

BANGLADESH UPDATE

12,744
New cases in 24hrs

13,22,658
Total cases

21,902
Deaths

11,56,943
Recoveries

GLOBAL UPDATE

4,275,324
Deaths

201,297,463
Total cases

Sheikh Kamal faced malicious campaign

Hasina says at function marking 72nd birth anniversary of her brother

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said Sheikh Kamal used to lead a very simple life but faced a malicious campaign after surviving a futile assassination attempt in 1974.

"Kamal was shot on December 16, 1974 following a conspiracy. An ill-attempt was made to kill him. When he survived it, various negative campaigns were carried out against him," she said.

The PM was addressing a function marking the 72nd birth anniversary of Shaheed Sheikh Kamal and the handover of Sheikh Kamal National Sports Council (NSC) Award-2021.

The function was held at Shaheed Sheikh Kamal Auditorium of the National Sports Council, with the premier joining virtually from the Gono Bhaban.

Sheikh Kamal, the eldest son of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, was born on August 5, 1949 at Tungipara, Gopalganj.

Hasina said Kamal led a very simple life despite being a son of the then president or prime minister.

"Though his father was the prime minister or the president, he never had any intention of making money and

wealth or building a business."

Kamal's biggest passion was to develop the country's educational institutions and improve cultural and sports arenas, said the PM recalling the contributions of her younger brother to different sectors, particularly sports.

She said Kamal played a sincere role in modernising football, cricket and the sports sector. "He made tangible contributions to the field of music, too. As a Dhaka University student, he made a lot of contributions to our society."

Kamal's biggest goal was to reorganise the young generation, motivate them to love the country and work in the interest of the country, the PM said. "Had he been alive, he could have done a lot of work for the country's young generation."

Describing Kamal as a versatile man, Hasina said he had a good sense of responsibility and dutifulness, and he played various games like football, cricket and hockey in addition to founding Abahani Krira Chakra.

Alongside sports, Kamal was very good in drama, song and extempore activity. He had established Spondon Shilpi Gosthi.

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Gono Bhaban inaugurating a memorial postal stamp, an envelope and a seal on the occasion of 72nd birth anniversary of Sheikh Kamal.

PHOTO: PID

City back to near normal

More people, vehicles on roads; govt extends lockdown till Aug 10

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Although shopping malls and markets are closed and public transport remains suspended, the city streets look almost normal with people violating lockdown by coming out of home and moving around on rickshaws, vans and private cars.

Amid this breach, the government extended the ongoing lockdown for five days till August 10 to curb Covid-19 infection.

Yesterday, the cabinet division issued a circular to this end, which also lifted restrictions on operation of all factories and industries.

From August 1, the government allowed operation of export-oriented garment factories.

Domestic flights will operate, maintaining health rules, says the circular.

Officials of US-Bangla and Novo Air, two private air operators of the country, said they are ready to resume flights on different domestic routes.

In a press release, Novo Air said the airlines will operate six flights each to Chattogram, Saidpur and Jashore every day and two daily flights to each of Barisal, Sylhet, Rajshahi and Cox's Bazar.

Wishing not to be named, an official of Bangladesh Railway said operation of 38 pairs of intercity trains and 19 pairs of mail and commuter trains will begin from August 11.

Commuter trains will operate following health safety guidelines and leave half the train seats empty. Tickets will only be available online whereas local train tickets will be found at counters.

Since April 5, the government has been enforcing restrictions in phases to stop the spread of coronavirus transmission.

All shopping malls and markets will remain closed until August 10. Only kitchen markets and corner shops can stay open from 9:00am to 3:00pm.

All forms of social gatherings will be prohibited, including religious and political gatherings. No restaurant can provide dine-in service and can only offer takeaways.

In a circular, Bangladesh Bank yesterday decided to keep banks closed on August 8 to contain the latest wave of the coronavirus pandemic.

Banks remained closed on Sunday and Wednesday last week as per the decision of BB.

These are also ordered to keep their doors open for clients from 10:00am to 3:00pm during working days, according to a Bangladesh Bank notice.

Banks will be allowed to remain open until 4:30pm to complete work other than transaction activities.

The decision has been taken in line with a government instruction to continue the ongoing strict restrictions on movement till August 10.

"Stricter lockdown" has been in force from July 1 with an eight-day break during the Eid-ul-Azha. It resumed again from July 23 morning and it was scheduled to end yesterday.

After an inter-ministerial meeting on Covid-19 on Tuesday, Liberation War Affairs Minister AKM Mozammel Haque said shops and offices will open from August 11.

Operation of public transport will also resume on a limited scale, he said.

Messi to leave Barcelona

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most of its business to private equity firm CVC Capital Partners for 2.7 billion euros (\$3.2 billion).

"Despite FC Barcelona and Lionel Messi having reached an agreement and the clear intention of both parties to sign a new contract today, this cannot happen because of financial and structural obstacles (Spanish La Liga regulations)," Barca said in a statement.

"As a result of this situation, Messi shall not be staying on at FC Barcelona. Both parties deeply regret that the wishes of the player and the club will ultimately not be fulfilled.

"FC Barcelona wholeheartedly expresses its gratitude to the player for his contribution to the aggrandisement

of the club and wishes him all the very best for the future in his personal and professional life."

Messi had tried to leave Barcelona in August 2020, making a formal request for an exit after a break down in his relationship with then president Josep Maria Bartomeu but successor Joan Laporta, who presided over the Argentine's rise to greatness, convinced him to stay.

Messi, who signed his first contract with Barcelona in 2000 on a napkin aged 13, is the club's all-time top scorer and appearance maker with 672 goals in 778 games in all competitions.

He remains without a club ahead of the 2021-22 season.

Delta variant found in 98pc

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was conducted on them to know which variant was responsible for the infection.

M Sharfuddin Ahmed, vice-chancellor of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University and also the supervisor of the genome sequencing research project of the institution, revealed the findings of the survey at a programme yesterday.

The research programme was aimed at unveiling the character of the genome and types of mutation and discovering the inter-relations with the global Covid-19 genome as well as preparing a database of the Covid-19 genome in Bangladesh.

The Delta variant was first detected in India in October last year.

Fifty-three percent of the samples analysed in the study were from male patients. The study included samples from people aged between nine months and 90 years.

"No age group is immune to coronavirus infection. It cannot be said that children have no risk of

coronavirus infection," Sharfuddin said.

He said the study findings are from the first month of BSMMU's research and updates will be revealed in the months to follow.

The study found that people with comorbidities like cancer, respiratory problems, diabetes and those aged over 60 face high risk of mortality if infected for the second time.

According to the study, the Alpha variant, first found in the UK, dominated the country in December 2020, before the South African Beta variant dominated in March 2021 but now most people are being infected with the Delta variant.

The research team also found the existence of the Nigerian variant in one sample.

The Delta variant was first detected in the country on May 8. It is far more transmissible than the virus's previous strains. The World Health Organisation has termed it a "variant of concern".

Govt failing to engage people

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Pointing out that Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan, after a high-profile meeting on July 27, talked about going for an extensive community engagement right away, the experts said it would be nothing but "yet another popular rhetoric" without a community engagement framework in place.

"The government's steps taken so far suggest that those holding leadership positions in different ministries and bureaucracy have no clear understanding about the field reality. As a result, the outcome of many efforts is very poor," Dr Abu Zamil Faisal, member of the Epidemiology and Public Health Committee (EPHC) of the health directorate, told The Daily Star yesterday.

On March 10 last year, couple of days after the first Covid cases were detected in the country, the cabinet division formed an 11-member committee, headed by the deputy commissioner, in each district and a 10-member committee, led by the upazila nirbahi officer, in each upazila.

All other members of those committees were government officials while the local lawmakers or upazila chairmen were kept as advisors.

Six days later, the health and family welfare ministry formed a nine-member committee in each union, headed by the union chairman, for community engagement.

The three committees were asked to follow instructions from the 30-member National Committee on Covid-19 led by Health Minister Zahid Maleque.

But as the national committee itself did not function properly due to a lack of coordination between different government ministries, the other committees at the districts, upazilas and union failed to work as per the plan as well.

In a latest development, the health ministry issued a circular on July 25 saying committees have been reformed at union and ward levels to work on containing the virus.

While many union parishad authorities have reformed the committees as per the circular, many have not yet done it, this newspaper has learnt after talking to multiple chairmen yesterday.

Besides, none of those reformed committees has started working yet.

The Daily Star has talked with more than 80 union parishad chairmen and municipality mayors across the country recently. Almost all of them said the union level committees were not in function.

They said they have implemented a few campaigns after the committees were formed, with their own plan, but could not continue them due to a lack of coordination and support from the "centre".

"We formed a committee as per government instructions last year. But as we did not get any further instruction or support, we could not function properly," Md Aminul Islam, chairman of Annadanagar union parishad under

Pirgachha Upazila in Rangpur, told The Daily Star.

"It was only recently that the UNO has asked us to reactivate our committee," Aminul added.

Eight chairmen in Sylhet division echoed Aminul's statement.

"We've heard that the government is planning to revive the committees, but we have not received any instructions in this regard yet," Mamunur Rashid, chairman of Alinagar union parishad in Sylhet's Beanibazar upazila, said recently.

Monoranjan Mondol, chairman of Batiaghata Sadar union in Khulna, told this newspaper, "We [union parishad] carried out routine work like distribution of relief materials amid the pandemic."

Sohel Rana Ranu, panel mayor of Munshiganj municipality, said no committee was formed in his municipality area to prevent Covid-19 from spreading.

"The district administration engaged us in distributing relief materials. We did it only twice. We have no engagement with the district corona prevention committee," Sohail Rana Ranu told The Daily Star.

Of the 61 unions in Kushtia district, the committees were formed in six unions, reports our correspondent in the district.

Mayors of different municipalities and chairmen in different union parishads in Dinajpur said they got no instruction on community engagement from high-ups.

"We try to do work as per our own plan. There is no coordination from the local administrations," said Mahmudul Alam, mayor of Phulbari municipality in Dinajpur.

LEADING BY EXAMPLE
Chapainawabganj district and Savar upazila have succeeded in containing Covid-19 infection and deaths through extensive community engagement, said officials.

After Chapainawabganj became one of the hardest-hit bordering districts due to the Delta variant of the coronavirus, the district administration imposed lockdown and formed committees in all 45 unions with the local union chairman as chief to engage people in the Covid-19 fight. A 10-member volunteer committee in each ward was also formed on May 26.

Besides, the district administration assigned one government official to supervise the activities of the ward-level committees every day. The officials were drawn from various government departments.

Since the formation of those committees, the volunteers have been providing support to the local people in taking Covid-19 tests, treatment, and more importantly, campaigning to make people wear masks and follow other health rules.

The result is inspiring for others -- the district now has a positivity rate of around seven percent from 63 percent in mid-May.

"If any poor person is infected, we

give him or her Tk 500-1000 and our volunteers take care of the patient until they recover," Tariqul Islam, chairman of Baidianga union in the district, told The Daily Star.

Savar upazila health and family planning office, on the other hand, has mobilised around 4,500 active volunteers and representatives from different professional organisations as well as schools to successfully contain infections and deaths.

The upazila on the outskirts of the capital is home to around 70 lakh people.

"We ensured every medicine store has a pulse oximeter so that people can check their oxygen level easily. We engaged local youth clubs in supporting the people with symptoms," Savar Upazila Health and Family Planning Officer Mohammed Shayemul Huda told The Daily Star.

He said they did not need additional funds for these activities.

"What we did was that we gave an identity card to each volunteer. And we regularly join their local campaign. This inspired them very much," he added.

He said they also encouraged people to stay in isolation if they showed symptoms.

"We have got good results-- we have only 54 deaths due to Covid-19 so far," said Huda.

FRAMEWORK STILL AWAITING APPROVAL

On June 20, the EPHC of the DGHS submitted a draft Community Engagement Framework to Prof Meerjady Sabrina Flora, additional director general of the DGHS.

Since then, there has been no progress on finalising the draft.

"We are so busy responding to the daily issues related to Covid-19 that we could not manage time to work on it," Prof Dr Nazmul Islam, line director of the DGHS, who was the convener of the nine-member technical group formed to prepare the draft, told The Daily Star.

He, however, said there was no alternative to implementing such frameworks to fight this pandemic as it would not be over soon.

While drafting the framework, the technical committee considered two things. One was a Yale University study in Bangladesh published on May 7 this year which stated that lockdown produces four times the benefit of mask distribution, but the economic cost is at least nine times higher.

Another was the experience in Savar Upazila.

The framework has 12 actions and involves elected representatives, particularly the local lawmakers, transport sector leaders, local businessmen, professionals such as doctors, teachers, social and religious leaders, and media people etc.

An effective communication with the community to bring behaviour change particularly for mask wearing, treatment of patients, providing financial support to the vulnerable and removing misinformation, fear, anxiety, and stigma are the key actions in this regard.

Delhi for quick implementation of agreement with Dhaka

Indian FM writes to his Bangladesh counterpart

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

India has called for quick implementation of the memorandum of understanding on cooperation in the field of disaster management resilience and mitigation.

The MoU was signed during Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Bangladesh in March.

The request, which was made by Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar in a letter to Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen, comes weeks after the Indian state of Maharashtra saw heavy rainfall that caused flooding and landslide, leaving nearly 150 people dead and scores missing.

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Pori shown

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press briefing at the Rab headquarters in the capital.

Members of the elite force detained Pori Moni and Raz after raiding their houses on Wednesday night. They seized foreign liquor and narcotics from there.

Ashraful Islam alias Dipu, an associate of Pori Moni, and Md Sabuj Ali, Raz's associate, were also shown arrested in the two narcotics cases.

Meanwhile, a Dhaka court placed Pori Moni, Raz and their two associates on four-day remand in connection with the two cases filed with Banani Police Station. Additional Public Prosecutor Tapash Kumar Pal told The Daily Star.

The court of Metropolitan Magistrate Md Mamunur Rashid passed the order after Sheikh Sohel Rana, investigating officer of the cases, sought seven-day remand for each of the four arrestees.

The cases were handed over to the Detective Branch of Police, Nure Alam Miah, officer-in-charge of Banani Police Station, told this newspaper late last night.

At the press briefing, Khandaker Al Moin said Rab raided Raz's house after getting information from Mishu Hasan, an associate of model Faria Mahbub Piasha.

Rab recovered liquor, narcotics and sex toys from the house.

Piasha, model Moriom Akter Mou and Mishu were arrested earlier in similar drives.

Pori Moni used to host regular parties at her home, where Nazrul Islam Raz had been supplying foreign liquor and various types of narcotics, said Rab officials.

Rab officials said the detainees organised parties attended by models at flats in posh Gulshan, Banani and Baridhara areas where people used to take drugs and engage in immoral activities.

"After interrogating the arrestees, we have got names of some more people who are said to be involved in the racket. We are now verifying those," Rab Additional Director General (Operations) Col KM Azad told The Daily Star.

The officials said the members of the racket blackmailed influential and well-off people by taking compromising pictures of them, and extracted huge amount of money from them with threats of releasing the photos.

Drives are underway to bust the racket which includes actors, film producers, models, and businessmen, among others, said sources in law enforcement agencies.

Meanwhile, Pori Moni's lawyer Nilanjana Rifat Surovi told the court that the liquor shown as recovered was not from Pori Moni's house. She had a few empty liquor bottles in her house and they were kept as decoration pieces. Also, she had no ice and no LSD, according to court sources.

"She is a well-known actress and the case has been filed to tarnish her image," she told the court, praying for her bail.

Country hits

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been detected since the first cases were reported on March 8 last year. In the last 15 days, 1,86,151 people tested positive for Covid-19 in the country.

Among yesterday's 264 deceased, 124 were women.

Of the dead, one was under 10 years old, one was between 11 and 20 years old, five were between 21 and 30 years, 25 between 31 and 40 years, 31 between 41 and 50 years, 59 between 51 and 60 years, 74 between 61 and 70 years, 50 between 71 and 80 years, 15 between 81 and 90 years and three between 91 and 100 years old, added the release.

According to the DGHS, 1,647 people died between last Friday and yesterday. In the previous week, 1,570 people had died from Covid.

At least 15,786 Covid-19 patients were registered recovered yesterday. The total number of recoveries now stands at 11,56,943 and the recovery rate at 87.47 percent.

The ongoing lockdown has been extended to August 10 to curb transmission.

Govt organs faring better than NGOs

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"In the case of NGOs, there is still a lack of disclosure of relevant information in accordance with the laws and regulations," Iftekharuzzaman said.

No NGO got satisfactory scores in the extent of information they provided whereas different types of government organisations had satisfactory scores, Iftekhar added.

Scores of all types of government agencies regarding compatibility of information were inadequate; while the NGOs' scores were alarming, said the TIB study.

Most NGO websites do not have all types of information in accordance with the Right to Information Act and Proactive Information Disclosure Guidelines. Some do not have up-to-date information or the date of last update. Most websites are in English only.

However, information of some

NGOs has been published in Bangla.

The study also said about seven percent of the organisations did not have websites.

According to the study, most government organisations gave satisfactory organisational and service information but their disclosure of information on activities and decision-making was alarming.

Most NGOs disclosure of information on organisation, activities, decision, and service was alarming.

The government organisations in the study included ministries, departments, the Prime Minister's Office, departmental institutions affiliated to the ministry, constitutional and statutory institutions, and other institutions like agencies, trusts, foundations, and public companies.

And of the NGOs, 44 percent

were international and 66 local. At least 22.2 percent of the NGOs were providing only services, 15.6 percent were doing advocacies, and 62.2 percent were doing both activities.

In the ranking, the Ministry of Food, the Ministry of Jute and Textiles and the Ministry of Water Resources were at the top, scoring 84 percent.

The Coastal Association for Social Transformation, a local NGO, was the top scoring NGO with 44 percent.

In its 11-point recommendations, the TIB said the authorities concerned need to formulate their own proactive information disclosure and dissemination guidelines and publish them on the websites; they need to monitor to ensure effective implementation of the guidelines.

It also recommended training to enhance the technical skills of employees in website management.