

BANGLADESH UPDATE



5249

New cases in 24hrs



14,72,964

Total cases



25,513

Deaths



13,81,763

Recoveries



GLOBAL UPDATE



4,458,511

Deaths



213,580,916

Total cases

74 Rohingya held after they fled camps

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Seventy-four Rohingyas, who managed to flee from camps in Cox's Bazar, were arrested in Chattogram's Boalkhali upazila early yesterday.

Acting on a tip-off, police raided Karoldanga area of the upazila around 5:30am and held them, said Abdul Karim, officer-in-charge of Boalkhali Police Station.

Fleeing from the camps in Cox's Bazar's Ukhiya, they went to Boalkhali and started work at a lemon orchard as labourers, the OC added.

A case was filed against the arrestees, the police official said.

Fleeing from Rohingya camps in

Teknaf and Ukhiya of Cox's Bazar, Rohingyas have been found hiding their identities and working as labourers in Satkania, Lohagora, Patiya and Boalkhali upazilas. Police on different times arrested and rescued a number of Rohingyas.

On July 27, police held 31 Rohingyas from the same Karoldanga area.

On January 30, a Jatiya Party leader in Lohagora upazila was hacked to death by a Rohingya worker and buried in his farmland over a wage dispute. Following the incident, police warned people not to appoint any Rohingya as labourers.

Railway runs with rundown

FROM PAGE 1

100 new trains were added to its fleet over the last decade. Train carriages and locomotives are procured separately.

The crisis became so acute that the BR had to seek help from the Indian Railway. The BR received 10 broad-gauge (BG) locomotives from India in July last year as gift.

The crisis is, however, likely to ease to some extent once 140 locomotives, which are in the BR pipeline, join the fleet within the next three years. Of them, 28 locomotives have already reached the country and 10 of them are expected to start operations next month, officials said.

Contacted, BR Director General Dharendra Nath Mazumder admitted the problems regarding the outdated locomotives.

He said they have been servicing the locomotives to keep them usable.

Besides, they are collecting new locomotives under several projects to solve the problem, he added.

CURRENT SITUATION

Railways Minister Nurul Islam Sujan on Monday presided over a meeting at the Rail Bhavan over locomotive maintenance, spares availability, relevant problems, and their solutions.

At the meeting, BR's mechanical department revealed some latest data on BR locomotives, meeting sources said.

Among its 263 locomotives, including the 10 BG locomotives that the BR got from India, 171 are MG (metre-gauge) locomotives while 92 are BG locomotives.

Among the 171 MG locomotives, 132 are overaged, which is 77 percent of all the MG locomotives. Of the 132 engines, 61 locomotives are over 50 years old, 11 are over 40 years old, 34 are over 30 years old and 26 are over 20 years old.

Only 39 are below 20, show BR documents.

On the other hand, among the 92 BG locomotives, 43 are overaged, which is 47 percent of all the BG locomotives.

Of them, 17 are over 50 years old, 14 are over 40 years old, 12 are over 30 years old. Only 49 are below 20 years, show the documents.

Talking to The Daily Star, two senior mechanical engineers of BR spoke about different problems the state-run transport agency was facing with those locomotives.

Maintenance cost of the overaged locomotives are huge, as many of their spare parts are not available since those models have already phased out, one of the engineers said.

So they have to use locally-made parts, which are often not up to the mark, and thus such engines fail frequently, the engineer said, wishing not to be named.



Runway to be stretched

FROM PAGE 1

which is crucial for long-haul international flights.

CAAB on February 9 signed a deal with China's Changjiang Yichang Waterway Engineering Bureau (CYWEB) and China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation (CCECC) to implement the project.

According to project documents, the construction should be completed by May 10, 2024.

The contractor will extend the existing 9,000ft runway towards the Maheshkhali Channel through coastal land claiming.

Officials said the CYWEB-CCECC has mobilised their resources on the site after the signing of the contract with CAAB.

The detailed design is being made and construction of temporary facilities like a site office, road network, jetty, and concrete batching plant has made significant progress.

CAAB officials said the main construction work will begin after the prime minister lays the foundation stone.

State-of-the-art technology will be used to build the runway by claiming

land from the sea. It will include an airfield ground lighting system, instrument landing system, safety walls and a bridge over the Bakkhali river, CAAB officials added requesting anonymity.

The cabinet committee on purchase on December 30, 2020, approved the proposal of the civil aviation and tourism ministry to appoint the joint venture of the aforesaid Chinese entities for physical work.

Mahbub Ali, state minister of the civil aviation ministry, said, "The dream is to transform Cox's Bazar Airport into a hub."

He added that this was among the most crucial initiatives taken to develop Cox's Bazar as an international tourist destination.

The project will be implemented with the government's own fund.

Cox's Bazar Airport was launched as a domestic airport in 1956.

This airport, about 1.5km from Cox's Bazar city, occupies 941 acres.

Biman Bangladesh, US-Bangla and Novoir operate domestic flights to Cox's Bazar Airport.



A learner is being trained in a car that is going against the traffic at one of the busiest sections of Dhaka-Chattogram highway in Rayerbagh in the capital. Such disregard for traffic rules and safety on the part of the trainer could easily result in a horrible crash. The photo was taken this week.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Nowhere to go

FROM PAGE 1

"We do want to go back to Myanmar. That's our motherland. But there is no legitimate government there. So, who will take care of us? Who will take responsibility if we face a crackdown again?" said Khin Maung, coordinator of Free Rohingya Coalition in Bangladesh.

The Myanmar military, which seized power after overthrowing Aung San Suu Kyi's NLD-led government on February 1 this year, formed a caretaker government, but it has been largely criticised for killing over 1,000 civilians who demonstrated against the military coup.

On the other hand, the elected MPs of the National League of Democracy (NLD), representatives from different ethnic minority groups, including Karen, Kachin, Mon, Karenni, Chin, Kayan, and independent MPs, formed the National Unity Government (NUG) in hiding. It also formed an armed wing named "People's Defence Force" to launch a revolution against the military junta.

Fighting and killings in various parts of Myanmar are now a regular event. The NUG, however, is yet to make a headway in regaining control of the country. Meanwhile, representatives of neither of the sides are recognised at the UN -- a situation that is puzzling to the Rohingyas.

"The UN will fix which government is legitimate in October. So, everything is now fuzzy," said Arakan Rohingya Society for Peace and Human Rights Chairman Mohib Ullah from the Rohingya camp in Cox's Bazar.

Uncertainty over the repatriation is not new. Following the 2017 influx of about 750,000 Rohingyas, who joined about 300,000 others who had fled earlier waves of violence, Bangladesh government signed a repatriation deal with Myanmar.

Myanmar also signed a tripartite deal with UNHCR and UNDP on improving conditions in Rakhine State, home to majority of Rohingyas.

The meeting of Joint Working Group -- comprised of officials from Myanmar and Bangladesh -- has not taken place since May 2019 while two meetings are scheduled a year. Myanmar showed coronavirus pandemic as a reason for not holding the meetings and there has been no move at all after the military takeover, officials concerned said.

Even a trilateral initiative led by China involving Bangladesh and Myanmar could make no headway despite several meetings. Two repatriation attempts -- one on November 15 in 2018 and the second on August 22, 2019 -- fell flat.

A provisional order issued by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in January last year also failed to help make any progress.

SHIFT IN FOCUS
Foreign relations analysts and officials say the international communities -- especially of the Western powers -- have become more concerned about Myanmar's democracy than Rohingya repatriation.

In recent days, China, Russia and India, alongside the Western world, have become busy with Afghanistan crisis unfolding every day since the August 15 Taliban takeover that many say is leading to a serious instability and causing a refugee influx.

"After the military coup in Myanmar, the US and European countries have imposed some sanctions on military and businesses. However, they have not stopped doing business. On the other hand, Myanmar's engagement with China and Russia has increased, and this means Myanmar is on a strong footing," said M Humayun Kabir, president of Bangladesh Enterprise Institute (BEI).

Myanmar's military can be hurt if the Western countries stop importing from Myanmar, or Japan, India and ASEAN can put pressure on them. That, however, is unlikely for now, he said.

Kabir, a former ambassador of Bangladesh, said the NUG has issued a statement saying it would amend laws to give citizenship and basic rights to the Rohingyas and ensure justice for the genocide, blaming the military for it. This goes in line with what Bangladesh wants.

Analysts said in the wake of the military coup, there has been some sympathy among the Myanmar's people for the Rohingyas. The issue, however, is dependent on the restoration of democracy led by the NUG.

Former foreign secretary Md Shahidul Haque also agrees and adds that Myanmar military has little interest in Rohingya repatriation, though they said they would honour the bilateral deals signed by the previous government.

WHAT'S NEXT?
Dhaka University International

Relations Prof Dr Imtiaz Ahmed thinks that all the Rohingya repatriations in the past took place during the military regimes. Now, the military in power will be easier to be negotiated on Rohingya repatriation as they are under pressure domestically.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen also had spoken in similar line after the military takeover.

However, no effective communication has been made with the Myanmar military, officials say.

M Humayun Kabir and Md Shahidul Haque too think that theoretically this could be right that military government would be easier to be negotiated, but they say the ground reality is very different. Given the NUG's efforts to wage armed struggle, the military's main goal now is to consolidate power, not addressing Rohingya crisis, they say.

Md Shahidul Haque, also a senior fellow at the South Asian Institute of Policy and Governance (SIPG), North South University, added that Rohingya repatriation would now depend much on the restoration of democracy in Myanmar.

So, Bangladesh should consider establishing contacts informally with the NUG, which has in its policy incorporated granting citizenship and fundamental rights.

"We need to keep alive the Rohingya repatriation issue despite all odds and continue to press it upon, including with the Myanmar military," he said.

M Humayun Kabir said though ASEAN has not played any strong role in the past, it can still be useful in terms of addressing the crisis.

Some countries like Malaysia and Indonesia are quite vocal on the issue, and Dhaka needs to strengthen the engagement with them, he said.

Prof Imtiaz Ahmed said India and Japan have national interest in Myanmar but they should separate the Rohingya issue from it. "As Bangladesh's trusted allies, they should tell Myanmar to end the Rohingya crisis."

Prof Imtiaz further said the Rohingya voice globally has not been very strong as of now. There should be an initiative to create leadership and unity among the Rohingyas all over the world.

"Ultimately, the problem is between Myanmar and Rohingyas. We should facilitate their negotiating capacity," he added.

When contacted Dhaka North City Corporation Chief Health Officer Brig Gen Jobaidur Rahman said they conduct special larvicide and adulticide drives at hospitals where dengue patients are treated.

"If anyone is infected with dengue from inside the hospital then we do not have anything to do as hospital authorities will have to take measures against this," he said.

"The DNCC mayor has given 200 mosquito nets to the Shishu Hospital on August 15," he said.

PRO Nasher of the DSCC said they also carry out special anti-mosquito drives at hospitals treating dengue patients.

Meanwhile, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), one more dengue patient died while at least 258 more dengue patients were hospitalised in 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday.

With the new cases, the total number of dengue infections this year is 8,575 and the number of total deaths from the mosquito-borne disease is 38.

Without fear. However, Mujahid yesterday said that female Afghan government workers should stay home until security conditions in the country improve.

Many Afghans fear a repeat of the brutal interpretation of Islamic law that the Taliban implemented when first in power from 1996-2001, or retribution for working with the US-backed government over the past two decades.

The Taliban achieved their stunning victory thanks to Biden pulling out nearly all American troops from Afghanistan, following through on a deal struck with the movement by former president Donald Trump.

However, Biden was forced to redeploy thousands of troops after the fall of Kabul to oversee the airlift.

The rush to leave Kabul has sparked harrowing scenes and left at least eight people dead.

The Taliban have repeatedly claimed to be different from their 1990s incarnation, and have declared an amnesty for government forces and officials.

Nato diplomat told Reuters. "Every foreign force member is working at a war-footing pace to meet the deadline," said the official, who declined to be identified.

Leaders of the Taliban, who have sought to show a more moderate face since capturing Kabul, have begun talks on forming a government that have included discussions with some old enemies, including former president Hamid Karzai.

The Taliban appointed a former Guantanamo detainee, Mullah Abdul Qayyum Zakir, as acting defence minister, the Qatari-based Al Jazeera news channel said, citing a source in the Islamist movement.

The Pajhwok News, an Afghan news media, reported that Taliban has already appointed acting interior and finance ministers and an intelligence chief. A Taliban spokesman was not immediately available for comment.

Some former Afghan government officials told Reuters that the former insurgents have asked them to work

Dengue spreading

FROM PAGE 1

During a visit to Shishu Hospital on Sunday, these correspondents found drums with standing water bearing plants -- a prime breeding source.

"The water remained stagnant in the drums over the last one week.

"Although the hospital authority takes initiatives sometimes to clean the water and fog the area, sometimes the water remains stagnant after rainfall," said an employee of the hospital on Sunday.

When asked about the dengue infection at their hospital, Director of Shishu Hospital Prof Shafi Ahmed said that was not supposed to happen as they take measures to clean the hospitals every day.

"We will look into the matter," he said.

In the National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopaedic Rehabilitation premises, there is a fountain where water remains stagnant for long periods -- a potential breeding source of Aedes mosquito.

These correspondents found many discarded single-use plastic cups -- where stagnant water can collect easily -- at the premises of the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (NICVD) hospital.

The case was similar at the Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital. There is also a fountain at the premises of the hospital where water remains stagnant for long.

At the Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday, these correspondents found a water fountain without running water -- in other words the water remains stagnant. Moreover, various waste like plastic bags and cups were found on the fourth-floor balcony of the Covid building.

At the National Institute of Ophthalmology and Hospital, there is a water installation, adorned with stones for beautification purposes. However, some patients' attendants said the water had remained stagnant for long.

A fountain with stagnant water was also found at Mitford Hospital on Monday, that too in front of the dengue unit.

Md Kamrul, a hospital staffer, said the water has been stagnant there for around 20 days but no spraying of larvicide was seen by city corporation personnel.

Deputy Director of Mitford Hospital Dr Md Ali Habib told The Daily Star on Monday that their workers clean the place every day.

City corporation also conducts an anti-mosquito drive, he said.

Kabirul Bashar, entomologist at Jahangirnagar University, said as hospitals treat dengue patients, it would be very risky if Aedes mosquito breed in those sites. That would mean dengue patients and Aedes mosquitoes are in close proximity, thus increasing the risk of the virus spreading.

A hospital and its adjoining areas will have to be safe from Aedes mosquitoes and the authorities will have to take effective and strict measures to keep the place safe, he said.

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24 officials 'asked to take care of secy's mother'

FROM PAGE 1

Personal Secretary to the Secretary and also a deputy secretary himself.

The order contained a 24-hour roster, divided into four shifts, for three days -- Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. Two ministry officials were deputed for each shift.

According to the order, the first shift will start at 6:00am, the second one at noon, the third at 6:00pm and the fourth shift is to start from midnight.

The work hours of a government official starts from 9:00am and ends at 5:00pm. The roster, however, was

round-the-clock.

Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock Minister SM Rezaul Karim denied that such a ministry order was issued while addressing a briefing at his secretariat office yesterday.

The minister said, "I came to know that the secretary's mother is ill and that a newspaper reported that 24 officers and employees were asked to take care of her. I met the secretary himself and asked him if this was true, but he said that he did not make any such assignments."

Rezaul also added that the secretary himself was infected with dengue and soon after, his 95-year-old mother contracted Covid-19.

The minister said many of the ministry officials went to the hospital simply to express their sympathy during the critical time.

Rezaul Karim also said that the secretary informed him that instead of going together as a group, the ministry officials might have been visiting at separate time slots, to avoid creating crowds and that they did it on their own.

Do not leave your country

FROM PAGE 1

He told America to stop taking "Afghan experts" such as engineers and doctors out of the country.

"This country needs their expertise. They should not be taken to other countries," Mujahid said. "They should not encourage the Afghan people to flee Afghanistan."

He also urged foreign embassies not to close or stop work.

European nations have said they would not be able to airlift at-risk Afghans before the August 31 cut-off, and Biden has faced calls from all corners to extend the evacuation window.

But speaking at the press conference, Mujahid said the Islamist group opposes an extension.

"They have planes, they have the airport, they should get their citizens and contractors out of here," said Mujahid.

US-led troops have ramped up operations to get thousands of people out of Kabul by August 31 -- a deadline

set by the US before the fall of the country for all foreign troops to have pulled out of Afghanistan.

Germany yesterday said that Western allies simply cannot fly every Afghan who needs protection out of Kabul before the cut-off date.

Earlier, France said it would have to end evacuations from Kabul's airport tomorrow if the United States stuck to the deadline, and Spain said it would not be able to rescue all Afghans who served Spanish missions.

After a UK-chaired emergency G7 meeting, group leaders apparently agreed to stick to the deadline that Biden set in April, demanding, however, that the Taliban guarantee safe passage for those fleeing Afghanistan beyond the current deadline.

EU leaders at the meeting urged Biden to continue to secure the Kabul airport until operations to evacuate vulnerable Afghans are complete.

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