

Lowest daily

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Of those reported dead yesterday, 41 were male and 39 female. Of them, 34 died in Dhaka, 21 in Chattogram, nine in Khulna, six in Sylhet, four in Barishal, three in Rangpur, two in Mymensingh and one in Rajshahi divisions.

We have

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In Sylhet, Bangladeshi guerrillas raided the Pakistan troop position in Kamarsail and injured five Pakistani soldiers.
Mukti Bahini ambushed a Pakistani patrol today near Rajshahi and killed six.
5 MILLION AFFECTED IN BANGLADESH
Monsoon floods damaged crops worth about 500 million rupees in Bangladesh. More than five million people were affected by the floods in six districts. The crop damage aggravated existing food shortage.
Shamsuddoza Sajen is a journalist and researcher. He can be contacted at sajen1986@gmail.com

Officials bury

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buried the mammal in Monkhali beach yesterday.
The whale weighed around two tonnes. It had a length of 33 feet, width 10 feet and height 4.5 feet, he said.

The death of cetaceans, including river dolphin (Platanista Gangetica), Humpback and Bryde's dolphin, have been a common scenario in the country's waterbodies raising concern over the conservation of the these mammals which are categorised endangered by IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature).

There has seen 16 deaths of dolphins and whales in last one month in Patuakhali, Cox's Bazar and Chattogram districts.

India, US to work

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Blinken and Minister Jaishankar agreed to remain closely coordinated on shared goals and priorities to deepen the US-India partnership," State Department spokesperson Ned Price said in a statement yesterday.
The deadline for the airlift operations from Kabul airport is August 31. India on Friday said that the exact number of its citizens remaining in war-torn Afghanistan was unknown. The Ministry of External Affairs believes it has evacuated most who wanted to return while some are still around.

Several nations including the UK and Spain have ended evacuation flights from Kabul airport, a day after a suicide bombing targeted throngs of Afghans gathered outside the airport in hopes of fleeing the Taliban-ruled Afghanistan.

US officials have said more attacks on the evacuation effort are "likely."

India has already evacuated its mission staff from Kabul. Last week, the Taliban entered at least two of India's consulates in Afghanistan, searched for documents and took away parked cars, government sources had said, expressing worry that it meant the group is acting against the assurances its leaders have been giving to the world.

India operated four consulates in the country, besides the embassy in Kabul. Apart from Kandahar and Herat, India also had a consulate in Mazar-i-Sharif, which was shut down days before the Taliban took control.

On September 1, Kabul airport will be under the control of the Taliban, who already on Friday claimed to have moved into certain areas of the military side of the facility.

"We are departing by August 31. Upon that date, we are delivering - we're essentially giving the airport back to the Afghan people," Ned Price said on Friday, cutting off speculation about the possibility of it falling into international hands, news agency AFP reported.

Police, protesters clash as thousands march against Covid curbs in Berlin

REUTERS, Berlin

Police tussled with protesters as thousands of people marched through Berlin yesterday chanting slogans and waving banners against COVID-19 restrictions.

Some demonstrators tried to get past barricades to the government district around the Reichstag parliament building and clashed with officers, police said. Four officers were injured, the Berliner Zeitung reported.

About 50 people were detained, some for assaulting officers, the force said.

The protesters, few of whom wore masks, waved banners marked with the messages "I have my own opinion" and "Covid-84" in a reference to George Orwell's book "1984" about a totalitarian state.

The marches came a month before a federal election. The leading candidates vying to replace Chancellor Angela Merkel have pledged there will be no return to the strict lockdowns of last year and earlier this year.



Climate activists from the Extinction Rebellion hold a National Animal Rights March in London yesterday during the group's 'Impossible Rebellion' series of actions.

PHOTO: AFP

9 fish species on verge of extinction

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and declared 'protected' under the Wildlife (Conservation and Security) Act 2012.

Despite that, at least 25 Baghair fish, each weighing at least 30kgs, have been netted from Kushiyara, Padma, Jamuna, Brahmaputra and other major rivers since January 2019, according to media reports.

THREATENED AND PROTECTED SPECIES

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) published its first Red List of Threatened Animals of Bangladesh in 2000. Of the 266 freshwater and brackish fish species it assessed, 54 were listed as "threatened" at the time.

Among them, 12 were termed critically endangered, 28 endangered, and 14 vulnerable.
In 2015, the IUCN updated the Red List by assessing 253 freshwater fish species and, by this time, the number of "threatened" species rose to 64. Of them, nine were declared critically endangered, 30 endangered and 25 vulnerable. Another 27 were categorised as "near threatened".

Overall, 25.3 percent local fish species are threatened while nine others are at the verge of extinction, it found.

Majority of the threatened fish groups (53 percent) belong to carps, barbs and loaches.

The critically endangered fish species are Bhangan Bata, Nandi, Mohashol, Khorka or Khorika, Goalpara Puia, Pipla Shol or Tila Shol, Kala Pabda, Baghair and Chenua.

The 21 freshwater fish species

declared protected under the Wildlife Act 2012 are: Tila Shol, two species of Mohashol, Bhangan Bata, Nandi, Ghora Muikha, Baghair, Chenua, Kotha Kumirer Khil, Telotaki, Tara Baim, Napit Koi, Neftani, Kuicha, Rita, Bhool, Joya Hiralu, Rani, Bishtara, Gang Magur and Shilong.

Among them, Tila Shol, one variety of Mohashol, Bhangan Bata, Nandi, Baghair and Chenua are critically endangered, while another type of Mohashol, Ghora Muikha, Rita, Bhool, Joya and Rani are endangered.

"Local fish species are depleting fast. But it's not visible like other animals as fish live underwater," said Prof Dr Mostafa Ali Reza Hossain, of Fisheries Biology and Genetics department of Bangladesh Agriculture University (BAU).

While preparing the 2015 IUCN Red List, experts assessed that many fish species were already extinct, he said, adding, "But we are waiting to make that announcement as existing protocols require a 25-year timeframe before declaring any species extinct."

WHAT'S CAUSING THE DEPLETION ?
Data from Department of Fisheries (DoF) yearbooks show how some fish species are making up the major share of overall fish production while other local varieties deplete.

According to the 2019 Yearbook, major carps (Rui, Katla and Mrigal) account for 19.97pc of the total production while Hilsa 12.15pc, exotic carp (Silver Carp, Grass Carp, etc) 10.87pc, Pangas 10.45pc and Tilapia 8.91pc.

One key reason behind this is

increased production of cultured fish in inland close waters, which is 67.42pc of the total fish production. The catch from inland open waters stands at 32.57pc.

Data also show that Hilsa accounts for 74.30pc of the total fish captured from rivers while Rui, Katla and Mrigal together account for 30.86pc of the catch from Beels. The rest belong to other species.

"Overexploitation of fish resources, use of illegal gear, water pollution, increasing flash flood and siltation, unplanned construction on riverbanks, deforestation, fishing by complete dewatering, destruction of swamp forests are among the key reasons behind this," said Prof Dr Mrityunjoy Kunda of Aquatic Resource Management at Sylhet Agriculture University.

Jalmohal (waterbody) management and leasing system is also responsible for the loss of fish biodiversity, he added.

HOW TO REVERSE IT?

Experts suggested a number of measures, including building permanent sanctuaries at every river and beel and other water bodies, preventing river pollution and taking up waterbody dredging projects to reverse the current trend.

Building permanent sanctuaries at every river and beel will help fish species breed safely, said Dr Md Khalilur Rahman, director (research and planning) of Bangladesh Fisheries Research Institute (BFRI).

"All rivers must be protected from pollution and mother fish must be protected at any cost," he noted.

On the other hand, large-scale dredging is vital to regain navigability of rivers, beels and canals. Besides, controlled breeding of all declining species all across the country is crucial, said Prof Dr Mostafa Ali, director of Fish Museum and Biodiversity Centre at BAU.

"Where there is a sanctuary, the production of declining varieties has increased. So there must be sanctuaries at every possible fish breeding area by targeting specific fish species of the area," he said.

While the fish species are declining fast, relevant government authorities are working to reverse the trend.

Last year, BFRI started purchasing brood Mohashol fish from fishermen around Someswari river in Netrokona, the only known waterbody for this critically endangered fish, for controlled breeding.

"For years, we've been breeding declining fish species in hatcheries and releasing them into open waters. But our efforts will go in vain if the waterbodies are not properly protected," said Dr Khalilur of BFRI.

Hasan Ahmmed Chowdhury, former principal scientific officer (fish research and survey) of the DoF, said they had already taken a number of projects while some other schemes are at the planning stage to save the endangered fish populations.

He also suggested that the government revise relevant laws and rules for the department to work more effectively and efficiently. "If the laws can be implemented for all fish species like in the case of Hilsa, it would be the best way of conservation."

World's first

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University was able to replicate using 3D printing techniques.

'This work may help usher in a more sustainable future with widely available cultured meat,' that is closer to existing products, says study author Dong-Hee Kang.

The team gave no indication on eventual cost of producing the steaks or how long it would take for the product to reach the market.

Wagyu can be translated as 'Japanese cow' in English, and is one of the most famous meats in the world for its high content of 'intramuscular fat' and marbling.

It is this marbling effect that provides the rich flavour that also makes it one of the most expensive steaks on the market.

However, current cattle farming techniques considered unsustainable, particularly in terms of climate change emissions, which is one thing driving increased demand for plant-based alternatives and research into cultured meat products like this.

Jean-Francois Hocquette from the French National Institute for Agriculture, Food, and Environment (INRAE), not involved in the research, says the global position on the environmental benefits of lab-grown meat is far from agreed.

'Only three scientific papers have studied these issues and they do not agree. In any case, only three studies is not enough for robust conclusions,' he told MailOnline.

'Currently available "cultured meat" is made of poorly organised muscle fibre cells that fail to reproduce the complex structure of real beef steaks,' the team said.

'The main issue of cultured meat will be to move from research to a large-scale commercial and industrial prototype, and only thereafter to a large-scale production. A long journey,' said Professor Hocquette.

The findings have been published in the journal Nature Communications.

Last British civilian evacuation flight leaves Kabul

REUTERS, London

The last British flight evacuating civilians from Afghanistan has left Kabul, bringing to an end an operation that has airlifted almost 15,000 Afghan and British citizens in the two weeks since the Taliban took control.

Britain's armed forces are now preparing to leave and will take small numbers of Afghan citizens with them on remaining flights this weekend, a defence ministry spokesperson said on Saturday.

"It's time to close this phase of the operation down. But we haven't forgotten the people who still need to leave, and we will do everything we can to help them," Britain's ambassador to Afghanistan, Laurie Bristow, said in a statement filmed on the tarmac at Kabul's main airport.

Some British troops have already departed, and a British military transport plane carrying armed forces members landed at an airbase in southern England on Saturday.

British defence minister Ben Wallace said on Friday that Britain was entering the final hours of its evacuation and would process only people who were already inside Kabul airport.

Britain was at Washington's side from the start of a U.S. led invasion of Afghanistan that overthrew the then-ruling Taliban in punishment for harbouring the al Qaeda militants behind the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks. More than 450 British armed forces personnel died during two decades of deployment in the country.

Afghan photographer warns of Taliban threat to media

AFP, Amsterdam

The Taliban will shut down Afghanistan's media and are fooling the West by promising to let journalists operate freely, an award-winning Afghan photographer said after fleeing Kabul over threats by the group.

Massoud Hossaini, who scooped a Pulitzer Prize in 2012 while working for Agence France-Presse and is now freelance, said Afghanistan's new rulers were already restricting female journalists in particular.

The 39-year-old's dire warning on the future of the media in Afghanistan comes as he recovers from a dramatic escape from Kabul on the last commercial flight the day the Taliban took power.

"It is going to be really, really bad. They are trying to kill the media but they are doing it slowly," Hossaini, who is currently staying in the Netherlands, told AFP on Friday.

"When Taliban capture someone, first of all they capture someone and then kill them, and this is now happening to media in general."

After the fall of Kabul, Taliban officials stressed that the media, including women, could continue to operate freely and would not be harassed.

The Taliban even held a formal press conference where the group's spokesman took questions.

7 held for forging certificates of student

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commissioner (DB) of the DMP, at press briefing in DMP's Media Centre yesterday.

The fraudulent group, including some corrupt officials of the education board, forged the student's certificates and put in another student's name and details for Tk 3.5 lakh, investigators said.

The arrestees are Noor Rimty, the student who faked her certificate, her uncle Jamal Hossain, AKM Mostafa Kamal, who runs a coaching centre, and education board-based brokers -- Maruf, Faruk Ahmed, Mahbub Alam and Abed Ali.

"After studying hard for 10 years, the student found all certificates have been stolen. To fake a single certificate, the fraudulent racket faked her JSC, SSC and birth certificates," said the DB official.

According to the preliminary interrogation, Noor Rimty participated in the SSC examinations held in 2019, from City Model College, but failed in two subjects.

"She was in need of an SSC certificate to go to Italy. When she told her uncle Jamal Hossain, he contacted AKM Mostafa Kamal, to help them fake a certificate and offered to pay Tk 3.5 lakh."

Mostafa then contacted brokers Maruf, Mahbub Alam, Faruk Ahmed and Abed Ali.

"Of them, Maruf is a lower-rank employee of the education board and also a personal assistant of a CBA leader," he said.

He said the racket searched for a name close to "Nur" and picked Nur Tabassum. They collected all of Nur Tabassum and applied to the education board to change the name

and details.

"They then took down JSC, SSC certificates of Nur Tabassum and uploaded them again on the website with the name and other necessary information changed in exchange for money."

Ashrafullah, additional deputy commissioner (Web-based Crime) at the DB's Cyber and Special Crime, told The Daily Star the racket advised Noor Rimty to apply to the education board saying it got her name and birth date wrong in the certificate and they have to be "corrected".

The changes were then made with the board's verification, adding that they would investigate whether any higher official of Dhaka Education Board is involved.

Ashrafullah said this racket is not only involved in fraudulent activities with this board, but has connections

with other boards too.

"We got information that Mostafa Kamal is involved with underhand dealings to admit students at various schools and colleges," he said, adding that he is also involved with private and national university certificate forgery.

Kamal was a college teacher in Mymensingh and now runs a coaching centre in Dhaka.

Talking to reporters, the student Nur Tabassum said she got to know about her certificates being faked after she got an sms on August 21 for HSC registration.

"I saw my name and parents' names have been changed. When I checked it on the education board's website, I saw all my information changed."

Her mother Rokeya Sultana said they filed a case with Dhanmondi Police Station under the Digital Security Act.



But due to objections of the Water Development Board, which said small islands in the area may be

affected, they decided to limit the extension to 1,700 feet, he said.

The runway extension will be built