

BANGLADESH UPDATE

14,925
New cases in 24hrs

11,98,652
Total cases

19,779
Deaths

10,22,414
Recoveries

GLOBAL UPDATE

4,189,367
Deaths

195,769,235
Total cases

Lost Muslin yarn know-how recovered

SUKANTA HALDER and ASIFUR RAHMAN

The lost muslin yarn technology used to churn out exceedingly delicate fabrics much coveted in the 17th and 18th centuries the world over has been recovered by an expert team of the government.

In the ancient and medieval period, the muslin cloth made by the weavers of Dhaka became a status symbol for the rich and aristocratic class. In 1747, Dhakai Muslin exports fetched Tk 28.5 lakh, found the researchers.

The fall of the Mughal Empire, lack of patronage of the British rulers, expansion of the East India Company, Industrial Revolution in England, the imposition of high taxes on muslin and the cutting of the fingers of weavers were the main causes behind the loss of the Muslin cloth since the middle of the 19th century.

"The muslin we have made is 99 percent similar to the cloth preserved in the UK's Victoria and Albert Museum and the National Museum in Bangladesh," said M Monzur Hossain, chief scientist of the project titled 'Bangladesh's Golden Tradition Muslin Yarn Making Technology and Recovery of Muslin Fabrics (Phase I)'.

The Tk 12.1 crore project came into being after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina asked during a visit to the ministry of textiles and jute in October 2014 if the lost technology of muslin could be restored.

Subsequently, a committee was formed consisting of experts from the Bangladesh Handloom Board (BHB), the Bangladesh Textile Mills Corporation, the Cotton Development Board, the Bangladesh University of Textiles, Dhaka University and Rajshahi University.

The project, which started in July 2018 and wrapped up last month, started with training six weavers to churn out fabrics with 200 to 557 yarn

count. Now, 75 weavers can produce such fine fabrics.

The muslin of yore was renowned for its fineness, with its yarn count starting from 250 and going up to 1,000.

"Since the project started, we have had to go through seven steps from hand-spinning cotton to fabric production and fabric making. We used lots of data from several kinds of research, which brought us success," Ayub Ali, project director and chief planning officer at the BHB.

The whole exercise cost Tk 3.9 crore, meaning about Tk 8 crore assigned to the project has been saved.

With the rest of the money, a muslin centre would be set up on 3.5 acres of land in Narayanganj, where a plant of the Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation currently stands, he said.

A revised proposal has been sent to the planning commission for cotton cultivation, production of skilled spinners and weavers, purchase of machinery and construction of sheds etc.

"This project will help to restore the golden heritage of Bangladesh, which was lost almost 170 years ago," Ali said, adding that the fabric will be available to the public by next year.

For the feat, the BHB was awarded the Public Administration Medal under the Technical Research (science-based) category for 2020 and 2021 at an event yesterday.

"It is possible to earn a huge amount of foreign exchange by exporting muslin and to brighten the image of Bangladesh in the international arena," said Golam Dastagir Gazi, textiles and jute minister, at the event.

The acquisition of GI certificate and patent for muslin has created the opportunity for sustainable development and expansion of the country's weaving industry, he added.



Prices of vegetables have soared in the capital over the last few days as the supply has decreased amid the lockdown. The city's kitchen markets are seeing fewer customers now mainly due to restrictions on movement and high prices. The photo of this vegetables shop was taken at Hatirpool kitchen market yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Lockdown to get stricter

FROM PAGE 1

Though the lockdown was in place, the number of private vehicles on roads in the capital yesterday was higher than that of the previous day.

Commuters as well as vehicles, including cars, minibuses and motorbikes, were seen heading towards Dhaka, crossing the Padma river through the Paturia-Daulatdia route.

Health officials said there is no alternative but to enforce strict lockdown to prevent the Covid situation from going out of control.

On Monday, Health Minister Zahid Maleque said 90 percent beds at hospitals were occupied.

"If Covid infections continue like this, there will be no vacant beds at hospitals," he warned.

At yesterday's meeting, it was decided that necessary measures would be taken to make sure anyone stepping out of home for emergency purposes wears facemask.

The government will also go for extensive community engagement so that the Covid restrictions are enforced properly.

Steps will be taken to ensure isolation and quarantine of those

infected with the virus. Besides, vigorous campaigns would be launched across the country to make people aware of the pandemic.

The family members (aged over 18) of the frontliners in the fight against Covid will also be given jobs on an emergency basis.

It was also decided that another meeting will be held before August 5 to determine the next course of action.

Talking to the media, Asaduzzaman said the government will launch a massive vaccination campaign on August 7.

The authorities will administer Covid vaccine to anyone with a national identity (NID) card to speed up the inoculation campaign, he mentioned.

"We have seen that the countries which took up vaccination programmes have been able to bring down the infection rate. Our neighbouring country is an example of this. That's why the prime minister has given instructions to strengthen the vaccination campaign.

"She [the PM] has also issued directives to give Covid vaccine to any NID card holder."

Those who do not have NID cards can also get vaccinated by getting registered at a vaccination point, the home minister said.

"Not only members of law enforcement agencies or government officials, public representatives, and political, social and religious leaders also need to get involved in the vaccination campaign to make it successful. Otherwise, we will not be able to overcome this situation," he observed.

Health Minister Zahid Maleque said, "We are giving emphasis on vaccination. We are setting up vaccination centres in unions where the locals can get jobs... They can get the shots, showing their NID cards..."

"About 75 percent of the patients at hospitals are elderly people and 90 percent of them are not vaccinated. Mortality risk is high among them. We request all the elderly people to take jobs," he told reporters after the meeting.

Those aged above 50 will be given priority for vaccination, he noted.

The government has a plan to take the inoculation facilities to the ward level after securing more vaccine doses, added Zahid.

'No mercy for any misdeed'

FROM PAGE 1

Osmani Memorial Auditorium.

Joining the event virtually from the Gono Bhaban, the PM said public servants are the people of this country and their kith and kin are there across the country.

"The more Bangladesh prospers, your close ones will get a much better life. Work for the country with that line of thinking."

She asked the public servants to maintain professionalism, honesty, sincerity and devotion, and to work with innovative ideas which would be beneficial for the people.

Earlier, Hasina distributed public administration medals. Thirty-six officials and organisations received the medals for their outstanding performances in their respective fields.

Liberation War Affairs Minister AKM Mozammel Huq distributed the medals on behalf of the premier.

Hasina said the government,

defying all obstacles caused by the pandemic, presented the national budget for the 2021-22 fiscal year. She asked the public servants working in the public administration to make sure that the budget is implemented properly.

The PM asked them to maintain the standard while implementing development projects. "Let there not be any project that is planned and implemented indiscriminately."

The public servants must look after the development projects so that those deliver the purposes of the mass people, she said.

Those who're in the public administration must serve people and that's their duty, the PM added. State Minister for Public Administration Farhad Hossain, Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam and Public Administration Secretary KM Ali Azam also spoke at the programme.

The premier also unveiled the cover of a book titled "Administration of Bangabandhu" at the event.

Landslides kill 7

FROM PAGE 1

Md Abdul Hai, officer-in-charge of Moheshkhali Police Station, told The Daily Star that a 14-year-old girl in Choto Moheshkhali area died after being buried by a landslide around the same time.

The Cox's Bazar met office recorded 134 mm rainfall in the last 24 hours since Monday midnight to Tuesday noon. According to its forecast, heavy rain is likely to continue in greater Chattogram, raising the possibility of more landslides.

Over one lakh people live on hills and their slopes in greater Chattogram, including Chattogram, Cox's Bazar, Rangamati and Bandarban.

Politically influential people grabbed the hills, built makeshift homes and rented them to lower-income people at low prices.

In Chattogram, the district administration identified 30 landslide-prone hills, on which around 10,000

people live. Every monsoon, the authority makes efforts to relocate the people to safer places, but the initiative goes in vain largely due to the poor and unhygienic conditions of the shelters.

Around 170 people died in massive landslides in June 2017 in Chattogram, Rangamati and Bandarban districts, disconnecting regional communication for days.

A high-powered committee, formed after 127 people died in a landslide in the port city's Motijarna in 2007, put forward 30 recommendations, including permanent rehabilitation of the people exposed to landslides, afforestation on hills so they can ward off landslides, stopping hill cutting, and building fences around the hills to protect them from grabbers.

It has been 13 years since the recommendations were forwarded. However, none has been executed yet.

Cash assistance, counsel for them

FROM PAGE 1

Industry and Energy Division of the Planning Commission has been facilitating the development of this project.

Sharifa Khan, member of the division, said, "Last year, thousands of migrant workers started to return to Bangladesh due to the impact of the pandemic. A large number of those workers remain jobless and they are spending their savings. We were thinking of how we can utilise the human resources by employing them at home or sending them abroad again as skilled workers."

"Then the World Bank stepped forward to collaborate and we developed this project. If this project is implemented, migrant workers, who return home without any significant

amount of savings and those who had had adverse experiences abroad, will find the assistance needed to reintegrate to the society and to find a suitable employment or financial assistance if necessary and they will receive Tk 13,500."

According to ministry sources, more than 1.75 crore Bangladeshis are working in 175 countries across the world at present. In 2020, 4,08,408 migrant workers returned amid the pandemic.

According to a recent survey by Brac Migration Programme, 47.23 percent of the 417 interviewed migrant workers do not have any income. Besides, 98 percent of them said they were under serious stress due to inadequate earnings, unemployment and inability to reintegrate to the society.

Another day, another Covid deaths

FROM PAGE 1

The positivity rate was 29.82 percent.

Infections and deaths caused by the virus have been setting new grim records since the Delta variant spread at the community level in May.

The highest positivity rate of 54 percent was reported in Munshiganj yesterday followed by 53 percent in Gazipur.

Besides, five out of 11 surrounding districts of Dhaka, including Shariatpur, Rajbari, Narsingdi, Manikganj, and Faridpur, had positivity rates of 30 percent and above.

In the Dhaka division, the average positivity rate was 25 percent yesterday.

The Covid-19 situation appeared to be the worst across Sylhet, Barishal and Chattogram divisions with 40,

37 and 35 percent positivity rates, according to the DGHS data.

Among other divisions, the positivity rates was 26 percent in Mymensingh, 28 percent in Khulna, 27 percent in Rangpur, and 25 percent in Rajshahi.

District-wise analysis showed that 12 districts had positivity rates above 40 percent while 24 other districts had positivity rates between 30 and 40 percent, and 23 districts between 20 and 30 percent.

As of yesterday, the pandemic has caused 19,779 confirmed deaths and 11,94,752 infections, shows the data.

Of those reported dead yesterday, 138 were male and 120 female. Of them, 84 were in Dhaka, 61 in Chattogram, 50 in Khulna, 21 in Rajshahi, 13 in Barishal, 11 each in

Rangpur and Mymensingh, and seven in Sylhet divisions.

While the Covid-19 deaths and cases have been leaping, especially following the Eid, hospitals across the country have been struggling with the rush of patients every day.

The authorities of 100-bed Narsingdi District Hospital, where 80 beds were dedicated for Covid-19 patients, have issued a notice saying they can no longer admit new patients, reports our correspondent from Brahmanbaria.

Meanwhile, relatives of a female patient allegedly vandalised the ICU unit of a hospital in Noakhali after the patient died "due to an interruption in oxygen supply", reports our correspondent in the district.

Natore AL ignores lockdown rules, holds gathering

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

Natore Awami League ignoring the ongoing lockdown held a programme yesterday to celebrate the 51st birthday of Sajeeb Wazed Joy, son of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her ICT affairs adviser.

Cutting of a cake and a discussion were held at the temporary office of district AL in Kandivittua area where around 300 leaders and activists were present. Social distancing, a key health safety rules to prevent the spread of Covid-19, was not followed there.

Shafiqul Islam Shimul, lawmaker of Natore-2 and also general secretary of Natore AL, was present as the chief guest.

Two mobile courts, deployed in the area to ensure the lockdown, were not seen during the programme.

"Everybody came after hearing that it was a celebration of Sajeeb Wazed Joy's birthday, that's why health safety rules couldn't be followed entirely," lawmaker Shafiqul said when asked about the non-compliance.

Natore Deputy Commissioner Shamim Ahmed said, "Public representatives should be the most responsible persons in the country. We expect all to follow the rules. We will take steps in future so that they follow the rules."

Natore Municipality Mayor Uma Chowdhury Jolly said, "We asked



Disregarding health safety rules, people gather to celebrate the birthday of Sajeeb Wazed Joy at the office of Natore AL in Kandivittua area yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

the leaders and activists to follow the rules, but they did not. In fact, it is not possible to implement such rules in these party programmes."

Meanwhile, over 200 AL men gathered in Kanaikhali area to celebrate the founding anniversary of Swachhasebak League yesterday.

Health protocols were hardly maintained there.

Shariful Islam Ramzan, Natore Sadar upazila chairman and also AL joint general secretary of the district, said they could have organised the programme with the presence of thousands of leaders and activists. But

Bodies of three missing climbers spotted on Pakistan's K2

AFP, Islamabad

The bodies of three mountaineers who died during a winter expedition on Pakistan's K2 have been found months after they went missing while scaling the world's second-highest peak, officials said yesterday.

The remains of Pakistani mountaineering legend Muhammad Ali Sadpara, Iceland's John Snorri and Juan Pablo Mohr from Chile were spotted Monday near "the bottleneck" -- a narrow gully just hundreds of metres from the summit.

"We are now focusing on a strategy to bring the bodies to a point from where they could be airlifted," Ayaz Shagri, an official with the Alpine Club of Pakistan, told AFP.

"The bodies of the mountaineers are intact and frozen," Shagri added, saying the climbers' remains were at an altitude of 7,800 metres (25,600 feet).

"It is very difficult to bring the dead bodies down from this high altitude," said Karrar Haidri, also from the Alpine Club, adding that the military was helping with the operation.

The trio lost contact with K2's base camp in early February, sparking a massive rescue effort that included military helicopters and planes.

Sadpara's son Sajid is in the team coordinating the recovery effort, Shagri added.

The discovery of the bodies followed the death on Sunday of Scottish climber Rick Allen, who was killed after being hit by an avalanche.

With Pakistan's borders open and few other places to go due to the coronavirus pandemic, the country's summer climbing season is attracting a large number of alpinists.

Dengue cases

FROM PAGE 1

Ward-7 councillor Tofazzal Hossain is one of the shareholders of the shopping centre.

Tofazzal told The Daily Star that their workers cleared waters every three days but during the Eid vacation it remained unnoticed as workers were on leave.

Other mobile courts of the DNCC also fined Tk 3.41 lakh in different areas of the DNCC.

Eleven mobile courts of Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) also fined Tk 3.065 lakh to owners of 23 buildings including Bombay Sweets as they found Aedes mosquito larvae at their properties.

The courts also filed 23 cases against the building owners in this regard.

Executive magistrate Mamun Miah said they fined Tk 50,000 to Bombay Sweets.

The two city corporation authorities started operating raids as the number of dengue patients at the hospitals is on the rise.

With yesterday's 143, a total of 1,954 patients have been diagnosed with dengue this year and only 51 of them are from outside Dhaka, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Among the total infected, 1,573 were diagnosed with dengue during the current month till this morning, which indicates the fast-rising trend of the Aedes-borne disease.

Two hundred and seventy-two were infected in June while 43 were infected in May.

Most of the patients, who were hospitalised, have so far been released.

A total of 509 patients are still undergoing treatment at hospitals in Dhaka, the DGHS data shows.

considering the health rules, the event was held in a limited scale.

Shafiqul Islam Swapan, general secretary of Natore Swachhasebak League, said, "I asked them [leaders and activists] to follow the health rules. But I was not completely successful."