

BANGLADESH
UPDATE



10,299
New cases in 24hrs



13,53,695
Total cases



22,652
Deaths



12,05,447
Recoveries

GLOBAL
UPDATE



4,305,758
Deaths



203,244,961
Total cases

ROHINGYA REPATRIATION

Dhaka seeks ASEAN intervention

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka has sought ASEAN intervention in Rohingya repatriation by building trust and dispelling their sense of uncertainty over returning to Myanmar.

"I would like to urge the ASEAN member states to intervene in the matter and help the repatriation process," said Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen yesterday while addressing the 54th ASEAN Day event organised virtually by the ASEAN Dhaka Committee.

He said Bangladesh is sheltering about a million Myanmar nationals who fled a military crackdown in Rakhine state in 2017. Then, Myanmar also agreed to take them back and provide security and create a conducive environment in Rakhine.

Momen said for the last four years, there is no violence in Rakhine, yet none of the Rohingyas returned to their homes, mostly because of fear of uncertainty and trust deficit.

"ASEAN should walk together to reduce their trust deficit and uncertainty and facilitate their safe repatriation.

"The prolonged presence of such a huge number of displaced people entails serious ramification on the economy, environment, security, and socio-political stability of not only Bangladesh but also the entire region, including the ASEAN."

Momen said Dhaka is keen to intensify political, trade, economic and cultural ties with the ASEAN countries, adding that having a strong tie with the ASEAN countries is by any standard a key foreign policy priority of Bangladesh.

He sought ASEAN countries' support on Bangladesh's application for the status of ASEAN Sectoral Partner.

"We wish to institutionalise our relations with ASEAN. This could be done initially through Sectoral Dialogue Partnership leading to full Dialogue Partnership in future," he said.

The foreign minister said with a

large manufacturing base, Bangladesh stands to be one of ASEAN's strongest partners and an attractive destination for the ASEAN investors.

He suggested that Bangladesh and ASEAN countries can forge partnership in the areas of poverty alleviation, counter-terrorism, climate change, water resources management, migration, disaster management, agriculture and ICT.

Bangladesh, which itself is one of the fastest growing economies, can be a huge market for the ASEAN countries. With its large manufacturing base, Bangladesh can also be a source of competitive imports for the ASEAN countries, he said.

"We are already one of the largest tourist-sending countries to Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia -- with improved air connectivity there is scope to enhance this manifold."

With its unique geographical location, Bangladesh can act as a "bridge" between South Asia and South East Asia acting as a gateway to the landlocked countries of Nepal, Bhutan and Northeast India for the ASEAN countries, he said.

Malaysian High Commissioner Haznah Md Hashim, current chair of ASEAN Dhaka Committee (ADC), highlighted the achievement of ASEAN in bringing peace and prosperity to the region and said ASEAN has been working together in finding a sustainable response to the current pandemic.

She said ADC will continue to play an active and constructive role as the bridge for the ASEAN member states in engaging the host government.

Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen, Bruneian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Haji Haris Haji Othman, Indonesian Ambassador Rina P Soemarno, Myanmar Ambassador Aung Kyaw Moe, Vietnam Ambassador Pham Viet Chien, Thai Embassy Charge D'affaires Panom Thongprayoon, Philippines Embassy Chargé D'affaires Leo Marco C Vidal and Singapore Consulate's Head of Mission Sheela Pillai also addressed the event.

She helped make timely decisions

FROM PAGE 1

marking the birth anniversary of the majestic woman and better half of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Sheikh Hasina, the elder daughter of Bangamata Begum Fazilatun Nesa Mujib, said, "My mother had devoted and sacrificed her entire life for the ideology for which my father [Bangabandhu] had got involved in politics."

The prime minister continued, "She [Bangamata] had no ambition to become a political leader and no aspiration for wealth... She developed her life in such a way."

With State Minister for Women and Children Affairs Fazilatun Nessa Indira in the chair, secretary of the ministry Sayedul Islam delivered a welcome address at the ceremony.

A total of five women were given the Padak (award) for their outstanding contributions to their respective categories such as independence and Liberation War, education, culture and sports, agriculture and rural development, politics and research.

Prof Mamtaz Begum (Posthumous), a valiant freedom fighter of Brahmanbaria, was given this Padak for her contribution to Independence and War of Liberation, while Jaya Pati (Posthumous) from Tangail in education, culture and sports, Mosammad Nurunnahar Begum, an agro-entrepreneur from Pabna, in agriculture and rural development, valiant freedom fighter Principal Jobeda Khatun Parul from Cumilla in politics and Nadira Jahan (Surma Zahid), a writer and researcher from Narakona, in research.

Each awardee received a medal made of 40gm of 18-carat gold, a cheque of Tk 4 lakh and a certificate of honour.

On behalf of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the state minister for women and children affairs handed over the first-ever introduced Padak to the recipients, which is also the highest state honor for women in the country.

Dr Syed Anwar Husain, professor of "Bangabandhu Chair" at Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP), spoke at the function as keynote speaker, while Jatiyo Mohila Sangstha (JMS) Chairman Begum Chemon Ara Tayab spoke as discussant.

Besides, Principal Jobeda Khatun Parul spoke at the ceremony expressing feelings on behalf of the Padak recipients.

A documentary on the life and works of Bangamata Begum Fazilatun Nesa Mujib was also screened.

To mark the auspicious day,



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the distribution of cash support to the insolvent women at the Office of Deputy Commissioner, Gopalganj.

Some 2,000 women would receive Tk 2,000 each through mobile financial service provider Nagad.

On behalf of the prime minister, Gopalganj deputy commissioner also distributed sewing machines among insolvent women.

Mentioning that her mother did not beg her life to the killers, the prime minister said she [Bangamata] told them, "You killed him [Bangabandhu], so kill me too... I wouldn't go with you."

How much courage she had that pushed her to stand bold to embrace death rather than begging for life, she wondered.

She continued, "Today our women have got a position and I think they would find inspiration after hearing the courageous story of my mother."

Sheikh Hasina said Bangamata had huge enthusiasm for education and she wanted to do something so the country's all girls could get an education.

She said her mother believed and realised that "each girl should get the education... It shouldn't be logical to shout for rights, rather attaining education and economic solvency as well as standing on own feet is inevitable [for it]".

The premier said Bangamata always inspired Bangabandhu standing beside him as the Father of the Nation had sacrificed his life for the struggle of the country's independence and welfare of the people leaving the intention of changing his own fate.

"My mother never came to public. She neither appeared in front of the media nor wanted to focus on herself publicly. She had been helping my father silently in each stage, supporting him. And I think it was the highest sacrifice," she said.

She highlighted her mother as a "guerilla" for her secret and effective role in all struggles and movements. "Bangladesh became independent through a guerilla war and I always treat my mother as a guerilla... She secretly used to meet students and give directions to them," she added.

Recalling the worst memories of August 15, 1975, tear-toned Sheikh Hasina raised the question -- "Why was this killing? My father, mother and brothers who sacrificed their happiness and aspirations for the independence and freedom of a nation, why did those Bangali people kill them?"



The locally made brick crusher machine is being used to transport people on the highway in Aminbazar on the outskirts of the capital. In the absence of public transport, more people are taking such risky rides because not everyone can afford private vehicles.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Curbs to go when needed most

FROM PAGE 1

When the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic gripped the country in March this year, the government started imposing differing restrictions under various names from the first week of April.

On April 5, when the second set of restrictions was first imposed, the Covid-19 daily positivity rate was 23.4 percent and 52 deaths were recorded in 24 hours.

Yesterday, the day that the government decided to relax most of the restrictions, the positivity rate was 24.52 percent and 241 deaths were recorded, according to the Directorate General of Health Services.

"This is another strange decision... Such decisions contradict science," Prof Ridwanur Rahman, an infectious disease specialist, said when this correspondent contacted him about the government's decision.

"Relaxing restrictions when the infection rate is around 25 percent, means the infection rate would increase further. And a rise in infections will see an increase in the number of deaths," he said.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT: 50% VEHICLES, 100% PASSENGERS

In its circular, the cabinet division cited the decisions of an inter-ministerial meeting held on August 3, the country's socio-economic condition, the importance of keeping the economic activities moving and the overall situation as the basis to relax many of the restrictions.

The decisions will come into effect from August 11 and remain in force until further notice.

The circular said public transport on roadways, railways and waterways will be allowed to operate at 100 percent capacity.

However, local administration -- in consultation with law enforcers, agencies concerned and associations of transport owners and workers -- will allow half the total transport on roadways daily, reads the circular.

Launches and buses started charging 60 percent more than the usual fare from March 31 on condition that they would carry 50 percent passengers of their capacities and maintain necessary health safety guidelines.

BRTA and BIWTA said they would reinstate the original fare from August 11 as bus and launch operators would be allowed to carry passengers at full capacity.

"Launch operators will have to charge the previous fare from August 11," Commodore Golam Sadeq, chairman of BIWTA, told The Daily Star yesterday.

BRTA Chairman Nur Mohammad Mazumder echoed the comments.

However, transport owners said the decision to operate half the vehicles would be tough to implement.

Khondaker Enayet Ullah, secretary general of Bangladesh Road Transport Owners' Association, said, "We don't know how such a decision would be implemented. We have to hold a discussion with the authorities."

Romesh Chandra Ghosh, chairman of Bangladesh Bus and Truck Owners Association, said, "Those who have a large fleet will be able to follow the directive. But we have to discuss with bus owners who have one or two buses will follow the directive," he told The Daily Star last night.

Asked about the matter, BRTA Chairman Nur Mohammad said as per the cabinet division's circular, divisional commissioners in city

corporation areas and deputy commissioners in district level will be responsible for implementing the stipulation.

Both Enayet and Romesh said they would charge the previous fare if they were allowed to carry passengers at full capacity.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Railway (BR) has decided to operate 38 intercity and 20 commuter and mail trains from August 11 at full capacity.

Half the intercity tickets would be sold online while the rest will be available at counters from 8:00am today, Sardar Shahadat Ali, additional director general (operations) of BR told The Daily Star.

All tickets for mail and commuter services will be available at counters.

OTHER DIRECTIVES

All restaurants would be allowed to be open from 8:00am to 10:00pm, keeping half the seats vacant. Earlier, restaurants were allowed to remain open from 8:00am to 8:00pm, but only for takeaway services.

All mills and factories will be allowed to be reopen.

Earlier, the government allowed only export-oriented mills and factories to reopen from August 1 after nine days of shutdown from July 23.

The Supreme Court will give necessary directives regarding courts, reads the circular.

In all cases, wearing of mask and following the health safety guidelines issued by the DGHS have to be ensured.

Authorities concerned have to bear the responsibility if negligence in following the guidelines on public transport, different offices, markets is found and legal action would be taken against them, reads the circular.

CASES AGAINST PORI, OTHERS

Mahila Parishad slams media coverage

CID says accused named influential; PHQ forms probe body into officer's 'unprofessional conduct'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad yesterday criticised the wording in the news coverage of the arrests of actor Pori Moni.

Such news coverage is a violation of women's human rights, it said in a statement.

It urged all parties concerned to refrain from providing any news that violates human dignity and rights.

Meanwhile, Police Headquarters formed a probe committee to investigate the "unprofessional conduct" between Golam Saklain Shithil, an additional deputy commissioner (DB Gulshan Division), and actor Pori Moni.

The ADC was supervising a case filed by Pori Moni in June.

The Criminal Investigation Department yesterday said officers got the names of influential people after interrogating actress Pori Moni and models Piasha and Mou.

But CID officials didn't say what the allegations are against the individuals they termed influential.

The CID is investigating seven cases against Pori Moni, models Faria Mahbub Piasha and Moriom Akter Mou, their associate Mishu Hasan, film producer Nazrul Islam Raz and expelled Awami League leader Helena Jahangir.

"We are verifying the names and analysing the information now," Sheikh Omar Faruque, additional deputy inspector general, told reporters at the CID headquarters in the capital.

The CID official said, "No one has yet complained to the CID about blackmailing."

Rab and Detective Branch officials earlier said there were specific complaints against them of blackmailing.

But no case has been filed against them on these charges.

A CID official, wishing not to be named, said a managing director of a private bank is one of individuals being watched by the CID.

Meanwhile, the CID yesterday raided arrested producer Raz's house in Banani and seized two cars.

RAPE, MURDER OF 10TH GRADER

PBI arrests key suspect, 3 others

STAR REPORT

Police Bureau of Investigation arrested the key suspect and three others over the rape and murder of a schoolgirl in Bhuapur, Tangail.

Mohammad Siraj Amin, superintendent of PBI in Tangail, told a press briefing yesterday that 10th grader Khodeza Khatun was raped and strangled to death by the main suspect, Shree Krishna Das, 28, a resident of Jhaoail union in Gopalganj, reports our Tangail correspondent.

Krishna told investigators that he and Khodeza had a relationship. He introduced himself as Sani Ahmed, a businessman.

On August 2, he took Khodeza to his friend Mizanur Rahman's house in Dhanbari upazila and raped her. As Khodeza began to scream for help, Krishna strangled her with a piece of cloth.

Krishna and the three other arrestees then put the body in a plastic bag and dumped it by the Bhuapur-Tarakandi road, Siraj said.

The three men who assisted Krishna are: Sourav Ahmed Hridoy, 23, Mizanur Rahman, 37, and Mehedi Hasan Titu, 28, the PBI official said.

Bhuapur police recovered the body on August 3, and, after an autopsy, buried it the next day without identification.

A case was filed with Bhuapur Police Station in this regard and the PBI was given the responsibility to investigate it.

Using technology, PBI officers identified the victim on August 6 and arrested the suspects.

In Thakurgaon, police held Gora Union Parishad member Manaranjan Roy, 55, in a rape case, reports our correspondent in the district.

Tanvirul Islam, officer-in-charge of Thakurgaon Police Station, said Manaranjan's son Chandon Roy, 26, had an affair with a 20-year-old woman.

Promising to marry her, Chandan raped her multiple times. When the woman became pregnant, she asked Chandan to marry her.

On June 8, Chandan brought the girl to his house and asked her to take some drugs for abortion. As she refused to do so, Chandan and his family members beat her up and forcibly put medicine in her mouth.

Besides, Manaranjan took the girl's signature on a blank stamp at knife point.

The victim's family members later rescued her with the help of locals and got her admitted her to a hospital.

Doctors said she is 12-weeks pregnant.

The woman filed a case with Thakurgaon Police Station on Saturday night accusing Manaranjan, his wife Somary Roy, 48, son Chandon Roy, 26, daughter Mala Rani, 30, son-in-law Saoukhin Roy, 35, and younger daughter Kritika Rani, 22.

The OC said police are looking for the other accused.

Vaccine target met in 2 days

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Md Khokon, a 60-year-old businessman, along with his wife went to the Nagar Health Centre in the city's Azimpur in the morning to get vaccinated. But he could not get a jab.

"The procedure [for getting jabs] is very troublesome. One needs to get attested a copy of his national identity card by a councillor and then collect a token from the vaccination centre...." he told this newspaper yesterday.

As the centre at Azimpur had only 300 jabs, many had to return home empty-handed.

More than 3,000 people thronged another vaccination centre in the city's East Bhasantek since early in the morning.

"I did not get vaccine yesterday [Saturday]. I joined a long queue at the centre around 5:00am today [yesterday]. But there was so much rush that I decided to return home around 11:00am," said 59-year-old Md Harun who lives in a slum.

In Gazipur, several hundred people gathered at Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Medical College Hospital for getting inoculated. The fifth floor of the hospital, where the vaccination programme was arranged, was jam-

packed.

"There was such a huge crowd that I felt suffocated... I managed to take a jab around 1:00pm after waiting for four hours," said SA Mamun from Kaliakoir upazila.

However, many had to go back home empty-handed.

Health department officials in Munshiganj said their target of inoculating 42,000 people was met yesterday and that they would not continue the special campaign.

Hundreds of people queued for jabs at vaccination centres in the district yesterday. But a large number of them had to return home unvaccinated, reports our Munshiganj correspondent.

Upazila Health Officer Muhammad Rezaul Haque in Sreenagar upazila said, "Around 1,500 people did not get vaccine shots. Our vaccine stock has already run out."

In Feni, more than 500 people crowded Alia Madrasa Government Primary School centre by 9:00am to get vaccinated but the centre had only 200 shots.

"After waiting for over two hours, I learnt that I would not get a jab," said Saleha Khatun, a resident of Feni town.

There were huge crowds at different vaccination centres in Sylhet yesterday. Talking to this newspaper, Dr Md

Jahidul Islam, chief health officer of Sylhet City Corporation, said, "On the first day [Saturday], we administered vaccine doses to 23,753 people. Today [yesterday], another 24,000 got vaccinated. Now we are facing a shortage of jabs and unsure whether to continue the mass vaccination campaign tomorrow [today]."

In Pabna, officials of the health department did not run the special campaign yesterday as the vaccination centres already ran out of vaccine doses.

Earlier on Saturday, 50,000 people were inoculated in the district.

Dr Monisor Chowdhury, civil surgeon of Pabna, said two lakh people in the district got registered for vaccination and 1.40 lakh of them have received jabs so far.

In Rajshahi city, all 84 vaccination centres saw huge crowds yesterday.

On Saturday, some 34,000 people were vaccinated against the target of 25,000.

Asked, Prof ABM Khurshid Alam, director general at the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), said, "On-the-spot registration emerged as the biggest challenge during the vaccination campaign. We have to rethink our decision about it."

Curtain falls on Tokyo 2020

FROM PAGE 1

played out in empty venues with only athletes, team officials and media present.

Athletes have lived in strict biosecure conditions with social distancing at the Olympic Village and instructions to wear masks unless eating, sleeping, training or competing.

As the Olympic flag was passed to Paris mayor Anne Hidalgo for the 2024 Games, live footage showed cheering crowds in the French capital -- in stark contrast to Tokyo.

Bach has described how the IOC considered cancelling the Olympics and claiming the costs on its insurance policy but said officials ploughed ahead with holding the Games "for the

athletes".

On Sunday, the climax of the biggest sports event since the pandemic, Kenya's Eliud Kipchoge won the men's marathon and the USA edged China at the top of the medals table.

The United States scored victories in volleyball, track cycling and basketball to top the tally with 39 gold medals, just one ahead of China.

The Olympics were plagued by low Japanese support as they went ahead with Tokyo and other regions under a state of emergency and with infections multiplying to new highs.

But Japan's record haul of 27 golds to finish third on the table has won hearts. Britain were fourth with 22 and the Russian Olympic Committee, the team

for Russian athletes after their country was banned for systematic doping, were fifth with 20.

A succession of big names have failed to perform in Japan, where new sports skateboarding, surfing, sport climbing and karate brought young new stars to the fore.

But marathon world record holder Kipchoge showed his class on Sunday, kicking in the closing stages and clocking 2hr 08min 38sec to retain the title he won in 2016.

Tokyo will host the Paralympics from August 24. The Olympic circus will reconvene in just six months when Beijing, faced with boycott threats and a renewed coronavirus emergency, holds the Winter Games in February.