

BANGLADESH
UPDATE



8,661
New cases in 24hrs



9,44,917
Total cases



150,65
Deaths



8,33,897
Recoveries

GLOBAL
UPDATE



3,990,596
Deaths



184,440,655
Total cases

Cyclone, floods displaced 4.4m people

Says global study about Bangladesh last year

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

About 4.4 million people were internally displaced in Bangladesh last year largely due to natural disasters like cyclonic storm and monsoon flood, says a new global report.

The number of people displaced in Bangladesh last year was third highest among global internal displacements after China and Philippines, according to the “Global Report on Internal Displacement 2021”.

The report, however, says about 3.5 lakh people were living in displacement as a result of disasters in Bangladesh till December 31 last year.

Globally, conflict and disasters triggered 40.5 million new internal displacements across 149 countries and territories last year, it added.

Switzerland-based Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), which is part of Norwegian Refugee Council, published the report in May this year. The report is available in IDMC’s website.

It says cyclone Amphan which hit in May last year triggered around 2.5 million new displacements in Bangladesh, mostly in the form of pre-emptive evacuations.

Besides, the monsoon triggered around 1.9 million displacements nationwide, it added.

At least seven million people internally displaced by disasters across 104 countries and territories as of 31 December last year were still living in displacements, it says.

The report mentions the scarcity of data on how long people remain displaced, however, makes it difficult to fully understand the scale and nature of protracted displacement triggered by disasters and climate change impacts.

It also says the monsoon in Bangladesh caused the worst flooding in a decade.

The floods coincided with the Covid-19 pandemic, disrupting the operation of local markets, eroding people’s livelihoods and economic

resilience and making their impact more severe.

Despite these challenges, there were also some positive developments in the humanitarian response, such as the use of anticipatory action forecasting to allocate assistance to affected areas quickly.

According to the report, South Asia accounted for almost a third of the world’s new disaster displacements in 2020.

Around 9.2 million were recorded, an above-average figure for the second year in a row, it says.

Cyclone Amphan triggered nearly five million evacuations across Bangladesh, India, Myanmar and Bhutan in May, making it the largest disaster displacement event of the year globally, it further says.

Monsoon rains and floods affected the whole region from June onwards and particularly Bangladesh, it added.

Around 3.2 million people across the region were living in internal displacement as a result of disasters last year, the report mentioned.

Besides, more than 4,04,000 new displacements due to conflict were recorded in Afghanistan despite ceasefires and ongoing peace negotiations, and the country was home to more than 3.5 million conflict internally displaced persons last year.

Conflict displacement was also registered in India and to a lesser extent in Bangladesh and Pakistan, it says.

Globally, disasters triggered more than three-quarters of the new displacements recorded worldwide last year, accounting for 30.7 million.

Over 98 percent were the result of weather-related hazards such as storms and floods.

On the other hand, conflict continued unabated in countries such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Syria and Ethiopia, which are also home to some of the largest numbers of people living in protracted internal displacement.

Moderate rain exposes poor

FROM PAGE 1

pictures of pedestrians, rickshaw pullers, and motorists on flooded parts of Dhanmondi 27, Green Road, West Nakhalpara, Rajarbagh, Tezturibazar, Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Gandaria DIT Plot, Kazipara and Gopoiabgh.

Maleka Banu, who lives on the ground floor of a building in Poshchim Kazipara, said she had to put everything in her house on the beds and the tables because there was water on the floor.

It takes over eight hours for the water to recede in such cases in her neighbourhood, she said.

Akbar Ali, a grocery store owner in the area, said, “Some of the goods were damaged because the shop was flooded. There was knee-deep water on the road in front of my shop until 4:00 pm.”

Iqbal Habib, joint secretary of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon, said, “Lockdown or not, the cleaning activities must go on.”

The two city corporations should not fail us.

It is unfortunate that the authorities have not done anything to make rainwater drain to Dhanmondi Lake from near Rapa Plaza on Dhanmondi 27, he said. There should have been no waterlogging in the area so close to the lake.

“Water must flow to the rivers through the drainage network and the canals without interruption,” said Habib.

The city corporations must begin by clearing all the clogged canals. Then they will have to reclaim the canals lost to illegal encroachment.

Eventually, they will also have to recover the water retention areas, he added.

The two city corporations on December 31 formally took charge of managing and maintaining 26 canals, 10km of box culverts and 385km of storm water drains from Dhaka Wasa.

Earlier, the Dhaka north and south city corporations were in charge of the sewer pipes and surface drains.

Adil Mohammad Khan, general secretary of Bangladesh Institute of Planners, said a standard urban planning dictates that 10 to 15 percent of the city space are water reservoirs and 20 to 25 percent are green areas. But in Dhaka city, more than 80 percent of the real estate is occupied by concrete.

“Normally 30 to 40 percent of the water goes underground through the reservoirs and green areas. But we prevented that from happening with concrete structures,” he said.

“You can’t expect everything to be solved overnight, because the city was built without a plan. What can be done quickly is unclogging the drains. The city corporations should identify the problems in drainage and take prompt steps.

“But in the long run, we need to have more water retention, green areas, and connect the water bodies,” he said.

Contempt rule

FROM PAGE 1

Dilruzzaman issued the rule on June 30 following a contempt of court petition filed by rights organisation Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh (HRPB).

HRPB President and its lawyer Manzill Murshid told The Daily Star yesterday that the nine officials against whom the contempt of court rule has been issued are -- the then Chattogram deputy commissioner when the directives were issued and current jute ministry Secretary Md Abdul Mannan, and the incumbent Chattogram DC Md Mominur Rahman; the then superintendent of police (SP) AKM Hafiz Akhter and current SP SM Rashidul Haque; the then upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) Sabbir Iqbal and current UNO Saifuzzaman Chowdhury; the then officers-in-charge (OCs) of Banskhali Police Station Abdul Malek and Md Shahjahan Khan and present OC Shaful Kabir.

He said following a writ petition filed by HRPB, the HC on May 7, 2018, directed the officials to take

steps to fill up the pits of Gunagari hill in Banskhali and restore it to its original position within one year with money collected from the people liable for the damage.

The court also asked them to take appropriate legal action against those involved in cutting and damaging the hill.

But the respondent government officials have not yet complied with the directives, which is tantamount to contempt of court, Manzill Murshid added.

Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 1

across the country in 24 hours. At least 4,698 Covid-19 patients have recovered during the period.

The total number of recoveries now stands at 833,897 and the recovery rate at 88.25 percent.

Among the 153 dead, 96 were men and 57 were women. Of them, three were between 21 and 30, 11 between 31 and 40, 24 between 41 and 50, 45 between 51 and 60, and 70 were above 60 years old, added the release.



Momtaj Uddin sitting at the back of his rickshaw, waiting for a fare along with many others of his profession. Although rickshaws are allowed to ply the streets during this lockdown, a sharp decline in passengers has seen his daily income drop from Tk 800 before the lockdown to around Tk 300 now. The photo was taken from the capital’s Jatrabari on Saturday.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Hospitals swamped by Covid patients

FROM PAGE 1

The same trend can be seen in Khulna. In the first week of May, Khulna saw seven deaths. In the last week, ending on July 3, Khulna had 252 deaths.

In Barishal, deaths rose by 340 percent from the first week of June, while in Rangpur, deaths rose by 204 percent in the same period.

Chattogram saw 61 deaths in the first week of June, but last week the division reported 139 deaths -- an increase of 157 percent.

In Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH), there were 80 additional patients in the 385-bed Covid-19 unit of the hospital while all 20 ICU beds were occupied as of yesterday noon.

Doctors of the hospital said they have been receiving an average of around 75 patients daily for the last couple of weeks and at least 40 percent of them are being brought to the hospital at a critical stage.

Many of the patients cannot survive as the ward lacks the required logistical support, they said.

With a shortage of devices providing high-flow oxygen support, doctors have been sharing the available devices between patients.

On June 29, a doctor at ward-32 of the RMCH had four patients aged between 32 and 42 requiring high-flow nasal cannula (HFNC) support, and she had just one HFNC to share among them.

“I decided to ration the lone high-flow oxygen device between them in three-hour chunks. When I was taking away the machine from one patient to give to another, the patient’s son started crying and asking me not to do that. I couldn’t resist my tears, but I had no

alternative,” the doctor told The Daily Star yesterday.

The next day, the hospital authority provided two additional high-flow nasal cannulas to that ward.

As of yesterday, the hospital had 69 HFNCs, according to officials.

District-level hospitals in Chapainawabganj, Natore and the Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital were also struggling with additional patients.

Six other hospitals in different districts in Rajshahi, were almost at capacity.

As of yesterday noon, only 147 general beds for Covid-19 patients were vacant in 10 hospitals in Rajshahi division. Meanwhile, only 11 ICU beds out of a total of 46 were vacant, indicative of an increase of critical patients.

In Khulna division, where the highest number of deaths has been reported for the last seven days in a row, around 980 patients were undergoing treatment in 10 Covid-19 hospitals. Besides, there were 44 patients in the ICU beds in those hospitals.

The Kushtia Sadar hospital was treating 65 patients over its 190-bed capacity in the Covid-19 general wards. All four ICU beds were occupied.

In the 24 hours ending at 8:00am yesterday, the highest 51 Covid-19 patients died in Khulna division, out of a countrywide total of 153.

In the past 32 days, a total of 159 people died in the Covid-19 unit of Satkhira district hospital. Of them, 82 percent (131) deaths were with Covid-19 symptoms.

To tackle the rush of the Covid-19 patients, authorities of Rangpur

Medical College Hospital (RpMCH) has increased the number of beds in its Covid-19 unit from 100 to 131 yesterday, reports our Dinajpur correspondent.

Of all general beds, 91 have a central oxygen supply line. The eight ICU bed in this divisional-level hospital has been occupied for the last two weeks.

Relatives of patients alleged that a patient died when the oxygen supply was disrupted for technical reasons for half an hour on Saturday.

As of yesterday noon, there were 20 patients in the queue for the ICU.

Nurun Nabi, superintendent of the Covid-19 unit at RpMCH, told The Daily Star, “We are struggling as more patients are coming from nearby districts every day. Most of the patients need critical care, including ICU support. We, however, have no alternative as we have shortage of such support.”

In Dinajpur, the authorities of M Abdur Rahim Medical College Hospital (MARMCH) have also decided to increase the number of beds for Covid-19 patients from 100 to 135.

For the last couple of weeks, this hospital has also been overburdened with additional patients.

On Sunday, at least 130 patients were undergoing treatment at MARMCH against its capacity of 100 Covid-19 patients. Besides, all 16 ICU beds for Covid-19 patients were occupied as of yesterday noon.

Abu Mohammad Zakirul Islam, the Rangpur divisional health director (acting), said, “As the number of Covid-19 cases has been on the rise in Rangpur division, we have decided to increase the number of beds.”

COVID DEATHS IN PREVIOUS WEEKS								
DIVISION	I DHAKA	I CHITTAGONG	I RAJSHAH	I KHULNA	I BARISAL	I SYLHET	I RANGPUR	I MYMENSINGH
May 10 to May 16	98	66	15	7	6	12	10	1
May 17 to May 23	93	59	14	20	6	20	7	7
May 24 to May 30	50	63	24	30	8	13	16	3
May 31 to Jun 6	66	60	48	34	7	16	20	5
Jun 7 to Jun 13	65	61	54	51	5	12	24	7
Jun 14 to Jun 19	63	65	78	88	9	14	20	11
Jun 20 to Jun 26	132	87	104	178	11	19	38	18
Jun 27 to Jul 3	193	130	139	252	22	19	73	31

Left to starve in pandemic

FROM PAGE 1

Farida’s other son, who is 35, used to work in a scrap shop before the pandemic hit last year and now he too is unemployed. Farida’s two young daughters also don’t have any work.

“Now, we all live in a small room in a slum at Khalishpur industrial area. We are struggling so hard to get food,” Farida told The Daily Star last week.

She is among over 31,000 temporary and substitute jute workers, who have been plunged into dire straits after losing their jobs following the closure of nine state-owned jute mills in the Khulna-Jashore industrial belt in July 2020 amidst the pandemic.

“I have worked in this jute mill for 17 years. Like me, thousands of people have spent our golden years for the development of the jute mills. In return, the authorities have terminated us without paying our due wages,” said Siddiqui Rahman, a former temporary worker of Crescent Jute Mills.

“Now we want our due wages before Eid,” he demanded.

The government closed all state-run jute mills on July 1 last year due to heavy losses and excessive production costs, laying off workers including more than 46,000 in Khulna.

Of them, around 15,000 were permanent, 5,000 temporary, and 26,000 substitute workers, according to workers’ associations and Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation

(BJMC), the government body which regulates and supervises the state-run jute mills.

On a visit to four jute mills in Khulna’s Khalishpur last week, this correspondent observed that the area wore a deserted look, which was once crowded round the clock with workers coming to and from their shifts.

Talking to The Daily Star, worker leader Ruhul Amin said, “The lives of temporary and substitute workers are in dire condition, as they don’t know when they will be paid.”

While many male workers are now working as rickshaw-van pullers, female workers face greater difficulties finding jobs, even as domestic help, due to the pandemic, he said. “During this pandemic, there is no work, no food for them.”

Though the jute mill authorities promised workers they would pay their due wages within two months, this has only been partly implemented in one year, said Ruhul Amin.

Most of the workers used to live in the colonies on the mills’ territory. When the mills were closed, the authorities concerned announced workers would be paid their due wages and arrears, only if they signed documents to the effect that they would leave the colony within the shortest possible time.

The workers signed the documents and left the colonies accordingly but their wages are yet to be paid, said Ruhul Amin.

Almost all the temporary and substitute workers are due wages of around six weeks to eight weeks in arrears, he added.

BJMC officials said due wages and arrears of almost all laid-off permanent workers have already been paid. But payments of nearly 22,000 substitute workers are still due.

“Firstly, we are paying the due wages of permanent workers. Then, we will pay substitute and temporary workers,” said Md Murad Hossain, general manager of Platinum Jubilee Jute Mill in Khulna.

The arrears of substitute workers roughly amount to Tk 112 crore but there is no estimation for temporary workers yet, said BJMC officials.

Ruhul Amin said even the names of many permanent workers have been dropped from the workers’ list due to spelling errors.

These workers, numbering around 1,500, are also worried about receiving any of their dues as their names are not even on the mill’s list, he added.

At the time of closure, government officials concerned said the mills would be modernised and reopened shortly through joint venture, public-private partnership, or government-to-government agreements.

About the reopening of the mills, Golam Rabbani, BJMC liaison officer for Khulna zone, said the government is mulling leasing out the mills shortly.

ATTACK ON RAB

Rab sues 149, UP chairman

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

Rab has filed a case against 150 people, including an UP chairman, in connection with the July 1 attack on members of the Rapid Action Battalion-9 in Nasirnagar upazila of Brahmanbaria.

Abdul Hannan, deputy assistant director of Rab-9, Shayestaganj Camp, filed the case with Nasirnagar Police Station.

Bahar Uddin Chowdhury, chairman of Dharmandal Union Parishad, have been accused in the case.

According to the case, a team from Rab-9 -- based on information -- carried out an anti-drug drive in Thakurbari area of Dharmandal village around 10:30pm. Rab members detained three drug dealers, Abu Mia, 27, Bahar Mia, 28, and Sattar Mia, 32, with 100 grams of heroin, 235 yaba tablets, and Tk 281,170 in cash.

As the Rab members were leaving the scene, locals attacked them with weapons yelling they were robbers. Two members of the Rab team -- ASI Bokul Hossain and Nayek Md Touhidul Islam of Shayestaganj Camp -- were injured.

UK announces harsher sentences for Channel migrants

AFP, London

Britain has announced it will seek harsher sentences for migrants caught entering the country without permission amid a record-breaking surge in arrivals over the English Channel.

The stricter prison sentences for both migrants and people smugglers come as part of Home Secretary Priti Patel’s plans to overhaul asylum rules in a bid to prevent what her department has characterised as “asylum shopping”.

The legislation announced Saturday makes it a criminal offence to arrive in the UK without permission, with a maximum sentence for those entering the country unlawfully increasing from six months to four years.

Under the law set for its first reading in parliament on Tuesday, people smugglers will face life sentences, up from the current maximum of 14 years.

Patel said the plans were “fair but firm”, adding that the UK would “welcome people through safe and legal routes whilst preventing abuse of the system, cracking down on illegal entry and the criminality associated with it”.

Moderna roll-out

FROM PAGE 1

“We will open registration for other priority groups after checking vaccine stocks.”

As of yesterday, 72.75,977 people got registered through the government app for getting vaccines. Of them, 42,89,913 took both shots of Covid vaccine while 58,20,015 got the first jab.

Earlier on Friday and Saturday, Bangladesh received 45 lakh doses of Covid vaccines from two sources -- 25 lakh Moderna vaccine jabs provided by Covax, a global vaccine alliance, and another 20 lakh shots of Sinopharm vaccines bought from China recently.

The minister also said they will not administer all the 45 lakh shots right away. Half of the jabs will be kept for the recipients of the first dose and will be administered as second dose.

The Directorate General of Health Services is now drawing up a fresh vaccine plan for these jabs.

“Moderna vaccine doses will not be administered at all the centres across the country because of the storage issue,” the minister mentioned.

The efficacy rate of Moderna vaccine is over 94 percent in trials. Like Pfizer, Moderna uses the same mRNA technology. The doses need to be stored at minus 20 degrees Celsius, but those can be kept at 2-8 degrees Celsius for up to a month.

A recipient has to take two shots of the Moderna vaccine -- 28 days apart.

On July 1, government resumed administering the Sinopharm vaccine at all district hospitals and 40 centres in the capital.

It has so far inoculated less than three percent of the population. Its vaccination campaign, which started on February 7, stumbled due to suspension of Oxford- AstraZeneca vaccine supply by the Serum Institute of India amid a surge in daily infections and deaths in that country.

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

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

Serum delivered the first 50 lakh doses in January, but shipped only 20 lakh the following month. No shipment has arrived since.

Meanwhile, India gave Bangladesh 3.3 million doses of the vaccine as gift.