supplied only seven million of AstraZeneca vaccines although Bangladesh had a contract of receiving 30 million vaccines in six months since January.

India had supplied 3.3 million vaccines as gifts to Bangladesh. With the vaccine shortage, Bangladesh has been requesting different countries for Covid-19 vaccines, including the US, UK, China, Russia, Australia, Canada and European countries.

China has supplied 5 lakh Sinopharm vaccine as a gift and another six lakh will be arriving on June 13.

Bangladesh has also approved buying 1.5 crore vaccine doses from Sinopharm, but with a government official making the price of the vaccine public, the Chinese side is reportedly

The goal of our Covid lockdowns

Health Services (DGHS). The warning came at a time when

Covid yesterday. The DGHS reported 43 deaths in 24

The number was 40 the previous

Among the 43 deaths, the highest --

15 -- was reported from Rajshahi which

in the 24-hour period, taking the total number to 822,849, according to a DGHS press release.

work in both formal and informal sectors amid the pandemic also increased violence against them at the workplace, as an MJF study found child abuse in the workplace shot up by 137 percent in July last year, compared to previous vears.

#### SLOW PÁCE

Project Director Md Monowar Hossain admitted that they are far behind the schedule and blamed the Covid-19 pandemic as a major reason.

"We couldn't work properly in the pandemic.

He said they received applications from the NGOs through Expression of Interest (EOI) in 2019, which were shortlisted by a seven-member committee.

"The government must make the list public so that everyone can see who has been selected and what their qualification is," she said.

Ambika Roy, child rights unit coordinator of Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK), said the target is unlikely to be achieved as everything is unclear till

Apart from this project, the government should take more initiatives to solve the problem and increase the job opportunities of the parents so they stop sending their children to risky work, she said.

rate stood at 13.39 percent, it said. DISTRICTS ALONG

#### **BORDER IN PERIL**

The Covid transmission has been showing an upward trend in Khulna, Satkhira, Rajshahi, Chapainawabganj, Dinajpur, Naogaon and Natore over the past several days.

The situation in some of the districts is so bad that the Covid-19 units at the hospitals there have no more beds left for new patients. They have stopped admitting patients.

Take the example of Khulna.

In the district, the Covid-dedicated hospitals are overburdened. They of the country for the next seven days.

"Operation of all trains from Rajshahi to different destinations will remain suspended from the midnight of June 11 to midnight of June 17," reads a notice issued by BR.

The situation is also not improving in Satkhira.

Despite being under a lockdown, the district had a positivity rate of 52.60 percent yesterday. This forced the local administration to extend the ongoing lockdown till June 17.

Hossain Safayat, civil surgeon of Satkhira, said the ongoing lockdown that started on June 5 was extended to

rate was around 30 percent, which is a little higher than the Rangpur division's positivity rate of 26.04 percent.

Meanwhile, 15 more Covid beds were added to M Abdur Rahim Medical College Hospital in Dinajpur to treat patients.

At least 83 people were admitted to the hospital in the 24-hours. All were showing acute Covid symptoms. Of them, 46 were suspected Covid patients, said health officials.

Dr Abdul Kuddus, Civil Surgeon in Dinajpur, said they increased the number of beds as the infection rate went up

unhappy. Its status is not clear until now.

A foreign ministry official said Bangladesh will also discuss buying Sinovax vaccines from China.

Bangladesh is also in discussion with China and Russia on coproduction of vaccine in Bangladesh. Foreign Minister Momen on Fhursday said there will be an announcement on co-production of vaccine soon.

Meanwhile, the White House on June 3 announced that it would supply 7 million vaccine doses to 15 Asian countries, including Bangladesh. The amount or the brand of the vaccine has vet to be known officially, but a diplomatic source said it could be either Pfizer or Moderna.

# Free Covid test

FROM PAGE 1

In many of those districts the positivity rate is above 20 percent while the country's overall positivity rate is 13.39 percent.

Hospitals are at capacity in some of those districts amid shortages of oxygen support and other equipment.

"We started sending additional oxygen concentrators, beds, medicines and hi-flow nasal cannula to the highly affected districts and we have also asked officials to let us know what they need," said Farid Hossain Miah, director (hospitals and clinics) at the Directorate General of Health Services.

The minister said since transport workers travel across the country, testing has been made free for them, and they will travel with a covidnegative certificate. Those tests will be antigen rapid tests.

Sheikh Md Hasan Imam, director (admin) at the DGHS, said doctors from various districts were sent in the affected region to run the hospitals, but 20 doctors were sent back to their concerned stations.

Rajshai division has already attached 66 doctors in the districts to tackle the situation, he said.

"We have 100 doctors for the highly affected areas. We will send them where they are needed," he added.

In Satkhira, the positivity rate was 55 percent.

Hussain Shafaat, civil surgeon of Satkhira, said, "We requested for 20 doctors. The DGHS have verbally assured us of sending them. We also need supporting employees."

#### 1b Covid jabs for poorer countries FROM PAGE 1 world".

## "Let's get to work."

Campaigners said the G7's vaccine donations pledge for this year and next -- including 500 million ÚS doses -- is far too little, too late to end a pandemic that has claimed over 3.7 million lives worldwide.

"If the best G7 leaders can manage is to donate one billion vaccine doses then this summit will have been a failure," Oxfam said, insisting the world needs 11 billion doses

COVID AND CLIMATE

The co-chair of Covax, the global body charged with ensuring equitable vaccine distribution for poorer countries, said there remains a yawning gap in vaccine supplies globally.

"We've administered somewhere around 2.2 billion doses of vaccine around the world. Seventy-seven percent of those doses have gone into arms in 10 countries only," said Jane Halton.

"If we're going to get all those extra doses, firstly manufactured, then shipped, and then in arms equitably around the world we are going to have to scale up.'

The G7 pledges "don't go far enough, fast enough", said Alex Harris, director of government relations for the global public health NGO Wellcome Trust.

"What the world needs is vaccines now -- not later this year.

"To date, G7 countries have distributed over 528 million doses to their combined 610 million population: in contrast, African countries, with twice as many people, have distributed just 34 million," he said.

Patrick Watt, public affairs director at Christian Aid, urged "much greater ambition if we're to vaccinate the

He urged leaders to join US President Joe Biden and French President Emmanuel Macron in supporting IF waivers

Zoe Abrams, executive director of the British Rea Gross, and vaccines was "heartening". British Red Cross, said the promise on

commitment must be welcomed, more needs to be done, and fast.

The WHO's regional director for Africa said wealthy nations can help poorer countries scale up vaccine drives, urging much-needed help in securing vaccines.

"As we close in on five million cases and a third wave in Africa looms, many of our most vulnerable people remain dangerously exposed to Covid-19," said Matshidiso Moeti.

"Countries that can, must urgently share Covid-19 vaccines. It's do or die on dose sharing for Africa."

But the G7 wants to rise to competing "vaccine diplomacy" efforts launched by China and Russia, with the Biden administration stressing it expects nothing in return for its donated jabs.

The leaders are also expected to outline more help for developing nations to build up infrastructure, as a counterpoint to the debt-fuelled spending by China in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

The initiative "will embrace a high standards, transparent, climate friendly, non-corrupt mechanism" for infrastructure investment in the developing world, a senior US official said.

"It will be an alternative to that which other countries, including China, are offering.

### FROM PAGE 1 Four of the arrestees gave confessional statements under Section 164 of the

Code of Criminal Procedure, DB Inspector Keshab Chakrabarty told this correspondent on Tuesday.

"So far, Jakaria Noman Fayezi, former publicity secretary of Hefazat, Babunagari's personal assistant Enamul Hasan Farooqi and two others have confessed to their involvement," he said.

"In the confessional statements, they mentioned several persons who plotted sabotage and instigated the attacks [on March 26]

Police sources said at least eight cases were lodged over the violence but details of all these cases could not be known.

In his case statement, Solaiman said he was on official duty in plainclothes at Hathazari Zilla Parishad Market, in front of Hathazari madrasa, on March 26

After Juma prayers, around 2:14pm, over a thousand madrasa students started coming out from Al-Jamiatul Ahlia Darul Uloom Moinul Islam Madrasa, popularly known as Hathazari madrasa. All were equipped with bamboo sticks, machetes, iron rods, knives, and other lethal weapons. A group of students spotted Solaiman and took him to a room on the third floor of the madrasa building.

Three of them asked Solaiman to call the officer-in-charge of Hathazari Police Station and ask him to come over to "beg for mercy". The constable made the phone call accordingly.

Around 2:30am on March 27,

Hathazari madrasa's Assistant ATTACKS ON POLICE Director Mowlana Md Yahiya helped him get out of the room but around 200 students again caught him and

They forced Solaiman to phone senior police officials, asking them to release the bodies of the four who died of bullet injuries during the violence, without autopsies, otherwise Solaiman would be killed.

Solaiman was freed at around 4:30pm on March 27 and he then took shelter with Tribani intersection's police.

Around the same time, police handed over the four bodies to their family members, without autopsies, from Chattogram Medical College Hospital, sources said.

The Hefazat leaders present at the hospital all along had threatened the authorities that they would go for tough action if the autopsies were done, as they called the procedure disgraceful to the victims.

However, talking to The Daily Star in late April, Chattogram Superintendent of Police SM Rashidul Haque said officials released the bodies "following the request of the families".

The four deceased were identified as madrasa students Nasir Ullah, Rabiul Islam, Kazi Mirazul Islam, and tailor Wahidul Islam.

Witnesses said they were hit with bullets during clashes between Hefazat supporters and police in front of Hathazari Police Station. They were pronounced dead after being taken to CMCH around 4:00pm on March 26.

Amir Hossain, inspector (intelligence) of Hathazari Police Station, lodged another case against Junaved Babunagari along with 74 other

named Hefazat leaders and 2,500 unnamed madrasa students. In the case statement, he mentioned that around 2,000 armed madrasa students started attacking some police personnel in front of Hathazari Dak

Bungalow around 2:00pm on March 26 and chased another group of policemen on duty at a nearby temple. They also attacked the police

station, disconnected its electricity, telephone and internet lines and vandalised windows and doors.

Before this, the students had beaten up Assistant Sub-Inspector Md Abu Yusuf and snatched his 7.62 pistol along with 16 bullets. Besides, Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP-probationer) Muhammed Farabi and SI Mehedi Hasan were also critically injured in the attacks.

Apart from lobbing teargas shells, police opened 83 rounds of blank fire to bring the situation under control. As the madrasa students fired back and threw brickbats indiscriminately, police further opened 48 rounds of blank fire.

The attackers stepped back at one point and took position at Tribeni intersection.

No Hefazat leader was available for comment.

However, soon after the mayhem, Hefazat's chief Babunagari said police had attacked their students without any provocation.

Nerve-racking 24 hours

confined him to another room.