

**BANGLADESH UPDATE**



**11,874**  
New cases in 24hrs



**10,21,189**  
Total cases



**16,419**  
Deaths



**8,74,501**  
Recoveries



**GLOBAL UPDATE**



**4,046,834**  
Deaths



**187,523,496**  
Total cases

## Tripura CM sends queen pineapples for Hasina

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Tripura Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb yesterday sent 800 kilograms of queen pineapples as a return gift to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, six days after Bangladesh PM had sent 300 kilograms of Haribhanga mangoes to Deb.

The consignment in 80 cartons, after rigorous quality checks, was sent to Bangladesh through Akhaura Integrated Check Post (ICP) in Brahmanbaria around 9:00am.

Tarit Kanti Chakma, director of Industries, Commerce and Tourism of Tripura State, handed over the gift to Udat Jhan, Second Secretary of the Indian Assistant High Commission in Chittagong, at Akhaura Land Port zero point.

"The gifts will be handed over to the Bangladesh Prime Minister's Office on Monday [today]," said Mohammad Ali, revenue officer of Akhaura Land Port Customs.

The pineapples were collected from Ampri village in Gomati district of Tripura, the best quality is grown in

the state. Tripura grows an estimated bulk of 1.28 lakh MT pineapples every year across 8,800-hectare orchards in different districts.

On July 3, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina sent 2,600 kilograms of sweet Haribhanga mangoes to Indian President Ram Nath Kovind, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

Narendra Modi and Mamata Banerjee have written letters to PM Hasina thanking her and expressing overwhelming satisfaction for the gifts.

PM Hasina also sent mangoes to the Indian chief ministers Biplab Kumar Deb of Tripura, Himanta Biswa Sarma of Assam, Zoramthanga of Mizoram and Conrad Sangma of Meghalaya.

Conrad Sangma told Indian news agency PTI he will send Meghalaya spices, turmeric and organic products in return.

Prime Minister Hasina also sent mangoes to the leaderships of Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and Bahrain.



Grieving relatives of Selina Akter, 35, who died with Covid-19, console each other beside the ambulance that will take the body to the deceased's village home in Cumilla from Dhaka Medical College Hospital's Covid-19 unit. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Justice now a mirage to them

FROM PAGE 1

solace, but we don't know how many years we have to wait for it," he said.

Akash's frustration is shared by the victims of at least three other devastating factory fires as the cases over these incidents are progressing at a snail's pace, making justice elusive for the survivors and the families of the deceased.

Between 2015 and 2020, there were 4,968 fire incidents at factories in the country, according to Bangladesh Fire Service and Civil Defence.

However, no update is available regarding the progress in the cases filed over the incidents.

Labour rights campaigners and lawyers say that in most of the cases, the owners and the people responsible for ensuring safety and compliance at factories could not be brought to book due to lengthy legal process and the culture of impunity.

Proceedings in most of the cases are slow and may take months, they said.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Barrister Jyotirmoy Barua said, "The trial of such cases usually gets delayed as the prosecution and police fail to produce the witnesses before the court in time for deposition."

"Sometimes such cases are not properly investigated as the accused are influential and rich. Besides, witnesses, being influenced by the accused, do not appear before court for deposition," he pointed out.

Taslima Akter, president of Bangladesh Garment Sramik Sanghati, said, "[They] [the owners] do not consider workers as human beings. They just use workers as tools for making profits."

"We have not seen any of the culprits getting punished over factory fires because of the culture of impunity. If the owners and the culprits were punished, fire incidents would have come down significantly," she told this newspaper.

"Another issue is lengthy trial process... Factory owners usually have good relations with politicians and escape punishment, using their influence."

### SLOW PROGRESS

A day after the massive fire at Tazreen Fashions Ltd in Ashulia on November 24, 2012, a case was filed with Ashulia Police Station.

Police submitted a charge sheet against 13, including its Managing Director Delwar Hossain and Chairman Mahmuda Akter, in December 2013.

The charge sheet said Delwar and his wife Mahmuda constructed the factory building based on a faulty plan with an engineer's help, and illegally used the walkway on the ground floor as a warehouse. There was no fire exit at the factory though a provision of the labour law stipulates that there must be two exits in every factory.

Almost two years after the submission of the charge sheet, a Dhaka court in September 2015 framed charges against 13 and trial began in January 2016.

The court, however, has so far recorded deposition of only nine out of 104 prosecution witnesses at more than 40 hearings.

"The last time a witness gave a statement was on January 10 last year. But we could not produce any more witnesses before the court due to the Covid pandemic," Assistant Public Prosecutor Rehana Akter told this newspaper.

On November 26, 2012, Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST), Nijera Kori and BRAC filed a writ petition with the High Court over the failure of the authorities concerned to ensure effective enforcement of the laws on workplace safety, and compensations for the survivors and the families of those killed in Tazreen fire.

Lawyer Sharmin Akter, who moved the petition, said the court issued a rule nisi and an interim order.

In its order, the HC asked the respondents to show cause as to why they should not be directed to probe, prosecute and punish those responsible for the factory fire.

The respondents include the secretaries at the industries, and labour

and employment ministries, and the chief inspector of factories.

"The final hearing is yet to take place," Sharmin said.

Both Sharmin and Taslima said that in almost all cases, workers do not get adequate compensation.

Referring to the labour law, they pointed out the compensation is Tk 2 lakh in case of death. But it is meagre and the victim's family has to wait for long to get that.

Sharmin observed that the compensation should be raised, keeping in mind several criteria such as treatment cost, age of a worker, and how many years he or she could have worked.

**FACTORY FIRES IN GAZIPUR, SAVAR**  
At least 41 workers were killed in a massive fire at a packaging factory, Tampaco Foils Limited, in BSCIC industrial area in Tongi on September 10, 2016.

Two cases were filed over the incident -- one by police, and another by Abdul Kader, the father of a deceased worker, against Tampaco owner Syed Mokbul Hossain and seven others.

About the case filed by Kader, Gazipur Metropolitan Police Assistant Commissioner (prosecution) Shubhashish Dhar said police submitted the charge sheet to a Gazipur court against five, including Mokbul, in 2018.

The trial in the case is still going on, he added.

Police, however, could not give any update on the other case.

Asked, Tongi Model Police Sub-Inspector Ajay Kumar Chakraborty, who filed the case on behalf of police, failed to give any update on it.

"It will require time... I can give an update on the case after seeing the files," he told this newspaper.

Earlier in September 2016, BLAST, ASK and Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers' Association (BELA) filed a writ petition, pointing to the failure of the authorities concerned to ensure labour safety and adequate compensations for the victims.

The final hearing on the writ petition is yet to be held, said the petitioner, Sharmin Akter.

The police officials concerned failed to give any update on the cases filed over devastating fires at Garib and Garib sweater factory in Gazipur in February 2010 and Ha-Meem Group's sportswear factory in Ashulia's Narsinghapur in December that year.

At least 21 workers were killed in Gazipur and 26 in Ashulia.

Contacted, Kamrul Faruk, officer-in-charge of Gazipur's Bason Police Station, said he was unable to give any update on the case over the fire at Garib and Garib factory, saying the incident took place more than a decade ago.

"We don't have any information as the case was filed before the creation of Gazipur Metropolitan Police in 2018. I cannot say whether the charge sheet in the case was submitted or not," he said.

Asked about the case over the fire at Ha-Meem Group's sportswear factory, Inspector (investigation) Ziaul Islam of Ashulia Police Station said he was unaware of any case filed in connection with the incident.

"If any case was filed over the fire incident, you can check it with the court concerned," he added.

[Our correspondents in Gazipur and Savar contributed to this report.]

## Eid-ul-Azha

FROM PAGE 1

father to please Allah some 4,500 years back.

But the Almighty in His benign mercy spared Hazrat Ismail (AS) and instead sent a ram to be sacrificed.

To commemorate this historic event, the Muslims all over the world slaughter sacrificial animals and draw inspiration from the unique example of sacrifice to please Allah as shown by two great prophets -- Hazrat Ibrahim (AS) and his son Hazrat Ismail (AS).

On the occasion, the Muslims across the country will offer prayers in congregations and sacrifice animals in the name of Almighty Allah.

## Delta rages on through lockdown

FROM PAGE 1

As of yesterday noon, only 301 out of 1,263 ICU beds were vacant across the country, according to DGHS data.

Robed said the Delta variant of coronavirus is causing deaths not just of older patients but also of younger ones.

Earlier, the Institute of Epidemiology and Disease Control (IEDCR) said the Delta variant caused 78 percent of the infections in the samples on which they did genome sequencing in June.

Experts said the country is already in a "disastrous" situation and it could turn bleaker around the Eid holidays later this month. They also said the government should extend the lockdown -- currently in force till July 14 -- to stem the surge of the virus, which has reached even the remote villages.

Of the 230 deaths in the 24-hour period, Khulna division saw the highest 66 deaths followed by 56 in Dhaka, 39 in Chattogram, 26 in Rajshahi, 22 in Rangpur, eight each in Barishal and Sylhet, and five in Mymensingh divisions, according to the DGHS.

Meanwhile, State Minister for Shipping Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury said yesterday that

the government might extend the lockdown if the National Technical Advisory Committee (NTAC) on Covid-19 recommends.

"The current situation is not suitable to return to normal life," he told reporters at the secretariat yesterday.

Robed Amin said, "Covid-19 has spread to all districts in all divisions and it has been rising. The deaths too are increasing... If we can't control it in the next one week, the situation will turn miserable."

"RESTRICTIONS SHOULD STAY"  
Saying many are still going outdoors even though there is no urgency to do so, Robed Amin urged people to properly adhere to health safety guidelines.

Experts also said the impact of the ongoing lockdown, enforced since July 1, has been less than expected even after 11 days.

IEDCR Consultant Prof Mushtuq Hussain told The Daily Star: "There will be a rising trend in deaths next week. The transmission has not fallen despite the lockdown. So, there is no alternative to continuing the restrictions."

He feared that the transmission will intensify in the cities after the upcoming Eid festival if the

government relaxes lockdown for economic activities and people travel to their home districts for Eid-ul-Azha, which will be celebrated on July 21.

Infectious diseases specialist Prof Ridwanur Rahman said, "The number of tests in rural areas is inadequate. Patients are coming from those areas to the district hospitals late, mainly due to lack of transportation during lockdown."

Dr Mushtuq Hussain urged the government to set up community level hospitals by engaging the communities.

"There has been a move to build five new field hospitals in Dhaka. But building field hospitals at the community level is more important," Dr Mushtuq said.

On Saturday, Health Minister Zahid Maleque announced the convention centre of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University would be turned into a Covid-19 field hospital.

The Delta variant which is far more transmissible than most strains of the coronavirus brought the healthcare system in India to its knees. Since it was first detected in Bangladesh on May 8, the variant caused health disasters across the Khulna and Rajshahi regions before spreading to other parts of the country.

## Fire safety was lost on inspectors

FROM PAGE 1

Trade Union Centre.

The factory owners and the DIFE are equally responsible for the incident, he said.

Jafur Hasan Sharif, a labour expert involved in drafting the Bangladesh Labour Act 2006 and the National Labour Policy 2012, said the DIFE's capacity for inspections multiplied after the Rana Plaza collapse.

"The disaster in Narayanganj would not have happened if the DIFE properly inspected the factory. The issue of the lack of stairways, fire extinguishers, child labour and other safety hazards are supposed to be flagged during an inspection. Did they not find anything during the annual license renewal of the factory?" asked Sharif, who was also involved in drafting the Bangladesh Labour Rule 2015.

According to the DIFE website, "The department was established in 1970 with a vision to create a better working environment for the workers through implementing labour laws and regulations, eliminating child labour, enhancing productivity of factories by creating a better working environment, ensuring workplace safety including fire safety and welfare of workers and implementing minimum wages declared in different sectors."

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Syed Sultan Uddin Ahmed, former executive director of Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies, said the DIFE mainly focuses on readymade garment factories and other factories have for years remained out of their radar.

Amid rapid economic growth in the country, new factories are sprouting up every year, he said, adding, "A culture of impunity and poor compensation for the victims have developed over time. This should stop right now."

According to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, there are around 80 lakh economic units across the country. One unit means a factory where five or more workers are employed.

**THE DIFE'S EXPLANATION**  
In Narayanganj zone, 3,450 factories are registered with the DIFE. The department is mandated to visit each factory once a year. There are 14 labour inspectors and six assistant inspector generals in the zone, Suman Barua said, adding that the workforce is inadequate for the job.

"It is a Herculean task for us. We cannot visit every factory once a year with such understaffed manpower," he said.

Top officials of the department said there are more than 90,000 factories registered with it, adding that it has been growing as fast as the economy

of the country. To visit these facilities, the department has around 300 inspectors.

It means that over 246 factories would have to be visited by the department every day to cover all the registered ones in a year.

The department also does not have offices in every district. It operates through a headquarters and 23 district offices.

Khan said if his department wanted to visit all the economic units, registered and unregistered, it would take 10 years for it to revisit a factory.

In the 2018-19 fiscal year, the organisation inspected 43,401 factories, shops and establishments. A total of 2,755 complaints were received and 2,064 complaints were resolved.

A total of 1,429 cases were filed and 844 were settled.

In the 2015-16 fiscal year, the DIFE inspected 27,000 factories and filed 1,004 cases. In the 2016-17 fiscal year, it inspected 32,924 factories and filed 1,273 cases. In the 2017-18 fiscal year, a total of 42,639 factories were inspected and a total of 1,772 cases were filed.

"We visit only the registered factories and give licenses to the new factories," said DIFE Inspector General Md Nasir Uddin Ahmed.

## Euro final fuels Covid outbreak fears

FROM PAGE 1

football final in more than half a century.

But the fans do not appear to have been put off. Hundreds converged on Wembley many hours before kick-off, singing and swigging beer.

Neil Houldsworth, 61, told AFP: "If it gets busier I will wear a mask."

"Personally, there's no worry at all," he added, trusting in the high numbers of double-jabbed people.

Pensioner David Durant added: "Maybe I'm a bit double-jab happy. "It's better here in the open air to drink our beer. You're less likely to get it (Covid-19). You try, but it is very difficult with a game like this to observe social distance."

Prime Minister Boris Johnson has signalled that remaining restrictions should be lifted in England on July 19, but infection rates are again surging -- driven by the Delta variant.

His government argues that, with more than 85 percent of adults having received at least one shot, the link

between infections, hospitalisations and deaths has been severed.

But many scientists are deeply uneasy with relaxing all remaining rules, including social distancing and mask-wearing.

As England's players departed their St George's Park base on Saturday, large numbers of cheering fans lined the road, hardly any seen wearing masks in video and photos tweeted by the team.

Health experts have expressed concerns about Euro 2020 events becoming super-spreaders throughout the tournament, especially in Britain and Russia because of the Delta variant.

Authorities in Denmark, Finland and Scotland have already reported infections among fans after they attended Euro matches.

**'WORSE, MUCH WORSE'**  
The known Covid-19 global death toll has topped four million, with the fight complicated by the emergence of variants that have accelerated outbreaks even in countries that had successfully weathered the early

phases of the pandemic.

Australia, where restrictions have been reimposed in a number of cities recently, yesterday announced its first virus-related death in the Sydney outbreak.

Authorities warned the situation was expected to worsen in Australia's biggest city, already in a third week of lockdown and the population overwhelmingly unvaccinated.

"Tomorrow and the few days afterwards will be worse, much worse than we've seen today," said Gladys Berejiklian, premier of New South Wales state, of which Sydney is the capital.

South Korea, once a model for Covid-19 response, will tighten restrictions from today in and around the capital Seoul after new daily infections hit their highest level since the pandemic hit.

The Asia-Pacific region has seen a dramatic rise in cases in a number of countries, with Thailand, Indonesia, Pakistan and Vietnam imposing fresh curbs as a result.

## Tigers win big

FROM PAGE 1

able to record just their fifth ever away Test win in 59 matches, and their first since beating Sri Lanka in Colombo in 2017.

It is Bangladesh's second victory in Zimbabwe, with the other two away wins both coming in the West Indies in 2009.

The win also marked the farewell from the format for veteran Mahmudullah Riyad, who announced his retirement from Tests on the third day of the game. At the start of play yesterday, his teammates gave Mahmudullah a guard of honour and captain Mominul Haque let him lead the team out onto the ground.

After being included in the playing XI at the last moment, Mahmudullah rescued Bangladesh with a first-innings 150 batting at No 8. He added 191 runs for the ninth wicket with Taskin Ahmed, who made a career-best 75.

The 34-year-old was adjudged player-of-the-match, however, during the post-match presentation there was no official announcement from the man about his retirement. The Bangladesh Cricket Board has not made any official announcement either, but it is understood that Mahmudullah is sticking to his decision of not playing in the longest format anymore, a decision he had reportedly conveyed to his teammates during the third day of the Test.

The teams will now contest a three-match One-Day International series starting on Friday, which will be followed by three Twenty20 matches.

## Survivors now

FROM PAGE 1

ended up breaking her limbs.

Like her, six other workers, who jumped off the building, are now undergoing treatment at the US Bangla Hospital.

With pain and plastered arms and legs, they are now worried about the treatment cost and their future.

Speaking to The Daily Star from her hospital bed, Monwara said, "When I tried going downstairs, I saw fire on the staircase and came back to the second floor. By that time, smoke engulfed the whole area... The heat made us feel like our flesh was melting. I thought of jumping off the second floor and some others too fell down on me and I lost consciousness. Once I got back my senses, I found myself in hospital."

"My injured husband is starving. Who will look after my children? Who will bear the expenses of my treatment?"

Like her, Sonia Akter was in bed-1, Rozina in bed-2, Maria in bed-3, Nadia in bed-4, Monoara Begum in bed-5, Ruma in bed-6, and Ashraful Islam in bed-5 of the men's ward.

Sonia, 14, started working, with a salary of Tk 5,600, at the factory since her father was unable to continue work due to the lockdown.

"It's been a month and a half. She was about to get the salary, but the chance of that has also faded. Now I don't have money for food at home. How can I arrange treatment for my daughter?" asked Abdul Quader, Sonia's father and a day-labourer.

"Sonia's left arm is broken. Doctors said an operation, which will cost around Tk 50,000, has to be done. If the operation doesn't take place in two to three days, she won't be able to work with that hand. Where will that money come from?"

Sonia's elder sister Rima, 16, who worked on the ground floor, also survived the fire.

In the six-storey building, the third floor was from where 48 bodies were recovered. Several workers alleged that the gate of the floor was locked and that's why most of the casualties were on that floor, where cream-chocos, ice bars, chocolates, and lollipops were manufactured.

A police official, wishing not to be named, said they would investigate whether the supervisor of the third floor, Mahbubur Rahman, received any instructions over phone to force the workers to stay on the floor.

Meanwhile, the workers said the government announced the provision of some money as compensation but only a little amount of that was actually provided.

Police on Saturday arrested the owners of Hashem Foods Ltd -- Md Abul Hashem and his four sons. Three others, accused of burning 51 employees to death, were also arrested. They all are now on a four-day remand.

Meanwhile Gonoshasthaya Kendra founder Dr Zafullah Chowdhury, Ganosamhati Andolon chief coordinator Zonayed Saki, and Awami League organisational secretary Mirza Azam, were among others, who visited the spot yesterday.

Zafullah said it cannot be called an "accident", because it looks like a "premeditated murder".

"It's an overall failure of the government. There is an industrial department, their inspectors are supposed to come and inspect at what distance the chemicals should be kept. If they would come here, they would understand where the danger was... All the basic rules were violated. But what happens here, because of corruption, is that they submit reports without proper inspection."

He demanded a compensation of Tk 50 lakh for each of the