

BANGLADESH UPDATE



11,463
New cases in 24hrs



13,65,158
Total cases



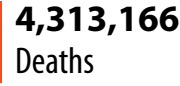
22,697
Deaths



12,19,859
Recoveries



GLOBAL UPDATE



4,313,166
Deaths



203,807,978
Total cases

N'GANJ FACTORY FIRE

Probe finds govt body's negligence

SANAD SAHA

The government's factory inspection department has been negligent in monitoring safety measures, found a government probe body formed after the devastating Hashem Food and Beverage factory fire in Narayanganj.

The probe body also blamed the factory owner.

After the incident, three government bodies -- Narayanganj district administration, Fire Service and Civil Defence authority, and the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments -- formed three probe committees.

The district administration's probe body submitted its 44-page report to the deputy commissioner on August 5 after almost a month-long probe. Yesterday, Narayanganj DC Mostain Billah shared the findings with The Daily Star.

The Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments is responsible for monitoring safety measures in factories. The probe report has found that the department lacked sound monitoring in this case, he said.

The fire originated from an electric short-circuit on the ground floor. As there were huge flammable substances stored, the fire spread fast, the DC added, quoting the probe report.

The owner did not have approval from the upazila administration and the Department of Environment (DoE) for setting up the factory, the probe found.

The owner did not comply with the government's directives to ensure safety at the factory. All these factors contributed to the fire, he said.

Contacted yesterday, probe body member and Deputy Inspector General Soumen Barua of Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments in Narayanganj said, "The owner could not show any documents of approval from the Department of Environment (DoE) or local upazila administration for setting up the factory."

Asked about negligence on the part of his department, he said the DC would talk about it and hung up the phone.

The probe body placed a 20-point recommendation.

The recommendations include increasing manpower in the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments to strengthen monitoring of safety measures in factories, keeping sufficient fire-extinguishers in factories, keeping a team of firefighters in each factory, and training the workers to fight fire in emergencies.

It also recommended paying Tk 2 lakh to families of each deceased worker and Tk 2.5 lakh to each of the injured workers as compensation.

The factory, located in Kornogop area of Ruppang, caught fire on July 8, claiming at least 51 lives.

The fire caused huge outrage among workers and common people. Two days after the accident, a police officer on July 10 filed a case with Ruppang Police Station, alleging negligence against eight persons, including factory owner Abul Hashem.

All eight were arrested hours after the case was filed.

Of them, five persons, including Hashem, later got bail.



A group of people tied and trapped a freshwater crocodile in a water body, and brought it onto land in a village of Faridpur's Sadar upazila yesterday afternoon. The Wildlife Conservation Management and Nature Conservation Division of Khulna were contacted to rescue the animal, said Mostakujjaman, chairman of North Channel Union Parishad.

PHOTO: SUZIT KUMAR DAS

Grim picture painted for Bangladesh

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greenhouse gas emissions decline dramatically.

It said heatwaves and humid heat stress will be more intense and frequent during the 21st century over South Asia.

Heat extremes have increased while cold extremes have decreased, and these trends will continue over the coming decades over Asia, the report said.

This is the first time IPCC has released regional factsheets. The Asia projection maps indicate annual mean temperatures will increase by 1-2°C relative to 1850-1900 period in case of 1.5°C to 2°C global warming. There are likely to be 90 to 120 days in a year with maximum temperatures above 35°C in case of 1.5 to 2°C warming and over

180 days in case of 4°C warming. "Strong and sustained reductions in emissions of carbon dioxide (CO2) and other greenhouse gases would limit climate change," the report said.

The report provides new estimates of the chances of crossing the global warming level of 1.5°C in the next decades, and finds that unless there are immediate, rapid and large-scale reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, limiting warming to close to 1.5°C or even 2°C will be beyond achievable.

The report shows that emissions of greenhouse gases from human activities are responsible for approximately 1.1°C of warming since 1850-1900, and finds that averaged over the next 20

years, global temperature is expected to reach or exceed 1.5°C of warming.

This assessment is based on improved observational datasets to assess historical warming, as well progress in scientific understanding of the response of the climate system to human-caused greenhouse gas emissions.

The report projects that in the coming decades, climate changes will increase in all regions. For 1.5°C of global warming, there will be increasing heat waves, longer warm seasons and shorter cold seasons. At 2°C of global warming, heat extremes would more often reach critical tolerance thresholds for agriculture and health, the report said.

Tigers wrap up series with thumping win

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The Tigers dedicated their maiden T20I series win over Australia to the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his family members who embraced martyrdom this month in 1975.

Having arrived on the back of a 4-1 T20I series defeat to West Indies, the visiting Australia side managed to scrape a single win against the Tigers in the fourth T20I, largely succumbing to the slow wicket and Mustafizur Rahman's cutters making the difference between the two sides.

But having once again restricted the home side to a manageable target yesterday, the Aussie reply this time was calamitous.

Defending a modest score of 122 for eight, the Bangladesh spinners once again set the tone early. Nasum Ahmed removed Dan Christian, sent to open the innings, out bowled in the second over. A crucial blow followed in the left-arm spinner's next over, the fourth of the innings, when in-form Mitchell Marsh looked to go across the line, only to be trapped leg-before and unable to overturn the decision.

Skipper Matthew Wade had two powerful sixes off Mahedi Hasan as he looked to dominate but Shakib cleaned up his castle in the seventh over with a delivery that rushed through and under Wade's pull-shot. With the skipper gone after a run-a-ball 22, the Australia innings would crumble to a heap thanks largely to Shakib's four-wicket haul.

During a turbulent phase of bowling and in the space of 40 deliveries, Australia lost eight wickets, adding just 24 runs, falling to their lowest ever T20 score -- 17 runs short of their previous worst of 79 all out against England in 2005. The Aussies, who left Dhaka for home later in the night, would be

looking to forget the series as quickly as they can.

In his first match of the series, Mohammad Saifuddin picked up three wickets with Alex Carey and Moises Henriques departing in the 11th over to scores of three.

Ashton Turner gave Shakib his second wicket of the match, providing a dolly of a catch to mid-off as the ace all-rounder notched the unique record of becoming the first ever player to take 100 wickets and score 1,000 runs in T20Is. Shakib, playing in his 84th T20I, has already scored 1,718 runs in the format and before the match was two wickets shy of the feat.

Shakib bagged two more wickets in his last over -- the 14th of the innings -- removing Nathan Ellis and Adam Zampa to finish with four for nine as Australia were bowled out for 62.

Earlier, Bangladesh's batting continued to flounder after the hosts won the toss, only managing 122 for eight.

Australia picking four spinners in the line-up, including leg-spinners Zampa and Mitchell Swepson, should have worked in the visitors' favour but early on in the innings it had the opposite effect as the Tigers got off to their best start of the series.

Mahedi swept Turner through square leg for four in the first over before Mohammad Naim dispatched Agar through midwicket for six as early momentum belonged to Bangladesh. The duo took leggie Zampa for 14 runs in the third over as the left-right opening combo showed promise of a good total.

Following an economical Ellis over with just two runs coming off it, Australia made the breakthrough in the fifth over, breaking the 42-run opening stand as Mahedi found a Turner delivery bouncing a bit more than he expected

and too close to pull. The resulting shot only led to Mahedi's bat flying off while the ball looped to the man at midwicket to see the right-hander depart for a 12-ball 13.

Despite the wicket and Ellis then bowling another economical over, conceding just three runs, Bangladesh reached 46 for one in the Powerplay.

The Tigers would throw away all that with a lamentable batting display later on. Aussies realised that their slower cutters were having an effect and brought in Christian, who removed Naim for a run-a-ball 23, following a poor reverse paddle. Shakib, lacking fluency, fell prey to Zampa, out leg-before next over after a 15-ball 10 as Bangladesh reached 60 for three after 10 overs.

Skipper Mahmudullah added vitality to the Tigers' innings having come in at number five with Soumya struggling to time his shots at the other end. Mahmudullah got into gear quickly, picking his scoring shots regularly, including a six off Agar.

But once he departed, scoring 19 off 14, the Tigers were reduced to 91 for four in 14 overs. Soumya, having accelerated with a six and four, holed out at long-off trying to clear Christian over the ropes.

Afif Hossain began brightly, hitting a six over cover as the Tigers finished the 15th over on 102 for five. The last five overs produced just 20 runs as the hosts lost three more wickets.

Agar, Zampa, Ellis and Christian bowled intelligently to keep the runs down with even the in-form Afif struggling to get the slower deliveries away. Nurul Hasan (8) and Afif (10) departed to Ellis and Mohammad Saifuddin was run-out without facing a delivery as a boundary from Mosaddek Hossain in the final over saw the Tigers reach 122 for eight.

Special drive now uncertain

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special campaign," Haque said.

A source in the Director General of Health Services (DGHS) said the special campaign might launch later this month if there are adequate doses in stock.

About the thousands of people who registered for the vaccine but are yet to get the shot, Prof Abul Bashar Mohammad Khurshid Alam, director general of the DGHS, said, "We planned to launch the special vaccination campaign on August 14, but now we are planning to inoculate those who have registered and are waiting for the SMS. They should be prioritised."

Health officials said the six-day pilot campaign taught them that on-the-spot registration can be complicated and result in chaos.

"Registering people before the vaccination day could have lessened the sufferings. We will chalk out a plan on how that can be done," the DG said.

Over the last three days, poor internet connections in many rural areas caused additional bottlenecks during on-the-spot registration.

"Healthcare professionals had to enter the data in an excel sheet and then put the data in the server. It is a complex task. This is a lesson we learnt," he added.

China's Sinopharm vaccine is being administered in rural areas

and district towns while the Moderna shots are given in city corporation areas.

According to data, 66,09,145 Sinopharm and 16,72,401 Moderna shots were administered as of yesterday.

DGHS sources familiar with the situation said only half the Moderna shots are being administered, saving the rest for the second dose as there are uncertainties over its future availability. But the supply of Sinopharm doses are deemed stable.

Meanwhile, Health Minister Zahid Maleque yesterday told reporters that 54 lakh vaccine doses will arrive in the country by August 15.

Of the doses, 30 lakh will be from Covax, China's Sinopharm will ship 10 lakh doses that have been purchased by Bangladesh and China will give another 10 lakh Sinopharm doses as a gift.

"We will be able to continue the ongoing vaccination campaign at the same pace," the minister said.

About the people waiting for the SMS after registering for inoculation, the minister said, "SMSs are not sent when there is a vaccine shortage. More vaccines will arrive in the coming days and more people will get the SMS."

About the number of shots currently in stock, he said, "I cannot say at the moment, but we have the vaccine in stock."

Police probe clears Sikder

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court reopens, an official of the General Recording Office at CMM court said yesterday.

The other accused is Ron's brother Dipu Haque Sikder.

In the report, the IO said both the complainant and the accused on July 8 signed an agreement, where they said that they have settled the matter out of court.

The IO also obtained a copy of the agreement and attached it with the probe report.

The case was a "matter of factual error" as the ballistics report of the firearms, from which shots were fired did not match, the report said.

Upon receiving the copy of the agreement and the ballistics report, the IO submitted the final report before the court with pleas to relieve the brothers from the charges of the case.

"An agreement was made over the matter," Mohammed Haider Ali Miah, managing director and CEO of Exim Bank, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Ron Haque was arrested after he landed at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport on February 12. He had returned from Dubai after to his father's death. He, however, was given an ad-interim bail soon after he was produced before the CMM court the same day.

On May 19 last year, Exim Bank Director Lt Col (ret'd) Serajul Islam

filed the case against Ron and his brother Dipu for torturing and trying to kill the bank's managing director Mohammed Haider Ali Miah and additional managing director Mohammad Feroz Hossain.

According to the case statement, the two top officials were attacked after they refused to falsely inflate the value of the brothers' property that would be mortgaged for a Tk 500 crore loan, according to the case statement.

The brothers also tortured the two officials while confining them to a house in Banani and forced them to sign on a blank paper at gunpoint, read the case statements.

On May 25 last year, six days after the case was registered, the two brothers fled to Bangkok on an air ambulance that left Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport with government permission.

On July 20 the same year, the High Court fined Ron and his brother for seeking anticipatory bail from abroad in the case.

Rejecting their bail petition, an HC virtual bench ordered the siblings to give 5,000 personal protective equipment (PPE) each as fine to the Prime Minister's Relief and Welfare Fund in two weeks to contain the Covid-19 pandemic.

The two have also been asked to file a report with the Supreme Court registrar general's office after submitting the PPEs to the fund.

Covid shots given at home in Chattogram

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enforcers, Hasan took the vaccine at a house on Zakir Hossain Bylane under Khulshi Police Station in the city.

Hasan and his friend Mobarak Ali, 31, were arrested yesterday, said Abu Bakar Siddique, additional deputy commissioner (north zone) of Chattogram Metropolitan Police, adding that Mobarak works at a private bank while Hasan is a businessman.

"The vaccine was taken in Mobarak's house, who is a friend of Hasan's," he said, adding, "During primary interrogation, Mobarak said he also managed a vaccine at home for his ownmother."

"During primary interrogation, we came to know about two other people who are involved -- Sajjad and Bishu Dey... We are investigating further and trying to arrest whoever is involved in such activities."

Sajjad was given the vaccine by Mobarak. Meanwhile, Bishu supplied the shots to Mobarak.

"We are trying to know the identity of Bishu," he said, adding, that the filing of a case was underway with Khulshi Police Station.

Sources in the Chattogram City Corporation said such wrongdoings began when the vaccines were given under the supervision of local CCC ward councillors as part of mass vaccination campaign on Saturday.

They said many influential people got vaccinated at home after making arrangements with the councillors.

Sources in the port city's Pahartoli area said many ruling party men were given vaccines at their homes on Saturday.

Wasim Uddin Chowdhury, CCC ward-13 (Pahartoli) councillor o(Pahartoli), refuted the allegation.

"Only one person, who was a paralysed patient, was vaccinated at his residence," he said, adding, "He was registered for the mass vaccination."

Asked if the government gave any instructions about vaccinating at home, he said it was done on humanitarian grounds.

"The man could not come to the centre due to his physical condition and he requested to get vaccinated at home. So, we did it to uphold humanitarian values and the spirit of the mass vaccination."

Contacted, CCC Mayor Rezaul Karim Chowdhury said vaccination programme was going on not only in city areas but also outside the city and so whether vaccines are taken from centres and being given at home illegally must be investigated.

"It is also not confirmed whether the vaccines administered at home are even real. Dishonest people try to make a quick buck by deceiving people... Law enforcers should investigate and bring the culprits to book."

Meanwhile, health experts said it is risky to get vaccinated by unskilled people.

"The medical staffers who are involved in the vaccination programme

are given special training," said public health expert Prof Dr Shakeel Ahmed.

"There has been no instructions from the government about vaccinating people at their home. It will be illegal if anyone does so. And it will be risky if unskilled people handle vaccines."

"There is another issue of maintaining the cold chain of vaccine," said Shakeel, also head of Bangladesh Institute of Tropical and Infectious Diseases Laboratory, adding, "If the cold chain of vaccine is not maintained, the vaccine would become ineffective."

Meanwhile, many people expressed their anger at such incidents. Sheikh Md Ledu, a resident of Rahatrapool area, said "We do not get vaccines even after standing in line for hours at centres, while many are seen getting it in the luxury of their homes."

Contacted, Dr Sheikh Fazle Rabbi, civil surgeon of Chattogram, said there was no instructions from the government to vaccinate people at home and that the chief health officer of CCC and the district administration would be able to give more information on the incidents.

Dr Selim Akter Chowdhury, CCC chief health officer, and Mominur Rahman, deputy commissioner of Chattogram, did not receive calls despite repeated attempts.

Dr Hasan Shahriar Kabir, director (Chattogram division) of Directorate General of Health Services, also could not be contacted.

245 die, 11,463 get Covid-19

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The health directorate reported 245 deaths and 11,463 cases of Covid-19 in 24 hours ending at 8:00am yesterday.

With this, the total number of fatalities reached at 22,897 which is 1.68 percent of all confirmed cases so far in the country.

Yesterday, the positivity rate was 24.28 percent against a total of 47,207 tests conducted.

The total number confirmed cases reached 13,65,158.

Of the deceased yesterday, 117 were females.

A total of 234 of the 245 died in hospitals while 11 died in their homes.

The number of Covid-19 deaths in homes has increased notably after community transmission of the Delta variant began.

Of the yesterday's deceased, the highest 83 was in Dhaka divisions followed by 71 in Chattogram, 25 in Khulna, 19 in Rangpur, 18 in Sylhet, 13 in Mymensingh, 10 in Rajshahi, and six in Barisal.

With the detection of new patients every day, hospitals have been struggling to treat patients.

As of yesterday noon, the ICU bed occupancy was 88 percent while the occupancy for the beds in the high dependency units was 86 percent across the country.

The general bed occupancy, however, declined a bit compared to the previous day. Yesterday, the general bed occupancy rate was 58 percent while it was 59 percent the previous day.

Arbitrary

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Secretariat yesterday.

Anwarul mentioned that the agencies said they would sit with deputy commissioners, superintendents of police, transport owners and workers at the district level and let half of any transport fleet ply the roads at least for some days.

When told that this may increase pressure of passengers, he said it was actually aimed at reducing pressure of transports and limiting the number of inter-district buses.

On monitoring mechanism, he said, "Deputy commissioners and the law enforcement agencies will hold discussions with transport workers and find a way."

The cabinet secretary further said he had seen in Beijing that the authorities limit the number of buses on roads on a daily basis.

Hours after the briefing, Bangladesh Sarak Parishad Malik Samity said the government decision to allow operation of only half of any transport fleet would lead to a transport crisis and subsequently increase pressure of passengers.

"It will also increase the risk of virus transmission," said the Samity in a press release.

Transport workers as well as owners will face losses because of the decision, it mentioned.

The Samity decided to withdraw the extra charges as the government will allow operation of transports at full capacity.

Earlier, the government had directed the transport owners to operate vehicles at half capacity, allowing them to charge passengers extra.

Contacted, Samity Secretary General Khondaker Enayet Ullah said the latest government decision was made without any consultations with them.

"We are requesting the government to scrap it and allow all buses to ply roads," he added.

In the past, it was seen that whenever the government relaxed the Covid restrictions, people in their thousands thronged shopping malls, markets and terminals.

Talking to this newspaper, Prof Ben-Nazir Ahmed, former director (disease control) at the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), said, "Across the globe, governments listen to the suggestions of public health experts to tackle Covid."

"But here we are seeing that public health experts are being ignored, and non-technical persons are making decisions without any impact assessment."

Termining the government decision an illogical one, he said restrictions can be lifted if the infection rate drops below 5 percent. But it is still above 20 percent.

"We should follow scientific approach. Otherwise, we may have to pay a high price," observed Be-Nazir.

At yesterday's press briefing, the cabinet secretary said restrictions on public gatherings and recreation centres will remain in force.

Replying to a question, he said, "Public gatherings and operation of recreational centres are still not permitted."

Meanwhile, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader said the strict lockdown has been relaxed for the sake of people's lives and livelihoods, but it may be re-imposed if the Covid situation worsens.

He also said both passengers and transport workers must wear facemasks and follow the health safety rules.

The minister asked Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) to take necessary steps in this regard, reports UNB.

Some now paying

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seekers were local political cadres, alleged the locals to our correspondent.

A similar situation was observed in Chattogram City Corporation Hospital by our correspondent, who interviewed around 10 vaccine seekers, all of whom alleged that a bribe of Tk 150 is needed to get the vaccine.

The bribe was being taken by volunteers assisting in the operation of the vaccination point, they said.