

BANGLADESH UPDATE

12,236
New cases in 24hrs

10,71,778
Total cases

17,278
Deaths

9,05,807
Recoveries

GLOBAL UPDATE

4,078,091
Deaths

189,449,101
Total cases

Promote qualified, right people in army

PM tells authorities concerned

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the Army Headquarters Selection Board-2021 needs to pick qualified people for promotion, aiming to build a strong military.

"I believe that the selection board will select qualified people for promotion through wisdom and prudent analyses rising above the personal liking and disliking. You'll have to find out the able leadership maintaining neutrality by remaining free from all influences," she said while addressing the meeting of the selection board.

The PM joined the meeting, held at Army Multipurpose Complex, virtually from the Gono Bhaban.

PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim briefed reporters after the meeting.

Hasina said she is happy to know that TRACE (Tabulated Record and Comparative Evaluation) Method is followed in the case of promotion of army officers, which is a manifestation of a comparative assessment of various aspects of their professionalism.

"Right persons will have to be promoted for various important appointments such as command, staff and trainers. This will increase the acceptance to all," she said.

The PM said the Awami League government always governs the country as the servant of people, never as a ruler. A disciplined and modern army plays a very helpful role in consolidating democracy, she said.

"That's why its leadership must be entrusted to professional and responsible officers who are always ready for supreme sacrifices to protect the sovereignty [of the country], being imbued with the ideology of the Liberation War," she added.

"Discipline is the backbone of the army. At the same time, it's necessary to find honest, fair-minded, righteous, people-friendly and humane officers who are successful in various fields of



their career," she added.

Hasina said Bangladesh Army had started its progress due to the sincere efforts of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. In the continuation of the progress journey, the army has now become

a highly professional, efficient and modern force due to intensive care from her government, she said.

"Our army has been working very efficiently in various development and public welfare activities, including containing the recent coronavirus pandemic, which is really commendable. Not only in the country, our army has brought a rare honour and dignity to the country from the world stage," she said.

Chief of Army Staff General SM Shafiqul Islam delivered the welcome speech at the virtual function.

Assuming power in 1996, Hasina said her government have been taking initiatives to modernise the armed forces and established National Defence College (NDC) in 1996, Military Institute of Science and Technology (MIST) in 1998, Bangladesh Institute of Peace Support Operation Training (BIPSOT) and Armed Forces Medical College (AFMC).

To enhance the organisational capacity of the army, the government has added a significant number of units and institutions alongside three new formations in its organisational structure. In 2016, the government established Bangladesh Peace Building Centre (HPC), she added.

Talking about the country's economic progress, Hasina said the poverty rate was brought down to 20.5 percent while per capita income has been raised to US 2,227 dollars. The government has brought 99 percent of people under electricity coverage, she said.

The six-day activities of the selection board started yesterday in order to award promotion to army officers.



Family members of Covid-19 patients collect refilled oxygen tanks from a voluntary organisation named Oxygen Bank in front of Khulna Medical College Hospital. The organisation has been giving out free oxygen, essential medication, and food among people who can't afford these.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Insanity reigns as lockdown goes

FROM PAGE 1

TRAINS

After a lockdown-induced break, Bangladesh Railway (BR) resumed its operations yesterday morning.

As per its earlier announcement, BR will operate 38 inter-city and 19 commuters, local trains at 50 percent capacity, maintaining health safety guidelines.

Of the trains, 34 are to be operated from Dhaka to different destinations, Kamalapur Station Manager Masud Sarwar told this correspondent.

Meanwhile, Railways Minister Nurul Islam Sujon yesterday visited Kamalapur Railway Station in the capital around 10:30am and talked to passengers of Kishoreganj Express.

He was accompanied by around 80-100 people, including Railways Ministry Secretary Salim Reza, BR Director General Dharendra Nath Mazumder and other BR and security staffers.

Later, talking to journalists, the minister said they are operating trains, maintaining health safety guidelines.

However, when reporters said many local trains were seen operating at more than 50 percent passenger capacity, the minister said, "There may have been some deviation on local trains."

"The minister said all stations do not have access control systems, so when a local train arrives, a huge number of passengers thronged there, leaving authorities with very little to do.

He, however, said they would take action if any BR officials or staffers were found responsible for this.

When reporters said many people faced difficulties in buying tickets online, the minister admitted the problem.

"Some 40 to 50 lakh" hit the website for tickets, causing problems, he said.

BUSES

The Daily Star correspondents visited Gabtoli and Mohakhali inter-district bus terminals yesterday, and found a huge number of people leaving Dhaka from the morning onwards.

Many buses were seen accommodating passengers on engine covers next to the driver's seat, without maintaining physical distance. Many buses were seen picking up passengers on the way after leaving Gabtoli.

Besides, many said they faced problems getting tickets as the day wore on and that bus operators charged extra for tickets.

Rasel Hossain, a truck driver, came to Gabtoli around 11:30am and bought a ticket of Souhardo Paribahan for Tk 600 to go to Rajbari.

"I travel home regularly on this bus service with Tk 300 tickets, but now I had to pay Tk 600," he said.

Selim, a ticket seller of Souhardo Paribahan, said they used to charge Tk 300 to get more passengers, but the original price of the ticket is Tk 380, and now they are charging Tk 600 as per the government order.

Many passengers and transport

workers were found violating health safety guidelines and a mobile court at Gabtoli filed 13 cases against 13 persons and fined them a total of Tk 31,500 till 2:00pm yesterday, a police official attached with the court said.

However, the number of passengers was low when this correspondent visited Mohakhali Bus Terminal around 3:00pm yesterday. Passengers alleged over-charging there also.

Meanwhile, our correspondents from Munshiganj and Manikganj reported crowding at Shimulia-Kathalbari and Paturia-Daulatdia ferry terminals. Many were seen without masks or not wearing the face coverings properly.

LAUNCHES

Five launches at Shimulia terminal were fined a total of Tk 5,000 for overloading and violating health safety guidelines.

There was huge pressure of home-goers at the Sadarghat Launch Terminal in the evening and many launches were seen over-crowded.

Shahidul Alam, acting officer-in-charge of Sadarghat River Police Station, said the number of passengers increased in the evening and some passengers and launch staffers were found violating health safety guidelines.

He said a mobile court fined 15 passengers and launch staffers Tk 100 to 200 each for the violation. Besides, a launch of Green Line-2 was fined Tk 32,000 for overcrowding, he added.

SSC, HSC likely in Nov, Dec

FROM PAGE 1

In case the examinations are not held, the results of both the tests will be prepared based on the students' results in the previous public exams and evaluation of assignments to be given to them, mentioned Dipu Moni.

Around 21 lakh students are expected to take the SSC and its equivalent exams and 15 lakh the HSC and its equivalent tests this year.

Meanwhile, the announcement triggered a mixed reaction among the students and their guardians.

Many lauded the government, saying it eased their concerns to some extent.

"At least now I know when I should start making preparations for my exams. It's a great relief," Papiya Ahmed, an HSC candidate from Sirajganj, told The Daily Star.

"We don't want any auto-promotion. We want to sit for the exams," she said.

Some guardians said the government should take the tests in all the subjects.

"If they can hold the exams in three subjects, why can't they do so for all the subjects?" asked Riajul Islam, guardian of an SSC examinee from Dhaka's Mohammadpur area.

Ziaul Kabir Dulu, president of Abhivhava Oikko Forum, a platform of guardians, said, "The government has made a good decision as there is no alternative to holding exams."

The government closed all the educational institutions on March 17 last year, around a week after the first cases of Covid were detected in the country. The closure has been extended multiple times since then.

According to the latest announcement, schools and colleges will remain closed till July 31.

The education ministry held the SSC tests in February last year, but the HSC exams had to be postponed. The

results were published by averaging the grades in Junior School Certificate (JSC) and SSC tests.

The students of other classes were promoted automatically to the next grade based on the evaluation of assignments handed to them.

HOW EXAMS WILL BE HELD

During the virtual briefing, Dipu Moni said the exams in each of the three optional subjects would be held for one and a half hours, instead of three hours.

Examinees will have to answer both multiple choice and written questions, she said.

This time, the examinees would get more options to answer the questions. Earlier, they were asked to write down answers to eight out of 10 questions. This time, they will have to answer three or four out of 10 questions, she explained.

"The total number in each examination will be 50 instead of 100."

Dipu Moni said the SSC candidates would not take the tests in compulsory subjects. Their results in the JSC exams would be taken into consideration. For HSC examinees, the results of their JSC and SSC exams will be considered, she said.

A Dhaka board official said that for preparing the HSC results, the marks the students obtained in the compulsory subjects in SSC exams and 25 percent in the JSC tests.

Talking to this newspaper, Prof Siddiqur Rahman, former director of the Institute of Education and Research at Dhaka University, said the authorities should take exams in the compulsory subjects as well.

ASSIGNMENTS

As part of the exam, SSC candidates will have to submit 24 assignments in three optional subjects in 12 weeks. The HSC candidates will have to

submit 30 assignments in 15 weeks. Students are required to do two assignments per week.

Dipu Moni said the distribution of assignments, to be prepared on shortened syllabuses for SSC candidates, will begin on July 18. For HSC candidates, it will begin on July 26.

Contacted, Prof Narayan Chandra Saha, chairman of the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB), said they were working to prepare the assignments and those would be sent to the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) before the stipulated time.

DSHE Director General Prof Syed Md Golam Faruk said all schools would give the assignment to students and students would submit those to their teachers.

"Teachers will assess the assignments of their own students and put all information in the central data centre," he said.

Educationists stressed ensuring transparency in evaluating the assignments.

"The assessment of assignments will have to be unbiased," said Rasheda K Choudhury, executive director of Campaign for Popular Education.

Expressing a similar view, Abhivhava Oikko Forum's Ziaul Kabir Dulu said, "If the assessment is done by the teachers of respective institutions, there will be a chance of biasness. The government must make the issue clear."

However, Dipu Moni said that they would pick 10 percent of the assignments and experts would assess those to check whether the evaluation was done appropriately.

"We will take action if we find that a teacher has not done his job properly during the evaluation," she warned.

COMPANYGANJ UPAZILA PARISHAD

Vice chairman, family members attacked by armed men

One hit by bullets: police

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

Companiganj upazila parishad vice-chairman and his family members came under attack by some armed men yesterday afternoon.

The attack was carried out at his house in the upazila's Basurhat municipality around 5:00pm, said Vice-chairman Azam Pasha Chowdhury Romel, also the president of the upazila unit Jubo League.

He also claimed that at least eight people were injured in the attack. Of them, five, including two women, suffered bullet injuries.

But police said they found only a woman sustained bullet injuries on the spot.

Talking to this correspondent, Romel alleged that attackers were the followers of Abdul Quader Mirza, mayor of Basurhat municipality and younger brother of Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader.

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Set alight by husband, woman dies from burns

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A 20-year-old woman, who was allegedly set on fire by her husband, died at Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital Wednesday night.

She was admitted to the hospital with burns on 60 percent of her body.

Her family alleged that she was attacked in sleep by her husband in Moulvibazar's Barlekha upazila on July 4.

Faizul Islam, medical officer at Barlekha Upazila Health Complex, said the victim, Rahima Begum, had suffered serious burn injuries on different parts of her body, including her face and hands.

As her condition was critical, she was referred to MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital where she breathed her last around 10:30pm Wednesday. The body will be handed over to her family after conducting an autopsy, he added.

Rafiq Uddin, the victim's father, said his daughter was married to Shipon, of the same upazila, three years ago.

Shipon and his mother tortured her after marriage, he alleged, adding that his daughter also escaped her in-law's house around seven months ago.

Shipon came to Rahima's house on July 3 night, poured petrol on her and set her on fire on early July 4, the victim's father said.

Jahangir Hossain Sardar, officer-in-charge of Barlekha Police Station, said Shipon and his mother Anuri Begum were in jail in a case filed by Rahima's brother Raju Ahmed for attempting to kill her sister.

Rejoinder, Our Reply

Sunamganj Police yesterday sent a rejoinder to our report 'Jubo League man 'tortured in custody', published on the same day.

In the rejoinder, the police said Jubo League activist Arindam Chowdhury Apu, 42, was arrested after he, along with his associates, attacked Sub-Inspector Md Shah Ali of Shalla Police Station with sharp weapons around 12:20am on Wednesday. Police treated him as per the law while he was in custody. During that time, additional police superintendent of Derai Circle was present at the police station. His family members and Shalla upazila chairman visited the arrestees on Wednesday.

During that time, the arrestee did not complain about being tortured in custody. Moreover, after the allegation of custodial torture raised, the police superintendent of Sunamganj asked them to file a complaint with the Judicial Magistrate and have medical tests conducted. But without taking any legal steps, they are trying to interfere with the investigation of the case by raising the torture issue through the media. The allegation of torture is false and baseless. The rejoinder claimed that there were three previous cases filed against Arindam, including one for assault on police.

OUR REPLY

The story is based on the case documents which are in our possession, quotes of law enforcers, and allegation by the arrestee Arindam Chowdhury Apu's brother Amitabh Chowdhury Rahul, who is a lawyer by profession.

We published the allegation of being tortured in the custody as allegation by the family member.

The report also carried the comments of superintendent of police of Sunamganj. The SP said the victim should complain to the magistrate when he is produced before the court. He said legal step will be taken if the allegation was found to be true. So, it was not a one-sided report.

While talking about not filing legal complaint with the magistrate, Arindam's brother Amitabh told 'The Daily Star' that the bail hearing on this case was held in a virtual court yesterday and they could not file the complaint as the arrestee was not present in the virtual court.

ASTRAZENECA VACCINE

No assurance from India on resuming supply to Bangladesh

Momen holds talks with Indian FM in Uzbekistan

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar gave no assurance about resuming vaccine supply to Bangladesh anytime soon at a meeting with his Bangladesh counterpart AK Abdul Momen in Uzbekistan yesterday.

"The Indian foreign minister said they are increasing vaccine production and also expediting inoculation. But a large number of people are yet to be vaccinated in India. At this moment, India is not considering export of vaccine," a diplomatic source told this newspaper from Uzbekistan last night.

Jaishankar said they will start exporting vaccine only after meeting the local demand, the source said.

He, however, expressed his happiness that Bangladesh has managed to secure vaccines from multiple sources including Covax, according to a statement from the foreign ministry last night.

India halted export of Covid vaccine in March after Serum Institute of India supplied 7 million AstraZeneca jabs to Bangladesh. As per an agreement, Serum is supposed to ship 30 million doses.

At the bilateral meeting on the sideline of Central and South Asia Connectivity Challenges and Opportunities in Tashkent yesterday,

Momen told Jaishankar that Bangladesh desperately looked for alternative sources of Covid vaccines after India halted its supply.

China is now supplying Sinopharm vaccine to Bangladesh and jabs are also coming from the US, the EU and Japan under the Covax facility.

Momen and Jaishankar discussed bilateral and regional connectivity, Covid situation, and also Rohingya repatriation.

They also emphasised the need for resuming the activities of various joint mechanisms soon after the covid scenario in both countries improves.

Later, Momen had a meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

Momen thanked the Chinese government for standing by the people of Bangladesh at an extremely difficult time by sending vaccine doses as gifts and also opening the commercial supply line.

Momen reiterated his request to initiate vaccine production in Bangladesh with partnership of Bangladeshi and Chinese stakeholders.

Wang Yi assured him of the Chinese government's support on this issue.

Both the foreign ministers agreed to continue to work further towards Rohingya repatriation. They also underscored the need for resuming tripartite dialogue.

Momen will leave Uzbekistan for Dhaka on July 18.

Dhaka to join int'l institute

FROM PAGE 1

The country's Covid-19 vaccination campaign relies on foreign sources and the government has so far inoculated less than three percent of the population due to shortage of vaccine doses.

In late June, Korean ambassador to Bangladesh Lee Jang-Keun called on the health minister at the latter's office and requested the minister to facilitate Bangladesh's cooperation with the IVI.

Launched with a vision to discover, develop and deliver safe, effective and affordable vaccines for global public health, the IVI has been supporting Bangladesh in combating infectious diseases for over a decade.

At least 58 Bangladeshi researchers and medical professionals have successfully completed the annual IVI International Vaccinology Course, according to the IVI website.

It focuses on infectious diseases of global health importance such as cholera, typhoid, shigella, salmonella, schistosomiasis, chikungunya, group A strep, Hepatitis A, HPV, TB, HIV, MERS, Covid-19, as well as antimicrobial resistance.

The organisation's mandate is to make vaccines available and accessible for the world's most vulnerable people.

The IVI website says, "As Covid-19 continues to disrupt communities around the world, IVI remains committed to our mission to protect the world's most vulnerable people from vaccine-preventable diseases by developing safe, effective, and affordable vaccines for global health. We do this for diseases like cholera and typhoid, as well as emerging infectious diseases."

Bangladesh is a founding signatory to IVI's Establishment Agreement, the 1996 UN treaty that established IVI as an independent international organisation dedicated to vaccine research and development and strengthening vaccine technology capacity in developing countries.

The IVI Agreement remains open for accession by any state or intergovernmental organisation. It has 36 signatory states and the World Health Organization (WHO) on its treaty. The state funders include Korea, Sweden, India, and Finland.

Covid patients whisked out of ICU

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building. He suffered a cardiac arrest there and died, he said.

Rezaul Karim, assistant director of Tangail Fire Service and Civil Defence, said an electric short circuit in a high-flow nasal cannula set might have caused the fire. The reason will be confirmed after further investigation, he said.

The official said firefighters on receiving information rushed to the hospital and shifted the patients to safety with the help of doctors and

nurses. The firefighters put out the flames within 10 minutes.

Witnesses said the fire caused panic among the patients and disrupted the hospital's services.

All the 10 patients undergoing treatment at the ICU were shifted elsewhere, they said.

The hospital authorities told The Daily Star they were working hard to resume the ICU operations at the earliest.

Rawshan Ara, a resident of Dorun Sarutia area in Tangail, said, "My

daughter, who is a Covid patient, was undergoing treatment at the ICU. Hearing about the fire, we became panicked and took her out of the hospital building. She was on oxygen support."

Meanwhile, a five-member probe body, headed by an additional district magistrate, was formed to investigate the fire incident, said Ataul Gani, deputy commissioner of Tangail.

The committee was asked to submit its report in three working days, he added.