

BANGLADESH UPDATE



2,710
New cases in 24hrs



15,17,166
Total cases



26,628
Deaths



14,55,187
Recoveries

GLOBAL UPDATE



4,586,714
Deaths



221,850,378
Total cases

Stay ready to tackle floods: PM

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has asked all quarters concerned to stay prepared to tackle floods, as water levels of the rivers are rising.

"The water level in different areas, especially in the basins of the Jamuna and the Padma, is rising. That's why directives have been given to remain alert," Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam told the media after a cabinet meeting at the Secretariat.

The prime minister joined the meeting virtually from the Gono Bhaban.

Enamur Rahman, state minister for disaster management and relief, talked about the ministry's preparations, said Anwarul, adding that Education Minister Dipu Moni has already issued a set of instructions for the schools located in flood prone areas.

The PM has asked the agriculture minister to ensure that farmers can plant T-Aman paddy even in flood-affected areas.

The cabinet also cleared a proposal for the extension of the Quick Enhancement of Electricity and Energy Supply (Special Provision) Act 2010 for another five years till 2026.

Anwarul said the cabinet gave the final approval to the draft in order to ensure uninterrupted supply of



electricity and energy for the sake of Bangladesh graduating to a higher middle-income country by 2030 and a developed country by 2041.

The cabinet also gave the go-ahead to the draft of Public Debt Bill 2021.

Anwarul said the Public Debt Act 1944 is a very old law and was extended several times since the debt system witnessed a radical change, adding that the Finance Division designed the new law.

"At any cost, depositors will get their money back... In many cases, you've seen that depositors don't get their money back when private banks or financial institutions are dissolved... But now, people will get their money back."

The cabinet secretary also said a new provision was incorporated in the proposed law that allows running a Shariah-based deposit system alongside the normal one.

He added that if anyone provides false information while obtaining the issued certificates under the government security and saving certificate schemes, he or she would face a maximum six-month imprisonment and Tk 1 lakh fine or both.

The meeting also approved in principle the draft of Bangladesh Police (Subordinate Employees) Welfare Fund Bill 2021 to replace an ordinance of the military regime.

OC Pradeep stomped

FROM PAGE 1
source, quoting Kamal.

"When Sinha's car was halted at the checkpoint, Kamal had to stop his auto-rickshaw several feet behind the Sinha's car. Kamal saw the entire incident," the source told The Daily Star.

"Kamal told the court that he saw a man come out of a car with his hands up. Within a few moments, a policeman shot him. After being hit, the man advanced two steps forward. The policeman then shot him again," said the source.

"The man fell on the ground and he was bleeding profusely. A few moments later, another police team went to the spot. The officer leading the team kicked the man lying on the ground and stomped on his neck with his foot. Moments later, the body was loaded on a pick-up and they left the scene," the source added.

Kamal also told the court that he knew none of them when the incident took place. Later, he came to know that the shooter was inspector Liaquat Ali, the victim was Major (ret) Sinha and the police officer, who kicked the victim, was Pradeep Kumar Das, a court source said.

Judge Ismail Hossain recorded Kamal's deposition, which began at 10:15am and continued for an hour and around 15 minutes. The defence then cross-examined his statement.

All 15 accused in the case were present in the court yesterday, said court's Public Prosecutor Faridul Alam.

During the proceedings, defence lawyer Rana Dasgupta requested lawyers of both prosecution and defence to remain cautious so that the accused do not become victim of

media trial, said a court source.

Earlier in the first phase of the hearing, the court recorded statements of two witnesses between August 23 and 25 -- Sinha's sister and the complainant Sharmin Shahriar Ferdous and one of Sinha's associates Shahedul Islam Sifat.

The court began the second phase by recording statements of other witnesses on Sunday and it will continue till September 8. The court has summoned 15 witnesses to testify during this period.

According to the charge sheet, 83 people were witnesses to the incident.

On June 27, the court framed charges against 15 accused. Of them, 12 are police personnel, including Pradeep, Liaquat Ali, sub-inspector Md Shahjahan, and assistant sub-inspector Liton Mia, who were all suspended from their posts.

On December 13 last year, the investigators submitted the charge sheet.

Sinha, 36, had been making travel documentaries for a YouTube channel called "Just Go". He was returning to Cox's Bazar from Teknaf.

He was killed in a police firing at a checkpoint of Armed Police Battalion (APBn) at Teknaf's Shamlapur area on July 31 last year.

Police claimed that they tried to search the vehicle, and Sinha aimed his pistol at them, prompting them to shoot back in self-defence. They also claimed that they seized drugs from the vehicle.

Sinha's elder sister filed the murder case with Teknaf Senior Judicial Magistrate's Court against Pradeep, Nandadulal, and several others on August 5 last year.

PECE exams likely in Nov

FROM PAGE 1
would be examinations in all six subjects, Zakir said it would depend on the situation. "If the situation permits, we will take exams of all subjects."

The coronavirus pandemic had forced the government to cancel this year's PECE -- the first time the PECE was cancelled after its introduction in 2009.

During the last several years, about 3 million students sat for the PECE.

Zakir said they have also taken preparations to hold the final exams of all other grades of primary schools.

Students of pre-primary classes, like play group and nursery, will not have to return to classrooms right now, he added.

Examinees of PECE, SSC and HSC will have to attend in-person classes every week day while the rest of the students will go to school once a week after schools and colleges reopen on September 12, Education Minister Dipu Moni announced on Sunday.

The government after an inter-ministerial meeting at the Secretariat on Sunday unveiled the details of the reopening, which would bring to an end a near 18-month closure of educational institutions due to the pandemic.

Educational institutions have been closed across the country from March 17 last year to curb the spread of Covid-19. The closure led to cancellation of classes and examinations, throwing the academic lives of more than four crore students of around 1.5 lakh educational institutions in disarray.

Zakir, quoting a Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics Bangladesh study, said the country's literacy rate was 75.6 percent.

"Literacy rate in Bangladesh is increasing due to various efforts of the government. Still, 24.4 percent people are not literate. The desired development will not be possible if these people are not made literate," he added.

He also said the government was working to increase literacy among people and provide them with lifelong education.

Education ministry officials said English medium schools will need to reopen in phases and they would be allowed to bring all examinees every day and students of other classes once a day.

"All kinds of educational institutions will need to follow the same process of school reopening," Secondary and Higher Education Secretary Mahub Hossain said.

Officials of the Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics say there are 78,700 students at 146 registered English medium schools in the country.

However, sources said there are about 350-400 such schools in the country, and many are not registered.

In another development, the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education yesterday uploaded four documentaries on school reopening to their website, on their Facebook page and YouTube channel "Amar Ghar Amar School".

The documentary contains instructions for heads of educational institutions, teachers, school managing committees and students detailing the necessary arrangements for when educational institutions open.

Meanwhile, all examinations under the National University, which were postponed due to Covid-19, will begin on September 8, said a statement of the university.

Final year master's exams of 2018 will begin on September 8 and second-year exams of degree pass and certificate course of 2019 will start on September 11.

NU asked authorities to maintain at least three feet distance between candidates and follow Covid-19 health guidelines.



Chief of Army Staff Gen SM Shafiuddin Ahmed, right, hands a crest on behalf of the Bangladesh Army to Air Mshl D Choudhury, commandant of India's National Defence College, during a visit to NDC yesterday.

PHOTO: ISPR

Army chief visits Indian brigade that entered Dhaka in 1971

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief of Army Staff Gen SM Shafiuddin Ahmed visited the Indian Army's 50 Independent Parachute Brigade, Wargaming Development Centre, Defence Image Processing and Analysis Centre and Indian National Defence College (NDC) in the last two days of his India visit.

He yesterday called on Lt Gen (ret) Vinod G Khandare, military adviser to the Secretariat of the State Security Council at the Office of the Prime Minister of India. There, the army chief discussed various security issues during a meeting, according to a press release from the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR).

At the 50 Independent Parachute Brigade of the Indian Army, Gen Shafiuddin was briefed on the capabilities, activities and training of the brigade.

This brigade was the first to enter Dhaka through Tongi as a member of the Allied Forces in the War of Liberation in 1971.

Gen Shafiuddin visited the Indian Wargaming Development Centre and Defence Image Processing and Analysis Centre yesterday morning. There, he learned about the activities and technical issues of the two institutions and discussed possible areas of future cooperation, said the statement.

Later in the afternoon, the chief of army staff addressed a seminar on the India-Bangladesh Bilateral Relations, Foreign Policy and Security at the National Defence College of India.

At the end of the seminar, he answered various questions of the NDC course members during an open discussion.

The army chief is scheduled to return home tomorrow.

ZIA'S GAVE ISSUE

Govt created it to cover up its failures

Says Fakhru

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

The government has created an unpleasant issue out of the grave of late president Ziaur Rahman to cover up its failure to contain the Covid-19 and dengue situations, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir said yesterday.

He made the remarks while talking to reporters at his Kalibari residence in Thakurgaon town.

"During the Covid-19 pandemic over the last two years, unemployment has gone up to an intolerable level. Instead of trying to get out of all this, the government has instead been trying to raise an issue out of Zia's grave. That is why people do not have any confidence in this government."

On the remarks Zafullah Chowdhury made at a meeting at the Jatiya Press Club on September 2, Fakhru requested Chowdhury not to make misleading comments.

Zafullah had said that making Tarique the BNP acting chairman was a violation of the party's constitution.

Fakhru said Zafullah is a highly respected and intelligent man and is fighting against fascism. "But as he is getting older, he sometimes says things that undermine the anti-autocrat movement. His remarks about the process of appointing Tarique Rahman as the acting chairman of the BNP are not reasonable."

The BNP secretary general said Tarique is the acting chairman of the BNP as per the constitution and served as the party's senior joint secretary general and senior vice-chairman earlier. "He has gradually come to this position from within the party. He is also successfully organising the nationalist party from abroad."

Fakhru mentioned that when president Ziaur Rahman was killed, many people said the BNP would be destroyed but that didn't happen. The BNP came back strongly under the leadership of Khaleda Zia, adding that for the last 12 years, not only the BNP, but the country has been going through a major political crisis.

"The biggest crises [for the BNP] occurred when the party's chairperson was imprisoned in a false case and acting Chairman Tarique was exiled. Even after that, he [Tarique] has kept in touch with leaders and activists at the grassroots level. No question can arise about the leadership here. The party is led by him and he is performing his duties with extraordinary organisational skills... Under Tarique's leadership, we are very hopeful that the party will soon be well organised and create a movement that will be able to remove the present 'autocratic AL government' and establish a people's government."

District BNP President Taimur Rahman, General Secretary Mirza Faisal Amin, Finance Secretary Shariful Islam, district Chhatra Dal President Kayes were present.

Govt set to clip BTRC wings

FROM PAGE 1

much further than that. It requires that the commission take the ministry's approval for almost everything it plans to do.

Also, under this, the BTRC will have to forward its revenue earned from licences and spectrum to the exchequer. At present, the proceeds are kept with the BTRC.

Save for commissioners, who are appointed by the government, the BTRC can now recruit, appoint, transfer and promote its employees irrespective of grade.

But in the draft act, the ministry has the power to recruit, appoint, promote, transfer and penalise BTRC employees from grade-1 to grade-9, without involving the chairman of the commission.

The commission can only recruit, appoint, promote, transfer and penalise employees from grade-10 to grade-20, which are the lower-tier employees.

Also, the commission's chairman will no longer be able to issue government order (GO) for grade 1-9 officers' tour abroad under the proposed telecom act.

In the original act, the Supreme Court judges could investigate allegations of moral turpitude against the commissioner and remove him/her if found guilty. The draft amendment gives that responsibility to the ministry.

"If the telecommunications act is amended in this way, an important institution like BTRC will be destroyed," said Md Jahurul Haque, a former BTRC chairman.

The telecommunications sector will fall into the hands of the bureaucracy and there will be no transparency in its operations, he added.

The International Telecommunication Union has placed Bangladesh at 23rd position among 27 Asian countries in its latest regulatory index, said Abu Saeed Khan,

senior policy fellow at LIRNEasia, a Colombo-based information and communication technology policy and regulation think-tank active in the Asia Pacific region.

Bangladesh ranks four steps behind Afghanistan, seven steps behind Bhutan and 12 steps behind Pakistan.

"The amendment will further relegate Bangladesh, as bureaucrats are hijacking the regulatory functions from the BTRC. It is a humiliating contrast to the country's improvement in other indicators," Khan added.

BTRC Chairman Shyam Sunder Sikder said they have submitted the regulator's opinion as per the call of the telecom division.

"I think the commission should be allowed to act as a commission," he said.

The challenges and roadblocks that are impeding the growth of the industry were not addressed in the draft law, said Tanjib-ul Alam, an expert on telecom law.

The technology is being upgraded and converged on a regular basis but there are no rules or guidelines to cope with the new ideas and technologies in the draft law.

"Nothing is put up in the law in case of innovation. There are no clear-cut ideas about how it will work and implement the Digital Bangladesh roadmap."

All this draft law does is deny the commission its independent status and tighten the government's grip on the sector, said Alam, who was involved in drafting of the existing telecom act.

While some of the suggested amendments will clarify current ambiguities, most of the provisions appear to be aimed at reducing the status of the commission into a department of the telecom ministry and expanding the power of interception and instant punishment through mobile court.

The proposed amendment

Bashundhara MD, 7 others sued for rape

FROM PAGE 1

The Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal-8 of Dhaka.

After a hearing, Judge Mafroza Parvin took the case into cognisance and recorded the complainant's statements, court sources said.

The judge also directed the Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) to investigate the case and submit a report before the court within seven working days.

Abu Yousuf, additional superintendent (legal and media) of PBI, told The Daily Star that they came to know the news from media, but they were yet to get any official documents.

The Bashundhara MD has been made the prime accused for allegedly murdering the college student after raping her, while Shah Alam and six others were accused of assisting Anvir in committing the offence.

The case statements said the victim was raped before death as her private parts contained injuries and blood, while her clothes were torn, which police had mentioned in the inquest report.

The prime accused, in collusion with the others, confined the victim to the Gulshan flat to execute the plan to kill her, the complainant said in her statements.

The accused all had the common intention to kill the victim after rape, she also mentioned in the case statements.

The autopsy report found the evidence of intercourse before her death, the case statements added.

Meanwhile, in a statement to the press, Bashundhara Group said the group's chairman, managing director and any other family members are not involved in the incident.

Signed by Mohammad Abu Toyab, adviser, press and media of Bashundhara Group, the statement said the case is conspiratorial and the complainant intentionally made the case with baseless, unrealistic and fictional information to belittle

Bashundhara Group.

The statement said the Bashundhara Group will take the sufficient legal measures to fight this baseless and conspiratorial case.

The statement also mentioned that the complainant had earlier filed a false case implicating the Bashundhara Group managing director in connection with the unnatural death of her sister.

Police investigation had already revealed that the allegations were false and the investigators informed it to the court through reports. The court relieved the managing director of the charges, the statement added.

"Making the father, mother, son and daughter-in-law accused in such crimes suggest how fabricated and baseless the charges are," the statement reads.

On April 26, police recovered the body of the 21-year-old college student hanging from the ceiling fan of her bedroom in a Gulshan flat.

The victim's sister then filed a case with Gulshan Police Station against Anvir over abetting the death by suicide of the victim.

Two days after the body of the college student was recovered, Sudip Chakrabarty, the then deputy commissioner (Gulshan division) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said six diaries of the college student contained crucial evidence supporting the allegations brought against the accused.

"The victim's utter frustration and mental breakdown are reflected in her diaries, that we have seized. Her writings will be important evidence," the DC told reporters at his office.

Sudip said, "... She wrote [in the diary] about their relationship, the social barriers to recognition of the relationship, her expectation of a happy conjugal life with the accused and the barriers from his family."

She detailed her serious frustration in her diaries and these will be the key to establishing the case, he said at the time.

regarding alternative dispute settlement (section 89B) is not at all encouraging for attracting foreign or local investment.

It does not secure the fairness and independence of the arbitrators, as no scope is given to the parties to nominate their arbitrators.

"The most objectionable part of the whole scheme of amendment is that the government has abandoned the idea of avoiding conflict of interest. If the proposed amendment is implemented, the government will become both the regulator and operator," Alam added.

Mustafa Jabbar, posts and telecoms minister, however, defended the changes brought to the draft Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulation Act 2021.

"What's the harm there if the BTRC is under the government? The BTRC cannot and should not take any decision bypassing the government or the ministry. A regulator cannot function without the government."

The commission enjoyed outside authority, according to Jabbar.

"We have seen it function in an autocratic manner, especially in the case of appointments," he said, adding that the BTRC had recruited overaged personnel and promoted and transferred employees at will, using their autonomy.

The amendment seeks to bring such activities under a formal framework.

Besides, a sector as dynamic as the telecom sector cannot function effectively with a 20-year-old act. "That's why we have taken the initiative to amend the act," Jabbar added.

Tanjib-ul Alam, however, observed, "The draft amendment does not at all seem in tune with the rapid changes that are taking place in telecom and information technology sectors both at national and international levels. It instead seems bent on clipping the powers of the regulator, which is an ominous sign."

Philippines lifts lockdown in capital as virus surges

AFP, Manila

The Philippines will lift a stay-at-home order in the capital Manila this week as it trials "granular lockdowns", an official said yesterday, in a bid to rein in coronavirus cases and revive the economy.

More than 13 million people in the national capital region -- the country's economic heartland -- have been in lockdown since August 6 amid record infections fuelled by the hyper-contagious Delta variant.

The move to ease restrictions from Wednesday comes after nationwide daily cases exceeded 20,000 for the past three days -- double the number at the start of the latest lockdown -- straining hospitals as they grapple with a nurses shortage.

"Localised lockdowns will be piloted in Metro Manila," said presidential spokesman Harry Roque, explaining that a household, building or street could be targeted.

"It will be literally a complete lockdown if you are subject to granular lockdown -- even the food will be delivered to you."