

BANGLADESH UPDATE



6,368
New cases in 24hrs



11,46,564
Total cases



18,851
Deaths



9,78,616
Recoveries



GLOBAL UPDATE



4,155,011
Deaths



193,603,856
Total cases

BID TO CROSS THE MED 17 Bangladeshi migrants drown off Tunisia

REUTERS, Tunisia

At least 17 Bangladeshi migrants drowned in a shipwreck off Tunisia as they tried to cross the Mediterranean to Italy from Libya, while more than 380 were rescued by the coastguard, the Tunisian Red Crescent said on Wednesday.

The boat had set off from Zuwara, on Libya's northwest coast, carrying migrants from Syria, Egypt, Sudan, Eritrea, Mali and Bangladesh, the humanitarian organisation said.

"Seventeen Bengalis died and more than 380 other migrants rescued in a boat that set off from Libya's Zuwara towards Europe," Red Crescent official Mongi Slim said.

In recent months, several people have drowned off the Tunisian coast, with an increase in the frequency of attempted crossings to Europe from Tunisia and Libya towards Italy as the weather has improved.

Hundreds of thousands of people have made the perilous Mediterranean crossing in recent years, many of them fleeing conflict and poverty in Africa and the Middle East.

Arrivals in Italy, one of the main migrant routes into Europe, had been falling in recent years, but numbers picked up again in 2021.

Nigeria receives six warplanes from US to fight insurgency

AFP, Lagos

Nigeria has received six of 12 turboprop light attack aircraft from the United States to help fight mounting insecurity, its airforce said.

Africa's most populous nation faces several security crises, including a 12-year-old jihadist insurgency in the northeast, herder-farmer clashes in the centre, kidnapping for ransom in the northwest and separatist agitations in the south.

In August 2017, the administration of then president Donald Trump agreed to sell to Nigeria 12 A-29 Super Tucanos, built in the US by Sierra Nevada Corporation and its Brazilian partner, Embraer Defense and Security.

"The first batch of A-29 Super Tucano aircraft have arrived in Kano today," Nigeria Airforce spokesman Edward Gabkwet said in a statement late Thursday. He later told AFP that six out of 12 had arrived.

Govt hospitals

FROM PAGE 1

Of the six public hospitals, Shaheed Suhrawardy and National Institute of Neurosciences already have 263 and 60 general beds respectively for Covid patients.

The Convention Centre of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) will be turned into a 1,000-bed field hospital for Covid patients.

"It will have 400 ICU [intensive care unit] and as many HDU [high dependency unit] beds," said the health minister.

Apart from this, a central monitoring team has been formed to monitor the hospital services in the capital, Zahid said after Sunday's meeting with the officials of public hospitals.

"Our resources are limited. The increased number of beds will not be enough if the situation is not controlled right away," the minister warned.

Health professionals said increasing the number of beds will not bring any change if the manpower is not increased simultaneously.

"We have already started expanding the hospital beds. Our 8th-12th floor will be turned into a Covid unit. We are hopeful to add 200 beds to the hospital, but we don't have ICU facilities," NITOR Director Abdul Gani Mollah told The Daily Star on July 19.

He, however, said they have a shortage of manpower as the NITOR doctors are not tasked with treating Covid patients. "But we will try to ensure making our best efforts as this is a crucial time."

Prof Dr Khalilur Rahman, director of Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital, said that they are capable of increasing the number of Covid beds up to 350.

Asked about manpower, he said they have already communicated with the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) for additional manpower.

Dr Sheikh Farid Hossain Miah, director (hospitals) at DHGS, said they cannot recruit healthcare professionals overnight.

"Recruitment of doctors, nurses and technologists is under process. The existing manpower will provide services for now."

He said the ICU beds for Covid patients will also be increased.

Currently, there are 15,625 general beds for Covid patients across the country. Of them 6,198 were vacant yesterday, according to DGHS data.

Out of 1,301 Covid ICU beds across the country, only 257 were unoccupied until yesterday.



An emergency response warehouse of Dhaka North City Corporation in the capital's Karwan Bazar. Different types of imported firefighting equipment have been gathering dust at the warehouses of city corporations as those remain unused for about one and a half years. *Top right*, a generator at the emergency response warehouse at Mirpur-10. *Bottom right*, a server at Mohakhali satellite control room.

PHOTO: STAR/ COURTESY OF IMED



Crucial yet left without care

FROM PAGE 1

The newspaper came to know that the third ladder had become non-functional recently.

The IMED report said the agencies involved in the projects, including the city corporations and the fire service, do not have any organisational setup for urban resilience. There is also no allocation for maintenance of those equipment, which may threaten the project's sustainability, it said.

Besides, the IMED recommended arranging necessary funds for maintenance and repair of the equipment, setting up necessary garages and appointing skilled manpower and providing them with necessary training.

WHY THE PROJECT?

The government took up the project aiming to strengthen institutional capacity to tackle different natural disasters, including fire incidents and earthquakes.

Re-enforcing the country's emergency response capacity is one of the four components of the umbrella project. The DNCC is implementing one of the sub-projects at the cost of Tk 746.05 crore, of which Tk 731.50 crore will be provided by the WB.

Under the project, the authorities were supposed to establish different establishments and procure equipment for the DNCC, the Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) and Sylhet City Corporation (SCC).

They were supposed to set up two emergency operating centres, 10 satellite control rooms, two fixed and two mobile emergency command and control rooms, 23 emergency response warehouses and procure 74 types of emergency equipment.

The project, which witnessed 80 per cent progress till April, was supposed to be implemented between July 2015 and June 2020. But the deadline was extended till June 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The authorities then sought further extension of project deadline and costs. If the revised proposal is approved, the project cost would be Tk 805.90 crore and the deadline would be April 2022, shows relevant documents. The revised proposal is now pending approval from the Planning Commission.

IMED OBSERVATIONS

As per the report, an inspection team visited ICT and live saving equipment stationed at the headquarters of Fire Service and Civil Defence (FSCD) on May.

Different types of equipment,

including turntable ladders, were stationed there.

"During the inspection, one of the three supplied turntable ladders was found operational while foreign experts were seen working to repair the PTO [power take off] system of another [ladder]," reads the report.

"Side plate of the third turntable ladder got damaged while it was being taken to the garage. The supplier was informed about repairing it and necessary arrangements in this regard was being made," report added.

A major portion of ICT equipment was kept at the FSCD site in Purbachal and the inspection team, which visited the site the same day, could not see the equipment as boxes were not opened formally.

An inspection team visited an emergency response warehouse, situated beside the DSCC's regional office-3, in Azimpur on April 28.

No ambulance or any other vehicle for carrying dead bodies was found on the ground floor of the Azimpur warehouse and it seemed that the CCTV there was not operational, said the report.

"Like in other warehouses, there is an acute lacking of maintenance here. Dust gathered on the rooms of the warehouse and unused equipment lied there. As a result, there is possibility that sensitive equipment can be damaged," reads the report.

On the same day, the team visited a Mirpur warehouse. The IMED attached five photos of the warehouse with the report.

One of the photos shows an unused ambulance while others show layers of dust on unused generators, furniture and other equipment.

The team visited a Karwan Bazar warehouse on May 25 and said several under-construction building made the warehouse's entrance very narrow.

The main gate of the warehouse was blocked by bricks to be used for an under-construction park and thus it would not be possible to use the equipment for rescue operations immediately after any incident.

"Like in other warehouses, equipment was left unused there amid the absence of dedicated manpower for maintenance. Risks are there that the equipment would become non-functional," the report said.

IMED gave similar observation about the Mohakhali and Kalyanpur warehouses and satellite control rooms in Azimpur, Mirpur-10, Karwan Bazar and Mohakhali.

The satellite control room in

Karwan Bazar is situated on the first floor of the warehouse there.

"Necessary ICT equipment required for the satellite control room has not been installed yet. Currently, a layer of dust was found on a server and a digital inverter at the control satellite room," reads the report with which two photos of the control room was attached to expose the present conditions there.

WHAT THE DAILY STAR SAW?

These correspondents visited the warehouses and control rooms in Mohakhali and Karwan Bazar on July 8.

The warehouse and control room in Mohakhali was set up inside a two-storey steel structure near the DNCC regional office-3.

The warehouse, where a signboard was hanged mentioning the name of 53 equipment stored there, found locked. Grasses grew in front of the structure, giving a clear indication that the authorities seldom open the warehouse.

Contacted, Faruk Hasan Md Al Masud, executive engineer of area-3 of DNCC, said the ambulance under the project were being used for the DNCC's Covid-dedicated hospital.

Replying to another question, he said he keeps the key of the warehouse, which they open when required. He requested these correspondents to talk to the project officials to know further about the matter.

Visiting the Karwan Bazar warehouse and control room, The Daily Star found the two-storey steel-structure encircled by a fence of corrugated iron-sheet.

It seemed the fence was to secure entry to the under-construction part of the site. Dozens of makeshift shops were found doing businesses surrounding the fence.

When these correspondents went to the other side of the fence through a narrow gate, three-four construction workers were found working at the park and the warehouse was locked down.

Asked, one of the workers said the warehouse was last opened during the Ramadan, more than two months ago.

WHAT THE AUTHORITIES SAY?

Contacted, Project Director Tariq Bin Yousuf said they handed the warehouses and control rooms to the zonal executive offices of city corporation concerned officially around two years back and that they were supposed to do the maintenance work.

But the equipment is not being

used due to the Covid-19 situation, he claimed, adding that different zone offices and NGOs used to hold their meetings at the control rooms previously.

He said the emergency operation centre would be set up by the next two or three months and after that all zonal offices would remain connected to the centre.

Asked about the Karwan Bazar warehouse, he said the fence was made for modernisation of the park and that there would be enough space for entrance after the completion of the work.

He said the development work was scheduled to be completed with last year but it got delayed due to the pandemic.

About the fault at the turntable ladder, he said they were yet to receive the ladders officially. The supplier would repair it, he said.

Asked about the IMED observations, he said they did not seek any explanation from them.

Mostafizur Rahman, proprietor of Sadman Associates, local agent of Rosenbauer AG, which supplied the ladders, said they handed two ladders to the fire service "unofficially" and decided to handover the another after fixing some "faults" detected by the company experts.

But fire service officials damaged a portion of one of the two ladders later when they were bringing the equipment out from their garage, he said, adding that they had already received spare parts for both the ladders.

"But the experts who would fix it could not come to Dhaka due to the Covid situation. We assured the project authorities and fire service that the experts will fix the problem once the Covid situation improved," he told The Daily Star on July 15.

He also said the fire service "damaged" the third ladder while using it lately, "We will fix the ladder on our costs too," he added.

Contacted, DNCC Mayor Md Atiqul Islam said the maintenance work was not done due to the Covid-19 situation.

He said they would arrange a meeting after Eid with FSCD, Red Crescent Society, Scouts and other volunteer organizations so that trained people remained ready to use the equipment.

"We will ensure mock exercises are done every three months so that everything remains functional," he added.

BCL activist stabbed to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

A Chhatra League activist, who was stabbed and beaten up by a gang of criminals early Thursday in Gazipur, died from wounds at a hospital in the capital yesterday.

The victim, Masum Ahmed, 25, was from Berairchala village in Sreepur upazila.

Police and locals said the criminals broke into Masum's house around 3:00am on Thursday. They beat him up and stabbed him. Hearing his scream, neighbours rushed to the spot and the attackers fled the scene.

The locals took critically injured Masum to hospital, said his neighbour Md Habibur Rahman, also ward councillor of Sreepur municipality.

As his condition deteriorated, he was shifted to the National Institute of Neurosciences and Hospital. He died around 7:30am yesterday.

Habibur Rahman also mentioned that Masum was vying for the post of president of BCL Sreepur upazila unit.

Contacted, Khandaker Md Imam Hossain, officer-in-charge of Sreepur Police Station, said Masum's uncle filed a case over the incident, and they were trying to arrest the killers.

Covid infections

FROM PAGE 1

However, during this period, the infection rate dropped in two other adjoining districts Manikganj and Tangail.

In Tangail, the infection rate dropped by one percentage point to 30 percent while by seven percentage points to 30 percent in Tangail.

Meanwhile, 166 people died from Covid-19 in 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, read a press release of the DGHS.

The total number of Covid-19 deaths in the country now stands at 18,851 and the death rate stands at 1.64 percent.

At least 6,364 new infections were reported during the period, taking the overall number of infections to 1,146,564, added the release.

The current positivity rate is 31.05 percent while the total positivity rate stands at 15.5 percent. A total of 20,493 samples were tested across the country in this 24-hour period.

At least 9,006 Covid-19 patients have recovered during the period. The total number of recoveries now stands at 978,616 and the recovery rate at 85.35 percent.

Among the 166 dead, 95 were men and 71 were women.

Of them, two were between 11 and 20 years old, seven between 21 and 30, 15 between 31 and 40, 24 between 41 and 50, 32 between 51 and 60, 46 between 61 and 70, 27 between 71 and 80, and 10 between 81 and 90, added the release.

During the three-day Eid vacation, between July 20 and July 22, a total of 22,908 Covid-19 cases were recorded and 560 persons died from the novel coronavirus infection.

The lowest number of cases on a day was recorded -- 3,697 -- across the country on Thursday as few people appeared at the testing centres.

However, the positivity rate was highest at 32 percent in comparison to the samples tested.

Ensure vaccine

FROM PAGE 1

to ensure vaccines for all in a recent media briefing.

Yesterday, Prof Yunus received the Olympic Laurel as only the second person in history during the opening ceremony of the Tokyo Olympics.

The distinction was created by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to honour outstanding individuals for their achievements in education, culture, development and peace through sport.

In his reaction through social media, the Noble laureate said he was "honoured and overwhelmed" to receive the Olympic Laurel.

"I'm honoured and overwhelmed to receive this Olympic Laurel. And so sad I can't be there with you."

The IOC is taking the social dimension of sports very seriously, Prof Yunus shared on his verified Facebook page yesterday.

"You, athletes of the world, can provide the leadership in transforming this world," he said.

He called for creating a world of three zeros -- zero net carbon emission, zero wealth concentration to end poverty and once for all, zero unemployment by unleashing the power of entrepreneurship in everyone.

He wished the IOC success with its mission to help transform the world to a more peaceful world through sport.

Prof Yunus is also the recipient of numerous international awards for his ideas and endeavours. He is a member of the board of the United Nations Foundation.

In 2006, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for founding Grameen Bank, which pioneered the concepts of microcredit and microfinance for people living in poverty.

The first-ever Olympic Laurel was awarded to the Kenyan Olympian and social changemaker Kip Keino on August 5, 2016, during the Opening Ceremony of the Games of the XXXI Olympiad in Rio de Janeiro.

Initiated for Rio 2016, the Olympic Laurel is to be awarded at the opening ceremony of each summer edition of the Olympic Games.

Holidaymakers suffer in return journeys

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ferries between Daulatdia and Paturia and Bangla Bazar and Shimulia terminals. But the ferries could hardly keep up with the number of people and vehicles that kept arriving in the terminals. Many had to wait for hours before they managed to get on a ferry.

Yasmin, who travelled from Meherpur, told The Daily Star that she and her two children reached Daulatdia around midnight on Thursday and waited at the terminal until the next morning to be able to get on a ferry.

Sadi Mohammad, another traveller, said, "I work for a private firm. The employer told me to come back if I wanted to save my job."

Tania Sultana, additional superintendent of police (Shibabaya circle), said, "Vehicles have been stuck at Daulatdia since last night. They were allowed to cross the ferry on humanitarian grounds."

Our Munshiganj correspondent reports that the picture was similar in Banglabazar and Shimulia.

According to the Traffic Control Room of Bangabandhu Bridge, vehicles went across the bridge until 9:00am, reports our Tangail correspondent.

Streets in the capital's Farmgate, Shabbagh, Panthapath,



A launch bound for Moju Chowdhury's Haat in Laxmipur is crammed with passengers at liisha Launch Ghat in Bhola on Thursday as people are desperate to reach the capital before the "strict lockdown" was enforced from yesterday. The passengers, who would catch buses for Dhaka from Laxmipur, have little regard for health safety rules.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Mohammadpur, Shyamoli, Ring Road, Adabor, and Dhanmondi areas were almost empty yesterday.

The picture was similar in Sylhet, Barishal, Chattogram, Rangpur, Dinajpur and Rajshahi cities, reports our correspondents.

Rab, Border Guard Bangladesh and army personnel were deployed

to enforce the lockdown.

Police detained 403 individuals for being outdoors, defying the Covid-19 health guidelines in Dhaka yesterday.

Mobile courts fined 203 individuals and shops Tk 1.27 lakh while DMP's traffic division fined 441 motorists Tk 10.60 lakh.

Ecuador declares emergency after 22 killed in prison riots

AFP, Quito

Ecuador on Thursday declared a state of emergency in its penitentiary system after riots at two prisons left 22 dead and 57 wounded.

President Guillermo Lasso issued the order "to mobilize all necessary human and economic resources to re-establish order" in Ecuador's prisons.

Lasso said the military would be in charge of controlling the prison perimeter and entry, while police officers would control the inside.

Until now civilians trained as prison guards were in charge of indoor security.

Prison authorities earlier suspended all activities "that could put the penitentiary population and administrative personnel at risk."

Outside visits were cancelled at some prisons.

Among the wounded in the riots at prisons in Guayas, in southwestern Ecuador, and Cotopaxi, in the center of the country, were eight police officers. An earlier toll had reported 21 deaths.