

BANGLADESH UPDATE



2,325
New cases in 24hrs



15,27,215
Total cases



26,832
Deaths



14,72,067
Recoveries

GLOBAL UPDATE



46,26,461
Deaths



224,159,659
Total cases

RIVER EROSION IN 5 DISTRICTS

Houses, cropland, roads devoured

STAR REPORT

At least five districts in the country are facing erosion as river water started receding there, causing immense suffering to people.

Several hundred houses, vast areas of cropland, roads and other establishments have been devoured by the rivers in the districts.

In Kurigram and Lalmonirhat, around 420 homesteads, 2,000 bighas of land, 56 fruit orchards, four mosques and a community clinic have been devoured.

The officials of the two district administrations said many more homesteads, structures, and croplands were at high risk.

Nazul Islam, of Kurigram's Rajarhat upazila, said he and his neighbours managed to move their furniture and other valuables to safe places but could not protect their houses.

"The Teesta has eroded our homesteads," he said.

Contacted, Ariful Islam, executive engineer of Kurigram Water Development Board (WDB), said they would take necessary measures on an emergency basis to check the erosion.

In Tangail, the Jamuna and its branches continued to devour several hundred houses, croplands, roads and other structures.

The worst affected upazilas in the

district are Sadar, Kalihati, Bhanpur and Basail.

According to the district relief and rehabilitation office, at least 368 dwelling houses were devoured by the rivers in the last two weeks.

Tangail District Commissioner Ataul Gani said relief assistance including cash incentives would be provided to the victims.

In Manikganj, homesteads of at least 20 families and vast areas of cropland have been devoured by the Padman in Harirampur upazila in the last three weeks.

Around 200 more houses and other structures are at the risk of being eroded, said locals.

Main Uddin, executive engineer of Manikganj WDB, said they already started dumping geo bags to prevent river erosion.

In Sirajganj, over 100 homesteads and some croplands have been eroded by rivers in Shahjadpur and Chowhali upazilas in the last month.

Although the water level in the river started receding, people in the low lying areas remained submerged.

Meanwhile, a bulleting of Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC), released at 9:00am yesterday, read all the major rivers in the country are in falling trend that may continue for the next 72 hours.

2 fake firms

FROM PAGE 1

Development Finance Company Later, Shuvra confessed to a Dhaka magistrate that she took a loan of about Tk 87 crore for Wakama Ltd with fake documents.

She also told the investigation officer that she withdrew several crores and handed it over to her husband Subrata who later gave it to PK Halder.

"Since both companies are closed and there is no mortgage against the loan, it is not possible for them to repay the loan," she said.

ACC found that PK Halder was the mastermind behind the embezzlement of huge amounts of money from non-banking financial institutions (NBFIs).

On Thursday, Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Shahidul Islam recorded Shuvra's statement.

In her confessional statement, she said PK Halder assisted her husband in taking the loan without any collateral.

After recording the statement, the magistrate sent Shuvra to Kashimpur High Security Women's Jail in Gazipur.

The enquiry over A&B Trading is now going on.

Shuvra was arrested at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport by the immigration police on March 22. On that day, she was placed on a five-day remand after being produced before a Dhaka court.

On March 21, the ACC filed a case against Shuvra on charge of embezzling Tk 87.6 crore from ILFS Ltd.

Meanwhile, another accused Nahida Runal, former head of business of ILFS Ltd, gave a detailed description of how PK Halder took ILFS Ltd in his grip.

Nahida joined as an officer of Industrial and Infrastructure

Development Finance Company (IIDFC) Limited's Chattogram branch in 2008 when PK Halder was its deputy managing director.

PK Halder later joined Reliance Finance as its managing director in 2009. Nahida also joined Reliance in December 2010 as assistant manager of loan division.

In 2011, Rashedul Haque, who is also accused in the case, joined as senior vice-president of Reliance Finance. Rashedul later joined ILFS Ltd as its managing director in June 2015.

Nahida, upon the directives of PK Halder, joined ILFS Ltd as its head of business in July 2015.

The accused said she accompanied PK Halder abroad at least on 20 occasions.

"Upon his [PK Halder] directives, Rashedul approved and disbursed loans without any collateral to different persons and organisations," sources said, quoting Nahida.

"A borrower of ILFS Ltd and close aide of PK Halder, Swapan Kumar Mistry gave Nahida around Tk 15 crore for doing business," sources said.

She invested the money in the stock market.

The commission has so far arrested 11 people, including Shuvra, in connection with PK Halder cases. Of the arrestees, eight have already confessed to their involvement in the cases.

PK Halder took loans from financial institutions against at least two dozen non-existent companies created by him. In some cases, he used part of the funds to repay instalments of loans taken against his several fictitious firms.

Master of swindling

FROM PAGE 1

Moin told reporters while replying to queries at the briefing held at the Rab's Media Centre in Karwan Bazar.

"He has embezzled the hard-earned money of ordinary people under the guise of various different organisations involving housing, land projects, shops, and religious educational institutions. He has so far admitted to collecting Tk 110 crore," he said.

The Rab official said Ahsan allured people by using their religious sentiments.

He created his business strategy by targeting devotees and other ordinary people in different parts of Bangladesh and attracted investors with what he claimed was "Shariah-compliant interest free investment".

"This man used individuals involved in religious educational institutions, imams and others for making money. He also campaigned in Waz Mahfil. He enticed people with the promise of hefty profits per month by investing lakhs of taka," said the Rab director.

"Ragib Ahsan said he was able to get 10,000 customers in 2008. Now the number of customers is said to be around one lakh," Moin said.

There are at least 15 cases against him with different police stations, he added.

Talking to The Daily Star, Md Saifullah, one of the clients, said his father deposited over Tk 2 crore worth the MLM company.

"Ahsan brought famous preachers from Dhaka and other places in a Waz Mahfil in our area. There, they campaigned for the company and assured that it is a Shariah-based investment. He promised to give an excessive profit on the deposit scheme,

And people made investment," said Saifullah.

He said 16 out of 17 establishments of Ahsan Group are not in operation anymore.

"My father has fallen ill after losing his hard-earned money," he said.

The Rab official said Ragib Ahsan used to deceive the customers in various ways. In some cases, he forges cheques. Many went to bank to collect their cash but the cheques bounced.

The victims also said many of them were intimidated, humiliated and tortured.

Many of them held human chains, press conferences and spoke to the media demanding justice, he added.

He said there are about 300 employees at the Ahsan Group. These employees were not paid any salary, but used to get 20 percent commission on the customer's investment. As a result, he was able to increase the number of customers quickly.

Rab said Ahsan had his close relatives at the company's important positions.

Victims claim that by collecting money in the name of these organisations, he has acquired property and land in the name of family members and close relatives, according to Rab.

Ahsan started his education in a madrasa in Pirojpur in 1986 and completed Hadith in Daura from a madrasa in Hathazari in 1996-1999 and became Mufti from a madrasa in Khulna in 1999-2000 before began working in a madrasa in Pirojpur, according to Rab.

"The victims told us that Ahsan indulged in innumerable irregularities to swindle the money from them," said the Rab director.



Showing complete disregard for health safety rules, guardians crowd the road in front of the main entrance to the city's Tejgaon College as admission seekers come out after taking the Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS) entrance exam yesterday. The test, delayed due to the pandemic, was held across the country. PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Two crore doses every month

FROM PAGE 1

September and November -- two crore shots a month.

Apart from this, there will be 10.50 crore doses of Sinopharm and Sinovac vaccines from Covax. Hopefully, those will start arriving next month, they added.

"We have already agreed to purchase 10.50 crore doses [of Sinopharm and Sinovac] from Covax at a reasonable price which will arrive in the fourth quarter of this year," said the health minister.

Moreover, the country will get five crore free vaccine doses from Covax by the end of this year, he added.

The government has the capacity to administer four crore doses per month but could not do that due to the vaccine shortage.

"We are preparing the vaccination campaign plan, targeting two crore doses a month," said Dr Shamsul Haque, member secretary of the Covid-19 Vaccine Management Taskforce Committee of DGHS.

Meanwhile, Hualong Yan, deputy chief of mission at the Chinese Embassy in Dhaka, said yesterday that 54 lakh Sinopharm vaccine doses of commercial purchase will be arriving Dhaka early morning today.

"As a strategic partner of Bangladesh, China will always remain the most reliable supplier whatever and whenever our Bangladeshi friend needs," he wrote in a Facebook post.

The country has so far received

around 3.90 crore doses of different brands from various sources, according to the DGHS.

Around 2.01 crore people have got their first dose while around 1.25 crore people got both doses. Only around six percent of the target -- inoculating 80 percent of the total population aged 18 and above -- has been met.

Health officials say they are working to reduce the disparity in vaccination between urban and rural areas.

"We will focus more on vaccinating the rural people as a huge number of them are yet to be inoculated," said a DGHS official engaged in the vaccination campaign, wishing not to be named.

He added the loopholes they found in last month's special vaccination drive have already been addressed. "We hope this time it will be smooth."

The country has suffered frequent hiccups in its regular mass inoculation campaigns mainly due to a dearth of doses caused by a yawning gap between commitments and compliance in vaccine supply.

The regular vaccine campaign remained postponed for around a month due to a sudden suspension of vaccine supply from Serum Institute of India.

Bangladesh bought three crore doses of Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine from Serum but so far received only 70 lakh doses with the last consignment arriving in March.

Besides, the government also did not

get the promised amount of vaccines from Covax.

Because of the shortage of shots, it also could not continue the special vaccination campaigns at union level that started on August 7.

The government launched vaccination on February 7 for people aged 65 and above, and then gradually lowered the age bar to 25. The bar was further brought down to 18 years to include university students in the coverage.

Currently, over two crore people, including the vulnerable ones, await their first jab weeks after registration.

Once the vaccination of two crore people starts from next month, the sufferings will come to an end, health officials hope.

Bangladesh has been witnessing a gradual decline in the number of Covid deaths and infections over the last two weeks after a new coronavirus variant, detected in May, ravaged the country in June and July.

The number of deaths shot up to over 200 a day at that time with the number of casualties continued at over 100 for several weeks.

However, deaths from the deadly virus came down to 38 in the last 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, lowest in the last three months.

The total death count stands at 26,832, said a press release issued by the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Not more than 3 classes a day

FROM PAGE 1

government on September 5 decided to resume in-person classes at schools in phases.

According to the decision, candidates of Higher Secondary Certificate, Secondary School Certificate exams of 2021 and 2022 and this year's Primary Education Completion Examination (PECE) would attend classes every day after the reopening of schools and colleges.

Students of classes 1 to 4 and 6 to 9 will have in-person classes once a week.

"Primary school students will have to attend three classes a day," Primary and Mass Education Ministry Additional Secretary Ratan Chandra Pandit told The Daily Star.

He said it would not be possible for them to resume classes at primary schools in the flood-affected areas tomorrow.

The schools would reopen immediately after the improvement of the flood situation there, he added.

Yesterday, the DPE issued an order to the field level officials to inform schoolteachers about the class routine of primary schools.

In the order, it recommended holding three classes a day for each grade.

Candidates of Primary Education Completion Examination, for students

near the end of their fifth year in primary school, will attend classes everyday while students of grade 1 to 4 will join classes once a week.

The grade-I students will attend classes on Tuesday, grade-II on Monday, grade-III on Sunday and grade-IV on Saturday. A 10-minute briefing on Covid awareness will take place every day at the onset of the day's educational activities, according to the routine.

Yesterday, the DPE issued another order stipulating responsibilities of field level officials, headmasters, teachers, guardians as well as students regarding running school activities amid the pandemic.

It asked teachers to keep the school shut in any areas that the government would declare a "red zone" considering Covid infection rate. The order said the authorities will have to ensure all students, teachers and staffers wear masks and maintain physical distancing at the classroom. It asked the authorities to take steps so that there is no crowding on the school premises, and only two students sit on each bench of a classroom.

The DPE further asked teachers to make sure that all, including students, enter the campus after their body temperatures are checked. Besides, handwashing facilities and cleanliness of the campus must be ensured.

HEALTH MINISTER ON CLOSURE

Speaking to reporters while visiting a Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS) entrance exam centre at the capital's Government Titumir College, Health Minister Zahid yesterday said schools and colleges were resuming classes as the daily Covid infection rate dropped.

"If we see an alarming increase in the infection rate [of Covid-19], the education ministry will decide on closing schools. We will give our recommendations," he said.

"We don't want our students to get infected [with Covid]."

Asked about the government's plan to vaccinate students aged under 18, Zahid said the World Health Organization has not approved Covid vaccination for people under 18, but some countries are inoculating children aged over 12.

"We are following the issue and a discussion with the WHO is underway. We will provide the vaccine if we get approval," he added.

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

Afghanistan at risk of total collapse: UN

FROM PAGE 1

The first civilian flight out of Kabul -- carrying more than 100 passengers -- landed in Qatar on Thursday. The White House said the Taliban had been "businesslike and professional" in allowing the flight to leave.

The International Monetary Fund has also blocked the Taliban from accessing some \$440m in new emergency reserves.

"The Taliban seeks international legitimacy and support. Our message is simple: any legitimacy and support will have to be earned," senior US diplomat Jeffrey DeLaurentis told the Security Council.

Russia and China, which has offered millions in emergency aid to the country, have both argued for the release of Afghanistan's frozen assets.

"These assets belong to Afghanistan and should be used for Afghanistan, not as leverage for threats or restraints," China's Deputy UN Ambassador Geng Shuang said.

Afghanistan's UN Ambassador Chulam Isaccai, who was appointed by the US-backed government that collapsed as the Taliban advanced, urged the Security Council to "withhold any recognition of any government in Afghanistan unless it's truly inclusive and formed on the basis of free will of the people."

Al Jazeera's Charles Stratford, reporting from the capital Kabul, said

18 million people rely on humanitarian aid on a daily basis in Afghanistan, from a population of 38 million people.

"It's a dire situation. There have been convoys coming across from Pakistan and we know that some NGOs have been using airports in other cities, like Mazar-e-Sharif, to try to get aid in," he said.

"We know there are ongoing discussions within the UN on how to increase the amount of aid.

"But of course, there are some very real problems, like the political situation: there are many Taliban officials in this interim government that are on a black list, one of whom, the interim interior minister, is on terror watch list -- so the issue is how to deal with that on an international political level."

'CREDIBLE ALLEGATIONS' The Taliban announced what it said was an interim government on Tuesday, which included no women and several ministers on UN sanctions lists.

Lyons said there were "credible allegations" that the Taliban has carried out reprisal killings of security forces despite promises of amnesty.

She also voiced concern over what she said was the rising harassment of the UN's Afghan staff, although she said the Taliban had largely respected the world organisation's premises.

Army chief embarks on US visit

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief of Army Staff General SM Shafiqul Islam was scheduled to leave home for the USA early today on an official visit at the invitation of the US Army.

He was scheduled to leave Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport at 1:40am, an Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) release said.

Gen Shafiqul Islam will attend the "Indo-Pacific Armies Chiefs Conference (IPACC)-2021", jointly organised by US Indo-Pacific Command and the Papua New Guinea Defense Force. Senior leaders from 17 countries of the Indo-Pacific region will join the event.

The future of operational environment will be discussed in this year's IPACC conference.

The Bangladesh army chief will participate in bilateral meetings with his counterparts from different countries at the conference.

The army chief's visit is expected to further strengthen ties between the Indo-Pacific countries and the Bangladesh Army and increase possibilities for mutual cooperation.

Gen Shafiqul Islam is scheduled to return home on September 18.

Daily deaths

FROM PAGE 1

26,832 people have so far died and 15,27,215 have tested positive since the first cases were reported in the country on March 8, 2020.

Yesterday's positivity rate was 8.65 percent while the overall positivity rate stands at 16.60 percent. A total of 26,878 samples were tested across the country in the 24 hours.

At least 3,856 Covid-19 patients have recovered during the period.

The total number of recoveries now stands at 14,72,067 and the recovery rate at 96.39 percent.

Among deaths recorded in the those 24 hours, 17 died in Dhaka division, 10 in Chattogram, five in Khulna, two each in Rajshahi and Mymensingh, and one each died in Rangpur and Sylhet divisions.

The DGHS said among the overall 26,832 fatalities, 11,677 breathed their last in Dhaka division, 5,420 in Chattogram, 1,985 in Rajshahi, 3,484 in Khulna, 918 in Barishal, 1,207 in Sylhet, 1,328 in Rangpur and 813 in Mymensingh divisions.

Of yesterday's 38 deceased, 20 were men and 18 women. Of them, three were aged between 31 and 40; five between 41 and 50; six between 51 and 60; 10 between 61 and 70; eight between 71 and 80, and six between 81 and 90, added the release.

Tigers end

FROM PAGE 1

as Bangladesh, having finished the Powerplay at 35/1, slumped to 39 for two after seven overs. The bounce on the surface was much more conducive to short playing but Naim departed next over after a 19-ball 23 to Ben Sears, nicking an angled delivery to the wicketkeeper.

Then Mushfiqur Rahim, who has been struggling with the bat ever since his return to the side, felt the pressure of the required rate creeping over 10 and was holed out at long off after scoring three. With the top-order failing to add quick runs while also losing wickets in the process of trying to up the ante, Bangladesh slumped to 46 for four after nine overs, making their struggles at the top apparent yet again.

After the Powerplay, no boundary came until the 12th over due to loss of wickets but Afif and skipper Mahmudullah Riyad fought back with a considerably meaningful partnership. The partnership added 63 runs off 43 deliveries before Riyad departed to Kuggeleijn. Afif for his part had powered to 49 off 33, laced with two fours and three sixes, but Kiwi bowlers kept picking up wickets from the other end to stem the flow of runs as Bangladesh reached 134 for eight.

Earlier, Finn Allen set the tone for a big total after New Zealand won the toss and elected to bat. Allen plundered Shoriful Islam for 19 runs in the fourth over to get the Kiwis off to a flyer. Shoriful got his revenge in the last over of the Powerplay, first bagging Rachin Ravindra and then Allen.

The right-handed Allen had however swung the momentum sharply in his side's favour with a 24-ball 41 before departing. Tom Latham found the right platform during a run-a-ball 35-run partnership with Henry Nicholls before adding another 43 runs with McConchie off just 21 deliveries. The two big stands saw New Zealand capitalise on their initial momentum and the captain remained unbeaten on a 37-ball 50 to take Kiwis to the highest score of 161 for five in the series.