

**BANGLADESH UPDATE**

**7,666**  
New cases in 24hrs

**9,04,436**  
Total cases

**14,388**  
Deaths

**8,11,700**  
Recoveries

**GLOBAL UPDATE**

**3,949,268**  
Deaths

**182,400,748**  
Total cases

## Groom fined Tk 50k for hiring chopper to evade lockdown

A CORRESPONDENT, Shariatpur

A mobile court on Monday fined a person Tk 50,000 for violating the government's health safety guidelines by carrying a bride in a helicopter in Shariatpur.

Locals said Sagar Ahmed, 26, of South Bhasan Char village in Shariatpur Sadar upazila, tied the knot with Kawan Khandaker Bonna, 23, of Ibrahimpur village in Brahmanbaria's Nabainagar upazila, on Friday.

Due to the lockdown in different districts surrounding the capital, the groom's family could not bring the bride home by road.

That is why they decided to bring the bride to the groom's house by helicopter.

To materialise their plan, the groom's family rented a helicopter with Tk 1.20 lakh.

The news spread and several hundred curious people gathered in

Notunhat area of South Bhasan Char village where the helicopter landed around 11:00am on Monday.

A palanquin and a wedding band party were also arranged to celebrate the festivity, said locals.

Mondip Ghorai, Shariatpur Sadar Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO), said, "The government has imposed restrictions on public gatherings. But the incident has created large public gatherings that posed the risk of quick transmission of coronavirus."

It is a violation of the government's rules. That is why, the groom's uncle Abdus Salam Sardar was fined Tk 50,000, said the UNO, who led the mobile court.

Contacted, Abdus Salam Sardar, however, claimed that they wanted to complete the marriage procedure on a limited scale.

They did not invite the villagers, who gathered at the spot from their curiosity, he added.



Rickshaw van pullers take a nap on the flatbed in the capital's Fakirapul area after failing to find work yesterday.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

## Violators to be punished

FROM PAGE 1

Among others, Health Minister Zahid Maleque, Information Minister Hasan Mahmud, Disaster and Relief Minister Enamur Rahman, Principal Secretary Ahmad Kaikaus of the Prime Minister's Office, and Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam were present in the meeting.

The handout said the government decided to impose restrictions and regulations to stop operation of different government and private organisations, transport services and public movement for seven days from 6:00am of July 01.

"During this period, anyone, except emergency service providers, going outdoors without an urgent need will face stern punishment," reads the handout.

Details on restriction and regulation will be circulated today from the cabinet division, it reads.

On Monday, Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam told media that the members of the army, police, Border Guard Bangladesh and the Armed Police Battalion have been given the authority to take appropriate action so that people don't step out of their homes.

"We had no alternative but to impose strict restrictions," he said.

**112 DEATHS REPORTED**

The number of Covid-19 deaths continued to rise as the health directorate reported 112 deaths in the 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday -- the second highest daily toll recorded in the country.

On Sunday, the country logged the highest single-day death toll of 119.

The 112 deaths recorded yesterday brought the total number of Covid-19 deaths to 14,388 -- around 1.59 percent of all confirmed cases.

Since the cases were detected in the country in March 2020, Khagrachhari district has recorded 10 deaths, the lowest among the districts, while Dhaka tops the list with 5,487 deaths, according to a press release from the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

In the 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, 7,666 new cases of Covid-19 were detected against a total of 31,982 tests.

## Whistleblower

FROM PAGE 1

journalism department, pointed out that an applicant had placed 12th on the merit list despite being absent during the admission test.

A syndicate meeting on Sunday decided to take departmental action against him, confirmed Dr Md Abu Taher, registrar (additional charges) of the university.

"A probe committee found him guilty in connection with leaking information about an absent candidate who placed 12th in the 2019-20 session admission test," he told our Cumilla correspondent yesterday.

Mahbulul yesterday denied that he had leaked the information about the anomaly to journalists.

The syndicate's decision shocked Mahbulul's colleagues in different universities.

The B-unit admission test was held on November 8, 2019 when applicant Sazzatul Islam was absent from the Teachers Training College in the district.

But Sazzatul placed 12th on the merit list in the results published on November 12.

This was reported widely in the media as the authorities had allegedly called him for viva voce.

People took to the street to protest it. The authorities later formed two probe committees -- one to investigate the incident and another to identify those who shared the information with the media.

After a few days, the university authorities held a press conference and said no fraudulence had taken place and that a student had mistakenly filled up the roll number

of the absentee applicant.

"Even if it was done by mistake, there was negligence of the teacher concerned. The authorities did not take any steps but decided to punish Mahbulul," said a colleague of the teacher.

"Was it confidential information? Mahbulul, then member secretary of B-unit's admit card scrutinising committee, and his team should have been rewarded as they found out the fault in the admission process," he said.

Dr Asaduzzaman, the head of the probe committee which investigated the "information leakage", is now the treasurer of the university.

"Our responsibility was to find those who exposed the information to the media. After analysing information and call records, we found Mahbulul Haque Bhuiyan guilty. So, we suggested departmental action against him," he said.

Registrar Abu Taher, also a syndicate member, said, "The report was placed to the syndicate meeting, which then decided to take departmental action."

Talking to reporters at the university yesterday, Mahbulul said he did not share information with any journalist.

"I want to know how I am involved... Make the probe report public," he demanded.

He claimed they wrote about the fault to the concerned authorities of the B-unit admission test, yet the absent applicant was called for viva voce.

"I wanted to know whether any steps have been taken against those whose negligence led to the anomaly and tarnished the image of the university," he said.

## Massive vaccine drive next month

FROM PAGE 1

already been launched to inoculate the students of colleges and universities.

"We will be able to reopen colleges and universities upon its completion. Primary and secondary educational institutions will be opened if the Covid situation improves," she said, adding that the students have been in distress due to the closure of the institutions amid the pandemic.

Mentioning that there is an age limit for vaccination as per the World Health Organization's guidelines, the premier said, "We want students -- from school to university -- to get vaccinated so that we can reopen the educational institutions quickly."

Referring to online classes and educational programmes on the government TV channels and radio, she said, "We took steps to ensure the continuity of educational activities for students from the very beginning of the pandemic."

Hours after the PM's statement, the education ministry, and the primary and mass education ministry in separate statements announced extension of the closure of all educational institutions till July 31 due to Covid.

**PANDEMIC CAUSED \$17B DAMAGE**

About the pandemic's huge impact on the country's economy, the PM said it has caused \$17-billion damage to the economy since March last year.

"According to our initial estimates, the Covid pandemic caused \$17-billion loss to the economy in fiscal 2019-2020 and 2020-2021."

The government has been implementing 23 stimulus packages involving \$15.2 billion to recover the losses, she noted.

**HEADING TOWARDS PROSPERITY**

Hasina said that despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, the government will be able to implement the budget that has given priority to lives and livelihoods of people. And the country will move another step towards prosperity.

Referring to the upward trend of various economic indexes, she said Bangladesh's economy is now on way to a complete recovery due to the government measures taken under its 23 stimulus packages.

Pointing out that the effects of the second Covid wave still persists, she said if necessary, her government would take prompt measures to protect lives and livelihoods of people as well as the economy.

Pledging to stand by the people, she said, "I would like to assure people that the government is always with them in this crisis and will remain beside them."

Coming down heavily on the critics of the budget and the government, the PM said she has doubts whether these critics understand the global situation arising out of the Covid pandemic.

"In the budget, priority has been given to the measures needed to deal with the second Covid wave, protect lives and livelihoods of people and mitigate the pandemic's impact on the economy."

**BANGLADESH'S IMAGE BRIGHTENED**

Hasina said Bangladesh is providing \$250 million to Sri Lanka as loan assistance through currency swap.

"Sri Lanka sought this loan assistance from us." This proves Bangladesh is always sincere about regional cooperation, she said.

"We have also waived the debts of Sudan and Somalia."

Bangladesh's image has brightened and the respect for its people has enhanced due to its financial assistance to Sri Lanka and Sudan, she said.

## RMCH Covid unit overrun

FROM PAGE 1

attending to Hajera since the latter tested Covid-19 positive and was admitted to Chapainawabganj 250-bed Modern Sadar Hospital on June 19.

She said they got all the support and care for her grandmother at from the hospital staffers in Chapainawabganj.

The college girl took her grandmother to RMCH for better treatment. But she was at a loss at the hospital, already overcrowded with Covid patients.

"The scenes what I saw [at RMCH] was traumatising," Khadiza said.

As soon as she stepped into the hospital, she started noticing the changes. She had to pay Tk 300 for carrying her grandmother on a gurney to the Covid ward-14.

No doctors and nurses were available at the Covid ward, Khadiza said.

"I watched four people die during my stay there. None of them had a doctor or nurse beside them when they passed away."

At ward-14, as many as 12 people died in 24 hours till yesterday morning, hospital data show.

"A woman died next to my grandmother's bed [Monday morning]. Her oxygen mask had loosened somehow and her attendants were not able to fix it. They were looking for a nurse to do the job, but the on-duty nurse refused

to respond. The woman died panting for breath before my eyes," Khadiza said.

She said a nurse appeared after the death of her grandmother. But she stayed at a distance and never went beside her body to confirm her death.

Khademul Islam, uncle of deceased patient Sagar, 22, from Natore, and Polish, son of deceased Abdur Razzak, 70, from Hadi's intersection in Rajshahi city, made similar allegations.

Many other patients' attendants said doctors and nurses barely come out of their rooms at 10 wards out of 13 under the RMCH Covid unit.

Services are available only at the 20-bed ICU and two wards of HDIU, said RMCH sources.

Visiting the Covid wards yesterday, The Daily Star found those crowded with patients' attendants. Entry to these areas are strictly prohibited for all except the health professionals.

A patient's attendant said no treatment was available at the hospital sans oxygen support.

RMCH Director Brig Gen Shamim Yazdani said the record death figures show a "disastrous turn for the worse".

He said at least 70 people are being admitted to the hospital every day while more than 90 awaits an ICU bed.

The RMCH director admitted that the number of Covid patients reached far beyond the hospital's

normal service capacity.

A total of 459 patients were undergoing treatment at the RMCH's Covid unit, which has a capacity of 405 beds.

"We can't provide patients with normal healthcare as we are in an unusual situation now. But we are trying our best to serve," he said.

All the doctors and staffers cannot serve at a time as they work in shifts in every alternate 15 days, Shamim said, adding that the authorities were not allowing senior doctors to visit Covid wards frequently following a government directive to keep them safe from infection.

"When doctors and nurses remain busy attending critical patients, some other critical patients expect them to be beside them," he said.

Asked about Hajera's death before her CT scan was done, the RMCH director said she had luckily got a schedule for the test in the afternoon after applying for it in the morning the same day.

He said 40 tests can be done daily with the hospital's two CT scan machines and it usually take 2-3 days to get a schedule for a test.

The RMCH recorded 342 deaths in its Covid unit this month until yesterday. Of them, 163 died from the virus while others passed away showing Covid symptoms.

The hospital has 69 nasal cannulas, 183 oxygen concentrators and 1,047 oxygen cylinders.

## Scope to clean black money stays

FROM PAGE 1

"The way the provision was slipped in the Finance Bill, it can be said that the whole process was undemocratic," said Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of the Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh.

The government should have proposed the measure in the finance bill when the budget was first placed before the parliament.

"Lawmakers would have gotten the scope to discuss it in the parliament. Civil society could give opinions. And that is the goal of the constitution," said Mansur, also a former economist of the International Monetary Fund.

Despite the tax rate hike to 25 per cent, it can be said that the black money holders got a favour from the government.

"Even after this, no parity comes," he said.

There will be price speculation of properties because of the scope to invest the black money.

"By doing this, the government

gives in to the pressure of landowners and developers," he said, adding that black money holders are unlikely to go for long term investment like the establishment of factories.

A 25 per cent tax rate plus a 5 per cent penalty on investment of undisclosed money does not penalise the tax dodgers enough, said Zahid Hussain, a former lead economist of the World Bank's Dhaka office.

"The tax burden on honest taxpayers in the same tax category is still likely to be higher than the burden on tax dodgers who choose to invest the undisclosed money in securities."

Referring to the scope of investing undisclosed income to set up industry on 10 per cent tax, he said there is no definition of what constitutes industrial undertaking.

"It is not clear whether this is left at the discretion of the tax authority. If so, it leaves open a large window for abuse."

It seems the policy has attempted to accommodate pressures from the

beneficiaries of undisclosed money whitening facility while at the same time making them appear friendly to tax justice.

"The intention is laudable but as a practical matter it may be akin to trying to have your cake and eat it too," Hussain added.

Corruption is being patronised with such scope, said Muinul Islam, a former professor of the Chittagong University's economics department.

"It cannot be supported. If we patronise corruption instead of resisting, it will eat up the whole economy and eventually the whole politics will be taken over by the corrupts," he added.

Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of Transparency International Bangladesh, echoed the same as Islam.

"With this, corruption is being encouraged. This is discriminatory and unconstitutional. The entire black money was supposed to be seized along with a fine. Instead of doing this, this is being patronised."

## 300 Bangladeshis lose home after fire in Greece camp

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

A fire on Sunday burnt the residential camps of around 300 Bangladeshi migrants in Greece, forcing them to take shelter in others' camps.

The incident took place in Manolada area of Elis -- some 400km off the Greek capital Athens.

"The fire gutted all the 38 temporary shelters of the Bangladeshi nationals who lived near an agricultural farm," Bishwagith Paul, first secretary (Labour) of the Bangladesh embassy in Greece, told The Daily Star yesterday.

The possible source of the fire as suspected by the migrants is gas burners they use for cooking, he said.

"The incident took place in the afternoon when the migrants were working in the field. Thus, luckily they faced no physical harm, but their belongings, including passports, ID cards and clothes, were burnt to ashes," Bishwagith said.

A team led by Bangladesh Ambassador to Greece Ashud Ahmed yesterday visited the area, met the Bangladeshis and assured them of assistance, said a statement from the Bangladesh embassy.

During the visit, the migrants requested the ambassador to reissue their passports free of cost. Bangladesh community leaders, meanwhile, have assured the victims of extending a helping hand.

Ambassador Ashud Ahmed held a meeting with the local mayor and requested him to arrange brick-built shelters for the affected Bangladeshis. The mayor assured the ambassador of providing assistance for building better housing facilities, added the statement.

## Uncertainty goes

FROM PAGE 1

It requires a storage temperature of -20 degree Celsius. But it can be kept at 2 - 8 degree Celsius for upto a month. The vaccine has two doses recommended to be administered 28 days apart.

AFP reports that the US began shipping 2.5 million doses of the Moderna vaccine to Bangladesh on Tuesday.

Officials of the Directorate General of Health Services said Bangladesh has facilities capable of storing five million Moderna shots.

The Covax is a global initiative coordinated by the World Health Organization, Vaccine Alliance Gavi, and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations. It was formed to ensure that low- and middle-income countries have equitable access to Covid vaccines.

Under the Covax facility, Bangladesh was supposed to get 6.8 crore vaccine doses this year. This could cover around 20 percent of the population. But only 1.06 lakh doses of the Pfizer vaccine have arrived so far.

Covax also failed to keep its promise, made on march2, of delivering 1.09 crore doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine by May.

Health Minister Zahid Maleque yesterday said Bangladesh is likely to receive "a good amount" of the Sinopharm vaccine from China. The Finance Division has allocated the funds following the Health Services Division's proposal for buying the doses from Beijing Institute of Biological Products Company Ltd.

The plan is to buy 1.5 crore Sinopharm vaccine shots that would arrive in three shipments. Health ministry officials earlier said Bangladesh would have to make arrangements to transport the doses from China.

The health minister said inoculation of migrant workers willing to fly to Saudi Arabia and Kuwait will begin from Thursday at seven medical college hospitals in Dhaka.

The country has so far inoculated less than three percent of its population. Its vaccination campaign, which started on February 7, stumbled due to suspension of vaccine supplies by the Serum Institute of India amid a surge in daily new cases and deaths there.

Bangladesh and Serum had an agreement that the latter would ship three crore shots of the Oxford vaccine in phases to Bangladesh between January and June.

Serum delivered the first 50 lakh doses in January, but shipped only 20 lakh the following month. No shipment has been made since. Besides, India sent 3.3 million doses as a gift to Bangladesh.

Amid a fast depleting vaccine stock, Bangladesh suspended administering the first dose of the vaccine on April 26. Registering people for vaccination was suspended nine days later.

The government resumed administering the first dose on June 19 on a limited scale with 11 lakh doses of the Sinopharm China sent as a gift.