

BANGLADESH UPDATE



3,948
New cases in 24hrs



14,93,537
Total cases



26,015
Deaths



14,15,697
Recoveries

GLOBAL UPDATE



4,513,249
Deaths



217,100,127
Total cases

Fishermen not getting their aid

Says agriculture minister; points to corruption in distribution

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Explaining the hurdles that fishermen have to face, Agriculture Minister Dr Muhammad Abdur Razzaque said on top of other miseries, they do not even get the aid meant for them during fishing bans.

"I've information. Please don't mind. Fishermen do not get the 40-kg rice properly. Anomalies take place," he said at the inaugural session of "National Fish Week 2021" yesterday.

The National Fish Week 2021 began on Saturday and will continue till September 3.

Speaking to SM Rezaul Karim, minister of the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock (MoFL), who was present at the programme, Razzaque requested a special programme and monitor so that aid reaches actual fishermen.

In three phases, the MoFL provided VGF rice to fishermen. A total of 16,721 tonnes of rice were distributed to 2,98,595 fishermen during the 65-day ban on catching fish in the sea.

About 56,228 tonnes of rice was distributed among 3,73,996 fishermen during the ban on catching Jatka (fish fry) and about 10,566 tonnes to 5,28,342 fishermen during the 22-day ban on catching brood Hilsa.

Razzaque called upon the MoFL to increase the amount of aid.

"We have to feel the struggles and [consider the] conditions of fishermen who live in remote areas of Barguna and Patuakhali. Their living standard is declining due to the rise in sea levels and many other reasons... It is our duty to look after them. As a part of the government, I'll help you in this regard."

Contacted, Zia Haider Chowdhury, project director (Hilsa) of the Department of Fisheries (DoF), said

local administrations and public representatives are involved in aid distribution.

"We have to strengthen our monitoring this year to ensure that the aid reaches actual beneficiaries," he said.

Jatiya Sangsad Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury at the programme said the government has taken comprehensive measures to develop the fish sector of the country.

"Meeting nutrition demands, building a meritorious nation, resolving the unemployment problem, in other words, the overall socio-economic development of the country is related to the fish sector. That is why the government is giving emphasis on it," she said.

Fisheries Minister Rezaul Karim said Bangladesh was internationally recognised for its success in fish production. The country came in third in catching fish from inland water bodies and fifth in fish farming in closed water bodies.

Bangladesh ranked first in the production of Hilsa and fourth in Tilapia, he said, adding that they have successfully revived 31 native fish.

Underscoring the need to catch fish from the sea in a well-planned manner, he said if fish is caught following scientific methods, marine life will not go extinct.

Twenty-one individual and organisations were handed gold and bronze medals for their outstanding contribution in the fish sector.

Dhirendra Debnath Shambhu, president, parliamentary standing committee on fisheries and livestock, Rawnak Mahmud, secretary at the MoFL, and Quazi Shams Afroz, director general of DoF were present, among others.



People, many of whom are relatives of victims, get on boats yesterday to see the rescue and recovery operations launched after a boat capsized in Brahmanbaria on Friday.

PHOTO: MASUK HRIDYO

Use of antibiotics rampant, careless

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The IEDCR study found that physicians prescribed the Watch Group drugs in around 70 percent cases, followed by Access Group drugs (28 percent), Reserve Group drugs (0.8 percent), and drugs not recommended by the WHO (0.4 percent).

"Physicians should be cautious while using Watch Group antibiotics as these drugs have the potential to give rise to resistant bacteria," said Dr Zakir Hossain Habib, head of microbiology and principal scientific officer at the IEDCR, who led the study.

The study listed top 10 antibiotics based on their use among patients at the Covid-19 wards and ICUs.

It showed Ceftriaxone was physicians' first choice for majority of the patients at four of the five Covid-dedicated hospitals.

For example, Ceftriaxone was the first choice for treating 62.8 percent of the Covid patients at Bangladesh Institute of Tropical and Infectious Diseases in Chattogram, followed by a combination of Amoxicillin and

Clavulanic Acid (24.8 percent).

Similarly, Ceftriaxone was the doctors' top choice for treating 55.8 percent of the patients at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital, 53.6 percent at Shahid Shamsuddin Hospital in Sylhet, 30.7 percent at Chattogram Medical College Hospital and 27.9 percent at Uttara Adhunik Medical College Hospital in the capital.

According to a 2017 IEDCR study, the widely-prescribed ceftriaxone was ineffective in combating E-coli, proteus spp, non-typhoidal salmonella and Acinetobacter complex and other bacteria in many cases.

The latest study said Meropenem -- a Watch Group drug -- was also among the top 10 antibiotics used at these five hospitals. This was widely used for the patients in intensive care units.

"Covid-19 is a viral infection and antibiotics are not effective in treating it. Antibiotics should not be used unless there is possibility of secondary bacterial infection... Physicians should be judicious in selecting antibiotics," Dr Zakir told this newspaper yesterday.

"This [use of antibiotics] also puts unnecessary financial burdens on patients."

Ceftriaxone is a costly and overrated drug. It should not be used without proper judgement, he observed.

Voicing concern over widespread use of very effective antibiotic Meropenem for Covid patients, he said doctors should be more careful about using this drug and try to avoid it whenever possible.

According to experts, Culture and Sensitivity Test of a patient's specimen is a mechanism to see what kind of medicine, such as an antibiotic, will work best to treat a particular disease or infection.

Worryingly, this practice was found in case of drug selection for just 6 percent patients at private hospitals and only 3.44 percent patients at public hospitals.

The researchers involved in the study recommended prescribing antibiotics based on the results of Culture and Sensitivity Test.

They also said ceftriaxone should be used judiciously.

Momen leaves for Europe

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen yesterday left for Europe for a 10-day visit aimed at boosting cooperation on tackling the pandemic, climate change and challenges faced by migrants amid the pandemic.

He will attend the Least Developed Countries (LDC) Asia-Pacific Regional Review meeting on Monday and Tuesday in preparation for the LDC conference to be held in Doha in January, 2022.

Bangladesh, as a co-chair of the LDC, has been negotiating at the multilateral forum for several privileges, foreign ministry official said.

"There are also countries, including

Bangladesh, that are graduating LDCs. We are negotiating for continuing the privileges of the LDC for 12 years after graduation in 2026. This could be an important topic in the meeting," an official said.

Besides, the minister will meet the directors general of the World Health Organization, World Trade Organization, UN Refugee Agency, UN Human Rights Council, International Organization for Migration, and International Labour Organization, officials said.

He is also likely to hold a bilateral meeting with Swiss Foreign Minister Ignazio Cassis.

After visiting Switzerland, Momen will visit the UK and meet his UK counterpart Dominic Raab.

Bangladesh to be made

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the most important one in the future," she said.

She said after the expansion of Cox's Bazar Airport, it will emerge as a suitable place of refuelling aircraft from the east and west, and enhance communication with South East Asian countries. "If we can enhance our communications with South Eastern Asian countries, it will help expand our trade and commerce."

After coming to power, Hasina said her government bought 16 new aircraft, including four Boeing 777s, two 737s, four 787-8s, two 787-9s and four Dash-8s.

With these aircraft, she said the government wants to expand Biman's routes, including New York, Toronto and Sydney.

She asked the Biman officials to work with honesty and sincerity and upgrade all services, including security, to international standards.

The PM said the government wants to upgrade the Syedpur Airport to make it a regional airport so that Bhutan, Nepal and some Indian states can use it.

She also said Sylhet International Airport can be used by Meghalay, Assam and other Indian states while Chattogram International Airport can be used by Tripura and other Indian

states.

Voicing her frustration for not being able to utilise the new 16 aircraft of Biman, Hasina said these aircraft cannot be operated due to coronavirus.

She mentioned that the construction work on Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA) third terminal is going on in full swing. "It will be the most modern one."

She said there will be an underpass from HSIA to Airport Railway Station for the convenience of passengers.

About the development of Cox's Bazar as a tourist spot, she said the government has many development plans for the area to attract more local and foreign tourists.

In this connection, the PM mentioned that the Sonadia Eco Park which will be preserving all natural elements.

State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Md Mahub Ali, Secretary of the Civil Aviation and Tourism Ministry Md Mokammel Hossain and Chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) Air-Vice Marshal M Mafidur Rahman also spoke at the event.

A video on the development of the aviation industry of Bangladesh was screened at the programme.

A dozen Bangladeshis now

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their flights were again cancelled as two bomb blasts killed nearly 100 Afghans and US troops. Finally, the 12 Bangladeshis and Afghan students were evacuated to Doha on August 28.

Of the total of 12 Bangladeshi officials of BRAC International, nine were already brought back home. Still, there are three BRAC officials in Kabul. BRAC said they were safe and will be repatriated soon.

Some six other Bangladeshis were still known to be stranded in

Afghanistan but foreign ministry officials said they have yet to approach the Bangladesh authorities for evacuation.

Meanwhile, the foreign ministry said they are in regular contact with the stranded Bangladesh nationals and has taken every measure for their safe and orderly departure.

"It is expected that the development workers can return to Afghanistan once conducive environment is restored," said a foreign ministry statement yesterday.

Days in custody unaccounted for

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beaten up and kept inside an empty septic tank for nearly 36 hours before he was officially shown arrested for possession of 200 pieces of yaba.

This happened on June 30, 2015, but he was at court even yesterday for a hearing -- fighting not to prove the case of his enforced disappearance, but to prove that he was not carrying 200 pieces of yaba.

"I was fishing at a pond inside the cantonment area around 10:00am in the morning, when I was picked up by Bhashantek police," he claimed.

"They took me to the under-construction BRP [Bhashantek Rehabilitation Project] building and made me get into the septic tank. I spent the whole day and the whole night there. The next day, a child, who is a police informer, came to me and asked me what I wanted to eat. I asked him if he had a cell phone and he said yes," narrated Mosharraf.

"I asked him to call a number and put it on loudspeaker, and in that manner, I talked to my wife to let her know where I am," he narrated. His wife informed a journalist of this newspaper, who then informed a police high-up.

"It was right before iftar that I was taken out of the manhole," he claimed.

However, as per the first information report filed by Assistant Sub-inspector Sohel Md Mohiuddin, Mosharraf was arrested from beside a garbage bin in Damalkote at 6:45pm on July 1, 2015.

According to the case, police learnt from a tipoff that Mosharraf was selling yaba, went to find him and caught him.

When asked why he did not file a case against the police for keeping him in a manhole, Mosharraf looked befuddled for a minute. "I was sent to

prison for nine months. By the time I got out, wouldn't it have been too late?" he asked.

His lawyer Mozammel Haque, however, stated that the issue was brought up during hearings in court.

In February 2016, when Md Arman was picked up from Mirpur-10 Bihari camp, he was hit in the back of the head with a rifle butt.

He woke up four days later in a hospital bed at Dhaka Medical College Hospital. "When I regained consciousness, I could inform my family, who had been searching for me since I was picked up," said Arman.

He was shown arrested the same day in a case filed against someone whose father and Arman's father had the same name.

Arman was incarcerated for five years until the High Court declared on December 31, 2020, that the arrest and detention was illegal and contradictory to his fundamental and human rights, and asked the authorities concerned of the government to immediately release him from jail.

Compared to five years of incarceration, the four days of frantic searching probably meant nothing, but it is imperative to reiterate that it was a violation of the law dictating that an arrestee be produced before the court within 24 hours of being arrested.

Taking a look at 122 cases of enforced disappearances that happened between 2017 and 2019 where the victims were returned, it becomes clear that the most of the victims disappeared for two days. In almost all of these cases, the victims were shown arrested.

This is according to data provided by Mayer Daak, a platform of the families of the people who fell victim to enforced disappearances, who documented the date of arrest, and

Blast rocks Kabul again

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US officials had said they were particularly concerned about the ISIS-K militants attacking the airport as American troops depart, in particular the threat from rockets and vehicle-borne explosives.

One US official said yesterday's strike was carried out by an unmanned aircraft piloted from outside Afghanistan, and that secondary explosions following the strike showed the target had been carrying a "substantial amount of explosive material".

"We want to ensure that every foreign civilian and those who are at risk are evacuated today [yesterday]. Forces will start flying out once this process is over," the official said.

A US official told Reuters on Saturday that fewer than 4,000 troops remained at the airport.

The United States and allies have

taken about 114,400 people - foreign nationals and vulnerable Afghans - out of the country in the past two weeks, but tens of thousands who want to go will be left behind.

The airlift - one of the biggest such evacuation operations ever - marked the end of a 20-year Western mission in Afghanistan that began when US-led forces ousted a Taliban government that had provided safe haven for the perpetrators of the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States.

The final chapter came after the United States and the Taliban made a deal to end the foreign involvement by August 31 this year. The Western-backed government and Afghan army melted away as Taliban fighters swept across the country and took control of Kabul.

"We tried every option because our lives are in danger. They (the Americans or foreign powers) must

show us a way to be saved. We should leave Afghanistan or they should provide a safe place for us," said one woman outside the airport.

A Taliban official told Reuters the Islamist group had engineers and technicians ready to take charge of the airport.

"We are waiting for the final nod from the Americans to secure full control over Kabul airport as both sides aim for a swift handover," said the official, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Biden yesterday headed to Dover Air Force Base to honor members of the US military killed in Thursday's attack as their remains were returned to the United States.

His national security adviser said Washington expected the Taliban to still allow safe passage for Americans and others to leave after the US military withdrawal is completed.

Biman pilot still in coma

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Condition of Biman pilot Capt Nawshad Ataul Quayyum, who suffered a heart attack while commanding a Muscat-Dhaka flight, remains the same. He is in coma in a hospital in Nagpur.

"His condition is the same as yesterday [Saturday] ... he is still in coma at the ICU," said a senior official of Kingsway Hospital, wishing not to be named.

His view was echoed by a senior Biman official in India.

Requesting anonymity, the official

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Metro dream

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river. The Mass Rapid Transit Line-6 (metro rail), the dream of young people and a priority of the government, will be inaugurated late next year, he added.

TEST RUNS START

Top officials of Dhaka Mass Transit Company Ltd (DMTCL), the implementing agency of the project, over 100 journalists, many engineers and workers gathered at the workshop at the depot in the capital's Diabari yesterday morning.

Around 11:00am, MAN Siddique, the MD of DMTCL, briefed reporters about the programme.

Quader, also the general secretary of Awami League, MAN Siddique, along with Minister and Deputy of the Mission of Japan Embassy in Bangladesh Hiroyuki Yamaya, and Chief Representative of JICA Bangladesh Yuho Hayakawa, and several other officials, entered the train and inspected it for several minutes.

Quader then gave a speech. Around 11:50am, the train, consisting of six cars, came close to the podium inside the depot.

The minister then waved a green flag, signaling the train to start its first run.

Apart from a train operator from the Japanese company, a resident engineer, and Project Manager ABM Arifur Rahman were inside the train.

It was operated at 25km per hour on the main tracks while 5km per hour at the station, Arifur said. The train was operated between Uttara North, Uttara Centre, Uttara South, and Pallabi.

The electric train can reach up to 100kmph.

"We successfully completed today's test run. It was a good start," Arifur told The Daily Star, adding that he and the experts did several technical checks during the test run.

When the train reached Pallabi station, hundreds of people were seen watching it from the streets and rooftops.

Munna Islam, a resident of Mirpur-12, went to the roof of a six-story building to see the train.

"It will be really helpful to us. We heard it would take 20 to 25 minutes to reach Motijheel from Mirpur once the service begins," he told this correspondent.

WHAT'S NEXT

Quader said construction of 19.02km, out of 20.10km viaducts, have already been done. Apart from the depot, the tracks have been installed on 17.24km of it.

Wiring on 17.44km of overhead catenary system has also been done. Four of the 24 trains have reached Dhaka from Japan. The rest will reach gradually, he said.

Testing of the train inside the depot started on May 11, he said.

The overall performance tests may take six months and the integrity tests may continue for three months, he added.

After that, five months of trial runs without passengers will be carried out before starting commercial service, he added.

"Metro rail is no longer a dream, it is now a reality."

The original implementation period for the fast-track project was from July 2012 to June 2024. But Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the physical work in June, 2016.

She later directed that the metro services from Uttara-Agargaon be operational by 2019, and from Agargaon-Motijheel by 2020.

Failing to meet the deadline, the authorities in May 2019 said the services would be launched on December 16 this year to coincide with the golden jubilee of Bangladesh's independence. But construction work lost pace amid the pandemic, forcing the authorities to extend the deadline again, officials said.

The overall progress of the project was 44.12 percent in March last year, when the first cases of coronavirus were detected in the country. As of July this year, the project made 68.49 percent progress, falling short of what was anticipated at the outset.

Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal, in his budget speech in June and MAN Siddique at a programme on July 30 hinted that partial operation of the metro rail service was likely to start in December next year.

There will be 16 stations between Uttara and Motijheel. Around 60,000 people will be able to commute every hour between Uttara and Motijheel in just about 40 minutes. The journey now takes about two hours on a regular day.

The authorities later decided to extend the line to Kamalapur. However, physical work of this portion has not started yet.