

**BANGLADESH UPDATE**

**11,578**  
New cases in 24hrs

**11,03,989**  
Total cases

**17,894**  
Deaths

**9,32,008**  
Recoveries

**GLOBAL UPDATE**

**4,102,854**  
Deaths

**191,065,476**  
Total cases

## Journey home may worsen today

Closure of offices, garment factories to add to the rush

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With traffic congestion on the Dhaka-Tangail-Rangpur highway and ferry terminals on Padma River already causing sufferings for holidaymakers, the situation may turn worse today after the closure of the garment factories and offices.

Although the number of home-goers was relatively less yesterday, transport service providers and officials involved in the sector said the number is likely to rise sharply today, leading to a deteriorating situation.

People who left Dhaka for the north and north-western districts yesterday, faced sufferings due to long tailbacks on both sides of the Bangabandhu Bridge during the first half of the day.

Although launch and ferry services on the Shimulia-Banglabazar route witnessed crowds during the first half

of the day, services on the Paturia-Daulatdia route were at almost the usual level, our district correspondents reported.

Like previous days, physical distancing was largely ignored during the home rush. Many home-goers did not even wear masks, raising concerns over a rise in Covid-19 transmission in crowds at terminals and stations and on crowded transport.

The government relaxed the strict lockdown for eight days from Thursday for Eid, which will be celebrated on Wednesday. It made the move although many experts had warned that lifting the restrictions may lead to a spike in infections and deaths.

Some 16.93 lakh mobile phone users left Dhaka on July 15 and 16, according to data of Bangladesh

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**A cow being guided off a train compartment at the Kamalapur Railway Station in the capital yesterday. Bangladesh Railway has been operating a special service to bring cattle to the capital from all over the country ahead of Eid-ul-Azha**

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## DGHS worried over violation

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deputy commissioners [in all districts]. They are all supervising [the issue of following health safety rules] ... If everyone played his or her due role, the health safety guidelines can be maintained a little better," he said at a virtual briefing yesterday.

Hours later, the DGHS in its daily press release reported a spike in Covid-19 casualties and new cases in the 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday.

On July 11, the country logged the highest daily deaths -- 230. July 15 saw the second-highest death toll of 226.

With the latest count, the total number of deaths rose to 17,894, which is around 1.62 percent of the virus cases detected so far.

In the 24 hours, 11,578 people tested positive for the virus -- up from 8,489 the previous day.

The positivity rate was 29.09 percent yesterday. It was 29.06 percent the previous day.

The total number of Covid patients undergoing treatment stood at 154,087 yesterday.

Of them, 13,901 were receiving treatment at various Covid-dedicated hospitals across the country as of yesterday noon, according to the Covid-19 Dynamic Dashboard of the DGHS.

As in the previous day, Dhaka

Division saw the highest 60 deaths from the virus, followed by 54 in Khulna Division.

Among other divisions, 40 Covid patients died in Chattogram, 20 in Rajshahi, 14 each in Sylhet, Rangpur and Mymensingh, and nine in Barisal. **RAPID COVID TEST AT 9 CATTLE MARKETS**

Brac has launched antigen-based Covid-19 rapid tests at nine cattle markets yesterday, said a press release.

The initiative is being implemented with the help of Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC). The DGHS is providing necessary support to set up a Surokha corner in each of these cattle markets.

The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) of the Government of UK is supporting BRAC and the DGHS in this effort.

DNCC Mayor Atiqul Islam inaugurated it at the cattle market at Sayeednagar in Bhatara area yesterday.

The service will be available from 8:00am to 8:00pm every day and will continue till July 20.

Speaking as chief guest at the inauguration, Atiqul said, "This is truly a praiseworthy initiative from Brac at this moment of crisis of the pandemic. We are calling on other organisations to come forward with such initiatives..."

## 78 healthcare bodies given

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said the DGHS circular.

If the antigen test results of individuals showing Covid symptoms are negative, their samples will be tested again using RT-PCR machine for confirmation, added the circular.

The fees for a rapid antigen test have been fixed at maximum Tk 700.

In case of collecting samples from a patient's home, he or she can be charged Tk 500 maximum as an additional fee.

This charge will be applicable once in every household irrespective of the number of patients.

The 78 healthcare organisations have

to use the rapid antigen kits developed by two companies -- SD Biosensor of South Korea and Panbio of the USA.

On September 17 last year, the government first permitted antigen-based rapid testing at 36 public healthcare centres. The figure is now 457 across the country.

In the rapid antigen testing, a suspected patient will get the result within 30 minutes after the collection of samples.

For the detection of Covid-19, the RT-PCR test is considered the golden standard and is widely used in Bangladesh. It, however, takes at least 24 hours to get results.

## Uncertainty over workers'

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to walk tens of kilometres on foot in the absence of public transport for a movement control order to make it to their factories, many are staying put in Dhaka this Eid.

Nearly 30 percent of the garment workers will not go to their villages this time because of such confusing information regarding the lockdown and factory operations, said Towhidur Rahman, president of Bangladesh Apparels Workers Federation, a garment workers' platform.

"A clear and specific directive is needed to remove the confusion on such an important issue," Rahman said.

The workers will face a lot of trouble in going to their villages and coming back since all kinds of vehicles including buses, trains and launches will not ply during the lockdown, said Nazma Akter, president of Sammito Garment Sramik Federation.

So, there should be an easing of lockdown rules for smooth transportation of workers if the factories are kept open, Akter said.

Transport is a major concern for workers, said Amirul Haque Amin, president of the National Garment Workers Federation.

If they do not find any transport, many workers will set off by foot from their villages to save their jobs, as they did last year, Amin said.

"Unfortunately, many workers had walked even 50 kilometres last year because of such confusing information on factory reopening."

Those who did not want to put their body through the ordeal paid double or triple the fare for whatever transport they got to return to their workplaces, Amin added.

"We do not know when the direction from the government will come," said Faruque Hassan, president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association.

Both decisions can be finalised at the end of the negotiations with the

government.

"We are expecting the government will relax the lockdown but at the final stage, the government might not consider our application. So, nothing is clear yet," Hassan told The Daily Star over the phone.

However, the majority of the workers might not leave their workplaces for three reasons: transportation problems, fear of infection of the coronavirus that has spread to the hinterlands, and vaccination.

Mass vaccination for garment workers started from yesterday in two factories at Gazipur, Hassan said, adding that more than 12,000 workers have gotten the jab.

All the member factories have been asked to vaccinate the garment workers as soon as possible to keep the workers safe from infection, he said.

## Shakib guides

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spare.

Shakib's 109-ball innings featured eight boundaries as he mixed caution with aggression while losing partners at regular intervals. All-rounder Mohammad Saifuddin, batting at No 9, gave Shakib good company with an unbeaten 28 off 34 deliveries, the second highest score of the innings.

Earlier, Shakib contributed with the ball too, taking two wickets for 42 runs as Bangladesh restricted Zimbabwe to 240 for nine after being asked to field first.

The best performer for Bangladesh with the ball, though, was young pacer Shoriful Islam, the left-arm taking career-best figures of four for 46 in his 10 overs.

Bangladesh had won the first match of the series by 155 runs on Friday, courtesy of a Liton Das's century and Shakib's five-wicket haul.

The series concludes on Tuesday at the same venue.

## Crimes behind Brahman cows

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agro farm named Dairy Sun in Dhaka secured 30 Brahman cows with a nominal penalty and an apology to the court.

Contacted on July 8 and again on July 9, Mohammad Imran Hossain, proprietor of the Sadeeq Agro, gave different versions about the import documents and the reason for importing the cows: "no document was submitted", he was "not aware of forged document submission", "there were mistake", "cows were for research purpose", and the "cows were a gift" and so on.

Imran also insisted that this is the first time Sadeeq Agro imported Brahman cows.

But this correspondent, who went to the farm posing as a customer, was offered a two-year-old Brahman cow -- a livestock official confirmed the breed upon seeing a photograph -- at Tk 15 lakh with an expected yield of 800kg of meat.

Requesting not to be named, the owner of another agro farm who had earlier imported Brahman cattle illegally from the US, said he spent about Tk 58,000 on each cow.

Sources said Sadeeq Agro had earlier imported around 200 Brahman cows in five consignments -- a claim denied by its owner.

Sadeeq Agro, established on two acres of land in Mohammadpur's Beribadh area, has around 3,000 cows of different breeds. Many portions of the farm were set up by occupying a canal, alleged locals. **PAPERS ALL FAKE**

The Daily Star obtained three documents, submitted by Sadeeq Agro, under which Turkish Airlines brought the Brahman cows in its cargo plane on July 5. A Turkish Airlines official said various other goods were transported to Bangladesh on the same cargo aircraft these cows were flown in.

The documents -- a no objection certificate regarding the cattle import, a letter from the Animal Quarantine Division of the Department of Livestock Services, and the cattle import authorisation from the US -- were found to be fake by customs officials.

Agro Trade International was mentioned as the exporter under the address 7020 Hwy 75, South Madisonville, Texas.

The Daily Star, on July 10, emailed the US consigner Agro Trade International listed -- asking if they had sent those cows to Sadeeq Agro for research purposes as claimed by the owner. This correspondent hasn't received a reply yet.

All three documents submitted by the importer, dated May 25, were signed by "Dr Mohammad Omar Faruque, assistant director (quarantine) AC, Department of Livestock Services".

When showed the three documents,

Sadeeq Agro owner Imran said he was not aware of submitting any such documents to the Department of Livestock Services or to the fisheries and livestock ministry.

The Daily Star found an official named Mohammad Omar Faruque, an upazila livestock officer, now on deputation at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport as veterinary pathologist of the livestock quarantine station.

Contacted, Faruque said he never signed any documents provided by Sadeeq Agro.

"Actually, I don't have the authority to issue such documents on behalf of the department. Sadeeq Agro didn't even spell my name correctly," he said.

The mobile phone number mentioned in the documents does not belong to Faruque. On calling the number through the Truecaller app, the name that appears is one SM Reza.

This correspondent repeatedly called this number for several days, only to find it switched off.

Dr Shaikh Azizur Rahman, director general of the livestock department, told The Daily Star on July 9 that all three documents are forged as the department didn't provide any such documents to Sadeeq Agro.

He also confirmed that import of Brahman cows is banned since 2016 and said, "How dare Sadeeq Agro import those cows with all those forged documents!" **CONTRADICTIONARY VERSIONS**

On July 8, Imran claimed that Agro Trade International sent the 18 Brahman cows for research and development purposes to see whether Bangladesh's tropical weather "suits the Brahman cow".

Asked whether they had got the NOC from the ministry concerned, he said they were yet to get it though they submitted the necessary papers several months back to the livestock department and the ministry. "The Covid-19 pandemic delayed the ministry's process."

But, he claimed, the consigner had sent the consignment in the meantime. The supplier made some mistakes while sending those cows, he said, without elaborating what kind of mistakes.

He contradicted his own statements a day later, saying he didn't actually provide any documents to the livestock department or the ministry for an NOC -- presuming that importing cattle for research and development purposes would not require an NOC.

He then said, "As it was a gift from Agro Trade International, that's why we had thought NOC will not be required for receiving these gifts."

At one stage, Imran showed a paper to this correspondent titled "US Origin Health Certificate for Export of Cattle to the Bangladesh from the United

States". Surprisingly, the certificate issue date was written in Bangla.

Imran, also president of the Bangladesh Dairy Farmers Association, claimed they had submitted all other documents to the respective authorities including customs.

Asked why customs officials had seized the cows then, he said they did it because Sadeeq Agro hadn't submitted an NOC.

Imran said two months an agro farm named Dairy Sun in Dhaka had imported 30 Brahman cows, which were seized by customs officials.

That farm later got those cows back after giving some penalty money to customs following filing of a case with the High Court, he said, adding his plan was to take the same course if his cattle were not released by customs.

Masudul Islam Jesun, managing director of Dairy Sun, admitted that they imported 30 Brahman cows though the farm only had an NOC for importing Australian Friesian cows.

As officials filed a case, the High Court asked customs to hand over those cows after paying a penalty. "We had to pay Tk 35 lakh to customs to release those cows," he added.

**WHAT TURKISH AIRLINES SAYS**

Asked why and how they carried a cargo consignment although Sadeeq Agro's documents were fake, a top official of Turkish Airlines in Dhaka said it is not their task to verify the papers provided by the importer and agent of the consigner specially when the imported items are not sensitive.

"According to our airline's rules, we will just have to be sure whether the imported items are suitable for freighter service," he said, requesting anonymity, earlier this month.

"The importer sent documents of livestock ministry to the consigner in the US and his agent chose our cargo service," he added.

The official said as no representative from Sadeeq Agro was found after landing of the cargo aircraft. "The customs officials wanted to see the documents from us and they later found those to be totally fake."

Md Moazzem Hossain, commissioner of Dhaka Customs House at HSA, said they seized the cattle imported by Sadeeq Agro and sent these to the custody of the Central Cattle Breeding and Dairy Farm, Savar, as the consigner could not submit the bill of entry.

Asked about legal measures customs can take, he said, "From the day of arrival, the consignee will get 21 days to submit all documents and then we will assess these. If they fail to give the documents, we will go for legal action," he told The Daily Star on Saturday.

Queried as to what could be the possible punishment for importing cattle with forged documents, Moazzem refused to comment further.

## Shamsul Alam sworn in as state minister for planning

UNB, Dhaka

Shamsul Alam, an Ekushey Padak-winning economist, was sworn in as the state minister for planning yesterday.



President Abdul Hamid administered the oath of office to the new state minister at the Bangabhaban.

Liberation war affairs, law, home, agriculture, education, local government and planning ministers were present at the function.

Cabinet secretary conducted the ceremony.

Shamsul served as a member of General Economy Division (GED) at the Planning Commission since 2009 before retiring as a senior secretary.

He joined Bangladesh Agricultural University as a teacher in 1974 and continued teaching until 2009. He obtained honours and master's degrees from the same university.

Born on January 1, 1951, at Matlab Uttar in Chandpur, Shamsul received his post-graduate degree from Bangladesh Agricultural University in 1973.

In 1983, he achieved a post-graduate degree in economics from Thammasat University, Bangkok, and obtained his PhD in the same subject from Newcastle University in 1991.

Shamsul received Ekushey Padak in 2020 for his contribution in the country's economy.

## COLLEGE STUDENT'S DEATH Her elder sister loses job at private bank

KHALID BIN NAZRUL, Cumilla

The elder sister of the college student who was found dead in a Gulshan flat on April 26 has been terminated from her job at Padma Bank.

She alleged that she was terminated for refusing to withdraw a case filed against Bashundhara Group Managing Director Sayem Sobhan Anvir over abetting her sister's death by suicide.

A Padma Bank official, however, said she was terminated because of her performance.

The victim's elder sister said on July 14 she received the termination letter signed by Padma Bank's HR head M Ahsan Ullah Khan on July 13.

This correspondent obtained a copy of the letter.

"My sister was murdered. It is clear as daylight. Since her killing, I have been receiving threats from different quarters to withdraw the case against Anvir," she told The Daily Star the day she got the termination letter.

"Even the HR head of Padma Bank called me over Whatsapp around a month back and asked me to compromise with Anvir and withdraw the case, or face termination," she alleged.

M Ahsan Ullah Khan, who is also a senior executive vice-president of the bank, refuted the allegations.

Contacted yesterday, he said, "She has been terminated as she failed to perform consistently."

The elder sister of the college student said she was not given any show-cause notice or reminder about her performance before termination.

"If my termination was based only on a performance evaluation, why was no one else in my team terminated for bad performance?" she asked.

Earlier, she claimed that her sister was seven weeks pregnant at the time of her death.

"The forensic doctor who conducted the autopsy and the investigation officer of the case confirmed it to me," she said while talking to this correspondent.

She alleged that Gulshan police is trying to conceal the vital evidence of her sister's murder.

Contacted, Abul Hasan, the IO of the case and also the officer-in-charge of Gulshan Police Station, refused to make any comment about the case.

Masud Salauddin, a lawyer of the complainant, said, "In the inquest report the victim's bloodstained perineum proved that she was pregnant. The result of the DNA sample will be vital evidence in the case."

On April 26, the victim's body was found hanging from the ceiling fan in the bedroom of a Gulshan flat.

## Japan landslide toll rises to 15

AFP, TOKYO

The death toll in a landslide that hit the Japanese resort town of Atami has risen to 15, a local official said yesterday, as hundreds of rescuers continued the search for over a dozen missing residents.

"Two more people were confirmed dead during the weekend, with the number of victims now totalling 15," disaster-management spokesman Yuta Hara told AFP.

## Govt to lower age bar to 30 years

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campaign and lower the age limit to 18 years, keeping in mind the educational institutions."

He, however, did not elaborate.

Meeting sources said the government will start vaccinating people living in slum areas of the capital after the Eid vacation as part of its efforts to bring those with limited access to internet and technology under its vaccination programme.

As per the decision, people living in Karail slum will be vaccinated right after the Eid-ul-Azha to be celebrated on July 21.

The government also plans to buy another three crore doses of Sinopharm vaccine from China.

So far, around four percent of the country's population has been inoculated. The vaccination campaign, which was stalled due to a dearth of supply of AstraZeneca vaccine jabs from Serum Institute of India, resumed recently with the arrival of Sinopharm, Moderna and Pfizer vaccines.

The government has so far received 1.79 crore doses of Covid vaccines

from different sources, including 33 lakh jabs as gift from India and 11 lakh shots from China.

As of July 17, a total of 1.11 crore people were inoculated -- 43 lakh of them got both the first and second shots.

Yesterday's meeting also decided to inoculate Rohingya refugees aged 55 and above. According to government data, 47,240 Rohingyas will be vaccinated at 62 centres at the refugee camps in Cox's Bazar.

Vaccine doses and necessary accessories have already been dispatched to Cox's Bazar Civil Surgeon's office, sources said.

The vaccination campaign at the Rohingya camps will be assisted by the UNHCR, which will also help in issuing vaccination cards to the targeted population, they mentioned.

Vaccination at the camps is likely to start on August 16 and continue till August 24. Those who will miss out during this period will be vaccinated on August 25 and 26.

The authorities are yet to decide on which vaccine will be administered to

the refugees, added the sources.

The government's inoculation drive, which began on February 7 and revolved mainly around Serum's vaccine supply, came to a grinding halt after New Delhi suspended vaccine export in the last week of April due to a massive surge in Covid infections in India.

Bangladesh suspended administering the first dose on April 26. The inoculation of first dose resumed on a limited scale this month with the arrival of Sinopharm and Pfizer vaccines.

But the administering of the second Covishield jab among around 15 lakh people hangs in the balance due to suspension of supply from Serum, the largest vaccine producer in the world.

Bangladesh is supposed to get 6.8 crore vaccine doses this year under Covax facility. Those could cover around 20 percent of the population.

But the country has so far received 1.06 lakh doses of Pfizer and 25 lakh doses of Moderna vaccines from Covax. It will receive 30 lakh Moderna vaccine jabs tonight under the facility.