

**BANGLADESH UPDATE**



13,768

New cases in 24hrs



10,34,957

Total cases



16,639

Deaths



8,81,521

Recoveries

**GLOBAL UPDATE**



4,052,496

Deaths



187,874,406

Total cases

## Keeping more than 1 car gets costlier

Govt enforces 50pc more AIT from this fiscal year

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

If you have more than one car, SUV or minivan -- be it individually or jointly owned -- you have to pay 50 percent more income tax for each of such vehicles from the current fiscal year.

The Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) has started executing the move spearheaded by the National Bureau of Revenue (NBR) from July 1, said BRTA and NBR officials.

The development came seven years after the government imposed 50 percent additional tax on the owners having more than one such vehicles in 2014-15 fiscal year.

The government incorporated the provision of collecting additional tax in the Income Tax Ordinance-1984 at that time, but the additional tax could not be collected due to complications, including absence of necessary operating system at BRTA.

In an apparent bid to control small vehicles like cars, SUVs and minibuses, which is often blamed for traffic jam in the city, and collect higher tax from affluent people, the government had taken the decision to slap more tax at that time.

A total of 16.81 lakh vehicles got registered with Dhaka offices of BRTA till May this year. Of them, 4.39 are cars, SUVs and minibuses, show BRTA documents.

The BRTA, on behalf of the NBR, collects advance income tax from vehicle owners, through online banking system, while the owners have to pay for tax token or update vehicles' fitness certificates.

BRTA Chairman Nur Mohammad Mazumder said owners of more than one car, SUV and microbus have to pay 50 percent additional advance income tax from July 1.

"We have introduced the system," he told The Daily Star last night.

### HOW MONEY TO BE PAID?

Explaining the matter, a BRTA official said if a person owns a 1,500cc car, he or she has to pay Tk 25,000 annually as advance income tax (AIT) now.

But if he or she has two such cars, then they have to pay Tk 37,500 as AIT for the second car. Similarly, they have to pay Tk 37,500 for the third one, the official said, wishing not to be named.

When a car owner will go to bank and shows his or her e-TIN (online taxpayer identification number), the bank official will be able to know the vehicle/vehicles the particular person owns and will take the particular amount from him or her, the official said.

A person with fake e-TIN certificate will not be able to pay the AIT, the official said.

Asked about the delay in executing the decision, he said there were some complications in this regard and they have to solve those.

The official added that their vendor developed the operating system to collect the additional tax and completed the trial run before formally introducing it on July 1.

A NBR official said a good number of vehicles got registered with the BRTA with fake TIN certificates due to the lack of scope for verifying the authenticity of certificates.

But now the BRTA has the access to NBR's TIN database, it is not possible to get vehicle registered with fake TIN certificates, the official said, seeking anonymity.

Meanwhile, the BRTA, in circular issued yesterday, said if any vehicle owner faces problem in this regard, he or she is requested to inform the BRTA office of the matter via email as the circle offices remained closed due to the ongoing lockdown.

The mail address is: ad@brta.gov.bd. The owners have to send soft copies of NID, e-TIN and acknowledgement slip to the mail address.



A man jaywalks on a street near Kakoli intersection in the capital's Banani area. A sign next to him urges people to use a nearby footbridge to cross the busy thoroughfare. Such disregard for traffic rules leads to accidents and loss of lives.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## Lockdown to ease before Eid

FROM PAGE 1

At least 13,768 people were infected with the virus in the last 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, the highest in a single day.

The total number of infections stood at 10,34,957, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

At least 220 people died from the virus in the 24 hours, raising the death toll to 16,639.

On Sunday, the DGHS sounded alarm over the Covid situation. At the daily briefing, its spokesperson Dr Robed Amin said no hospital beds will be available in the next seven to 10 days if the current infection rate and patients' rush to hospitals continue.

Experts fear that the government decision to ease the lockdown may worsen the already deteriorating situation as it would be difficult to ensure the health guidelines during home rush and at cattle markets.

And if the situation deteriorates further in the coming week due to relaxation of the restrictions, things would be out of the government's control as the healthcare system is already under severe stress amid a surge in patients all over the country,

they added.

"More than one lakh people got infected even during this lockdown. Following its relaxation, the number of Covid cases may double or treble," said Prof Be-Nazir Ahmed, former director (disease control) of the DGHS.

During the lockdown, imposed on July 1, the government kept garment and other factories open and allowed rickshaws on roads. There were no strict measures to keep the infected and the suspected cases in isolation or quarantine, he observed.

"The infected people moved around and spread the virus. Similar things will happen during the home rush and at cattle markets," said Prof Be-Nazir.

Renowned virologist Prof Nazrul Islam said, "At any cost -- be it motivation or punishment -- the government needed to make people wear masks. But we could not do that in the last 16 months."

Forcing people to wear masks could have been more fruitful than a lockdown in curbing infections, he observed.

Amid a surge in Covid cases, the government enforced a nationwide

strict lockdown from July 1 for a week. It was later extended for another week till July 14.

Since July 1, a total of 121,699 people were infected and 2,156 died from the novel coronavirus.

Contacted, Helal Uddin, president of Bangladesh Shop Owners Association, said that if the government allows, they would reopen markets on Thursday.

According to the two Dhaka city corporations, a total of 18 makeshift cattle markets will be set up in the capital tomorrow and those will be open to buyers of sacrificial animals on July 17.

Though last year's data shows health protocols were largely ignored at the markets, DNCC Mayor Md Atiqul Islam claimed they will ensure that everyone follows the health safety rules this time.

"We've already formed monitoring committees to make sure that the health safety guidelines are followed properly."

"We will take immediate action if we find violation of the guidelines. We have already given instructions to those concerned in this regard," he added.

## Govt won't reopen schools

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The statement was issued ahead of the Global Education Meeting scheduled for today.

The statement said, "This should not go on. Schools should be the last to close and the first to reopen."

Education for millions of children has been disrupted since the Covid-19 outbreak started. As of yesterday, schools are shuttered in 19 countries, affecting over 156 million students.

In their efforts to limit transmission, governments have too often shut down schools and kept them closed for prolonged periods, even when the epidemiological situation did not warrant it.

These actions were frequently taken as a first recourse rather than a last measure. In many cases, schools were closed while bars and restaurants remained open, the statement said.

They said the losses that children and young people will incur from not being in school may never be recouped. From learning loss, mental distress, exposure to violence and abuse, to missed school-based meals and vaccinations or reduced development of social skills, the consequences for children will be felt in their academic achievement and societal engagement as well as physical and mental health.

The most affected are often the children in low-resource settings who do not have access to remote learning tools, and the youngest children who are at key developmental stages.

"The losses for parents and caretakers are equally heavy. Keeping children at home is forcing parents around the world to leave their jobs,

especially in countries with no or limited family leave policies.

"That's why reopening schools for in-person learning cannot wait," they said.

"I cannot wait for cases to go to zero. There is clear evidence that primary and secondary schools are not among the main drivers of transmission."

"Reopening schools cannot wait for all teachers and students to be vaccinated. With the global vaccine shortages plaguing low and middle-income countries, vaccinating frontline workers and those most at risk of severe illness and death will remain a priority."

In Bangladesh, education of around four crore students have been affected by the Covid-induced closure since March 17 last year.

In February this year, the government announced that all schools and colleges will reopen in phases on March 30. As more and more new cases of Covid-19 were detected, they deferred the reopening plan to May 23.

As the infection rate surged again, the government extended the closure until July 31.

According to the officials, reopening of schools will happen in phases. The education ministry plans to hold in-person classes for the SSC and HSC examinees of 2021 and 2022 six days a week.

Students of class six to nine will have to go to school once a week. The number of classes will be increased based on the situation.

## Jordan ex-officials handed 15-yr jail terms over 'coup plot'

AFP, Amman

A Jordanian court yesterday sentenced two former officials to 15 years in jail after finding them guilty of a coup plot that sparked a rare crisis in a kingdom seen as a pillar of stability in the region.

Former royal court chief Bassem Awadallah and an ex-envoy to Saudi Arabia, Sharif Hassan bin Zaid, had been convicted of conspiring to topple King Abdullah II in favour of his half-brother Prince Hamzah.

The former crown prince himself was not charged in the trial, but the charge sheet said he was "determined to fulfil his personal ambition to rule, in violation of the Hashemite constitution and customs".

The trial took place behind closed doors at the State Security Court, a military tribunal that also includes civilian judges.

But yesterday, journalists were allowed to watch footage of the ruling via video link from a tent set up

outside the court.

Delivering the ruling, Judge Muwaffaq al-Masa'id noted that the men had been friends for 20 years and were close to Prince Hamzah.

He said they had tried to put into action "ideas that are hostile to the existing political system in the kingdom and his majesty King Abdullah".

The men had tried "to create chaos, sedition and divisions within Jordanian society and spread hateful discourse towards the political system, threatening the safety and security" of the kingdom, he said.

Awadallah and Bin Zaid, who both have close ties to neighbouring Saudi Arabia, were found guilty of "incitement against the ruling system" and "acts that could threaten society and create sedition".

Awadallah, who holds Saudi nationality, had been on trial alongside Bin Zaid, a relative of King Abdullah, since June 21.

## Even bleaker days now await them

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However, this was postponed after the tragedy.

As many as 2,035 people work in 11 factory-buildings of Hashem Foods, which produces mango juice, lachchi (yogurt drink), vermicelli, biscuits, lollipops, Nocilla spread, chanachur, noodles, fried peas, lychee drink, chocolate and various snacks.

Their monthly salary altogether amounts to about Tk 1.5 crore.

But the people who would sign the bank cheques -- Md Abul Hashem, owner of Hashem Foods Ltd, his four sons (directors of the company), and three officials, including the chief operating officer and deputy general manager of the factory -- are now behind bars on charges of burning 51 employees to death.

The Daily Star talked to at least 20 workers.

Some of them alleged that the factory often kept their overtime payment due.

The average salary of these workers is about Tk five to seven thousand a month. Almost all of them work overtime for extra money.

Recently, after a protest on July 1, they got their overtime payment for June.

"As we were supposed to get the salary and bonus ahead of Eid, the fire took place. The factory authorities said they would pay it on July 13

[today]. But then the owner and higher officials got arrested. Now we don't know what's waiting for us," said Rubel Mia, an electric engineer of the factory.

Production Supervisor Ashraf Islam had jumped off the second floor of the six-storey building to escape the deadly fire on Thursday afternoon. With a fractured waist and back, he has been undergoing treatment at the US Bangla Hospital in Rupnaji, along with six others.

Speaking to The Daily Star, he said, "Eid will be celebrated in a few days but I have to be in hospital. I have severe pain in my waist and back. Doctors suggested bed rest for two months. Now who will bear the cost of my treatment? Who will bear the expenses of my family?"

Abdul Hakim, working at the factory's juice section for seven years, said, "There is no work at the factory. There is uncertainty over salary. If it [the factory] does not resume operation, how will we live with our families? With the house rent and shop rents due and with people back home waiting for me to send money, we will die of starvation."

Nahid Murad, manager (accounts), said, "If the owner of our company was not in jail, the salary would have been paid. But now the decision-makers, including the owner, are in jail. Even then, we are trying to pay

everyone's salary... Not just the salary, our owner will also help the deceased's families and injured workers as soon as he is released from jail. He talked to everyone before he got arrested."

About the factory's reopening, he said, "It will take time. After paying the salary, a decision will be taken about the resumption of the factory. Nothing can be said right now."

In the deadly fire, 51 workers and staffers lost their lives.

Bodies of 48 people, charred beyond recognition, were recovered from the third floor, where the only exit was locked.

Most of the victims were women and children.

The bodies were kept in the mortuaries of Dhaka Medical College and Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College.

Yesterday, the Criminal Investigation Department closed the temporary booth set up in front of the DMC morgue.

Drishy Islam, an assistant commissioner at the CID's forensic lab, told The Daily Star that DNA samples of 66 family members of 48 victims have so far been collected for matching.

The CID has issued a notice in front of the morgue to contact the forensic DNA laboratory of the CID in case any family member, of the deceased or missing person, want to give sample.

## UN rights chief urges reparations for systemic racism

AFP, Geneva

The UN rights chief yesterday called for countries to do more to dismantle systemic racism against black people, urging acknowledgement and reparations for past wrongs.

Speaking before the UN Human Rights Council, Michelle Bachelet described how deeply embedded racism against Africans and people of African descent continues to affect all aspects of their lives.

Presenting a report called for following the murder of George Floyd by a white US police officer last year, she said there was "an urgent need to confront the legacies of enslavement".

In her report, which addressed systemic racism worldwide, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights also called on countries to confront the legacies of the transatlantic slave trade and colonialism.

She insisted that only by facing the wrongs of the past could countries hope to "transform the structures, institutions and behaviours that lead to direct or indirect discrimination".

Bachelet warned that the systemic racism and racial violence on display today was rooted in "the absence of formal acknowledgement of the responsibilities of states and others that engaged in or profited from enslavement, the transatlantic trade in enslaved Africans, and colonialism, as well as those who continue to profit from this legacy".

A debate continues to polarise the United States about the idea of reparations for slavery and subsequent deep-seated discrimination.

And more recently, US schools have become embroiled in a row over so-called critical race theory.

The term defines a strand of thought that appeared in American

law schools in the late 1970s and which looks at racism as a system, enabled by laws and institutions, rather than at the level of individual prejudices.

But its critics use it as a catch-all phrase to attack teachers' efforts to confront dark episodes in American history, including slavery and segregation, as well as to tackle racist stereotypes.

In her presentation, Bachelet called for countries to "create, reinforce and fully fund comprehensive processes ... to share the truth about what was done, and the harms it continues to inflict".

"Establishing the truth about these legacies, and their impact today, and taking steps to address these harms through a wide range of reparations measures is crucial to healing our societies and providing justice for terrible crimes."

## SUED UNDER DSA Man goes live on FB during traffic stop

Police say he tried to create chaos, deteriorate law and order

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Police have filed a case under the Digital Security Act against one Foyso Kadir, who claimed himself to be a journalist, over going live on Facebook after a traffic sergeant seized his motorcycle for violating traffic rules.

Nurul Afsar Bhuiyan, traffic sergeant of Sylhet Metropolitan Police, filed the case with Shahporan Police Station on Sunday night.

According to the case statement, Foyso tried to create instability, chaos and deteriorate law and order through Facebook Live.

It said police stopped a motorcycle carrying three people at a check post in Sylhet Sadar upazila's Surma Gate area on Friday evening.

As Foyso failed to produce his driving licence and bike registration documents, police seized the vehicle and lodged a case against him for not having the licence and documents, carrying two pillion passengers and riding the bike without wearing a helmet.

After having a heated argument with the traffic sergeant, the accused went live on Facebook and started saying that police were harassing an "on-duty journalist".

The video showed that the sergeant cleared his stand against Foyso over violation of traffic rules. But Foyso repeatedly told the cop that this was "harassment of a journalist" and he would call the deputy commissioner of Sylhet Metropolitan Police.

SMP Additional Deputy Commissioner (media) BM Ashraf Ullah Taher said police were trying to arrest the accused.

## Surge of new

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and more than 5,000 are in hospitals across the country.

Of those reported dead yesterday, 64 were in Dhaka, 55 in Khulna, 37 in Chattogram, 23 in Rajshahi, 18 in Rangpur, 13 in Mymensingh, six in Sylhet, and four in Barishal divisions.

Of them, 142 were male and 121 were aged above 60. Thirteen of them died at home.

For more than a month, Khulna and Rajshahi divisions were the hotspots of the Delta variant of Covid-19. The situation worsened across the country over the last one week, especially in Rangpur and Chattogram divisions.

A majority of the patients are going to hospitals in critical condition, health officials said. This has strained the intensive care units and the high dependency units of hospitals.

As of yesterday noon, only 275 ICU beds out of 1,263 were vacant in 139 Covid hospitals nationwide.

In the Mymensingh division, the bed occupancy in Covid-19 hospitals yesterday was more than 111 percent.

## Nepal top court

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Political analyst Lok Raj Baral told AFP the court had stopped Oli from "doing as he pleases".

"Political stability ahead depends on an alliance among sharply divided political parties and their factions," he added.

The Oli government came to power in 2018 with a two-thirds majority.

There was optimism that his strong mandate at the polls would end years of instability and short-lived governments exacerbated by a devastating earthquake in 2015.

Deuba was elected as Nepal's prime minister four times between 1995 and 2018, including during the brutal, decade-long Maoist insurgency.

## Israel expands Gaza fishing zone, allows more imports

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel said yesterday it had expanded the fishing zone off Gaza and would allow additional imports into the blockaded Palestinian territory following "recent security calm".

The Jewish state regularly restricts fishing and imports for Gazans in response to unrest, including during an 11-day conflict in May that saw Israel launch hundreds of air strikes on the enclave and its Islamist rulers Hamas fire thousands of rockets at Israel.

"In light of the recent security calm ... the fishing zone in the Gaza Strip will be extended from 9 to 12 nautical miles," said a statement from the Israeli military branch responsible for civil affairs in the Palestinian territories (COGAT).