

BANGLADESH UPDATE



1,212
New cases in 24hrs



15,54,371
Total cases



27,439
Deaths



15,12,681
Recoveries



47,63,652
Deaths



23,26,72,955
Total cases

LENDING AT HIGH INTEREST RATE

Shut them down, take legal action

HC asks govt about financial and microcredit institutions, cooperatives

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed the government to immediately shut down the offices of unauthorised financial and microcredit institutions and cooperative societies and to take appropriate legal actions against them for lending at high interest rates.

In response to a writ petition, the court also ordered the finance secretary and Bangladesh Bank to form a committee to look into the activities of such unauthorised institutions and cooperative societies and submit a report to the court in 45 days from formally receiving the order.

Moreover, the HC asked the microcredit regulatory authority to make a list of names of local money lenders that have no licence and give the list to the court in 45 days.

At the same time, the court issued a rule asking the respondents to show causes as to why their failure to monitor and supervise the activities of unauthorised institutions and cooperative societies should not be declared illegal.

Secretaries at the ministries of finance and social welfare, governor of Bangladesh Bank and microcredit regulatory authority's chairman are the respondents to the rule.

The HC bench of Justice Abu Taher Md Saifur Rahman and Justice Md Zakir Hossain issued the order and rule after hearing a writ petition seeking an order to ban informal money lending businesses.

During the hearing, lawyer Syed Sayedul Haque Suman told the HC bench on September 20 that unauthorised financial institutions

have embezzled crores of Tk from the people in the name of money lending. Jubok, which had misappropriated Tk 2,600 crore in 2006, had no licence to as a lender, he said.

Syed Sayedul Haque Suman, on September 7, submitted the petition as a public interest litigation to the HC -- also challenging the failure and inaction of the respondents regarding informal moneylenders from lending money with exorbitant interest rates.

The petitioner also sought a directive from the HC on the respondents to identify the unauthorised moneylenders across the country.

Informal money lending businesses are present at every village across the country in the name of cooperative societies, the petition mentioned.

Many people also individually run money lending businesses and take high interest rates, it said. Such individuals collect weekly and monthly instalments from borrowers even though they have no registration to do this. Poor borrowers often become hostage to the lenders and end up being destitute.

A borrower reportedly has to give Tk 500 to Tk 1000 in interest every week for a loan of Tk 10,000, Sayedul Haque Suman said in the petition, adding that such money lending businesses are illegally functioning in broad daylight and need to be banned.

He also requested the HC to issue a rule asking the respondents to show causes as to why the failure and inaction of the respondents to prevent informal money lenders from lending money at high interest rates should not be declared illegal.



A TALE OF TWO REALITIES... Rakib Hossain shows his work to the teacher during class at the Nobab Katra Government Primary School near Zakir Raihan Road in the capital yesterday. Just a few months ago amid the pandemic-induced closure of schools in July, Rakib and his younger brother Rifat, inset, were selling masks on street corners in front of DMCH to help their parents make ends meet. Rifat is also studying in another class of the same school.



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

From ashes she rises and prevails

FROM PAGE 1

Once dubbed as a "bottomless basket" by former US secretary of state Henry Kissinger, Bangladesh is now among the most vibrant economies in the world. It is now considered a "role model" for the strides it made in various sectors including education, health, agriculture, and empowerment of women.

And for that to happen, she was unwavering in the face of numerous odds.

Of all she has done, infrastructure development might be one of her brightest legacies.

Aware of the challenges of globalisation in the 21st century, she placed a roadmap in her party's manifesto "Charter for Change - Vision 2021" before the 2008 election. After having made good on many of her pledges from Vision-2021, she placed in 2014 "Vision 2041" to help Bangladesh graduate to a developed country.

The longest-serving prime minister of Bangladesh, Hasina turns 75 today. The eldest among the five children of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib, she was born at Tungipara in Gopalganj on September 28 in 1947.

She spent her childhood at Tungipara and started her schooling there. When Bangabandhu was elected a legislator, his family moved to Dhaka in 1954.

Hasina got into student politics while in college and was elected the vice-president of the students' union at Government Intermediate College (now Begum Badrunnesa Government Girls' College) for the 1966-67 term.

As a student leader, she took part in the Six-Point Movement of 1966 and the student movement of 1969, which saw off the Ayub Khan regime.

In 1968, Hasina got married to nuclear scientist Dr Wazed Miah. She and her younger sister Rehana survived the August 15 bloodbath as they were in the then West Germany.

After a long exile, she returned to the country from India in 1981.

Since then, she has survived at least 19 attempts on her life, the worst being on August 21, 2004, when grenades were hurled at an Awami League rally.

In 1981, while in exile in India, Hasina was elected the president of the Awami League, one of the oldest political parties in the country. She has been leading the AL since then and has taken it to power four times.

During her term as head of the government, Hasina initiated war crimes trials, setting up two special tribunals. Several notorious war criminals were executed after completion of the trial proceedings. Also, under her watch, the trial of Bangabandhu murder case was completed after the scrapping of the infamous indemnity ordinance.

Since being elected the prime minister in 2009, Hasina has indeed been steering the country towards development.

However, like any other leader, Hasina has her share of controversies. There are allegations that under her tenure the country has witnessed some backsliding with regard to public trust in the electoral system and the rule of law; it has also seen weakening of institutions, shrinking of space for media and freedom of expression. And a functional parliament remains a far cry.

Prime minister for three times on the trot and only two years away from the next general election, Hasina now faces a stiff challenge: a seal of people's approval.

Only a free and fair election can help ensure that development and democracy go hand in hand.

Unusual UN meet to close without Taliban, Myanmar speeches

AFP, United Nations

The UN General Assembly in New York was set to end yesterday but without speeches by those in power in Afghanistan and Myanmar, one of many quirks at this year's diplomatic marathon that saw 100 leaders defy coronavirus fears to meet in person.

The UN representative of Afghanistan's former regime was expected to defy the Taliban with an address yesterday after the group requested its new foreign minister be allowed to speak instead.

The Taliban wrote a letter to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres last Monday requesting that Amir Khan Muttaqi be allowed to "participate."

The letter noted that Ghulam Isacqai, Afghanistan's UN envoy under Ashraf Ghani, who was ousted last month, "no longer represents" Afghanistan at the United Nations.

The plea was due to be considered by a committee that included the United States, Russia and China, but a UN official told AFP the meeting didn't take place.

A diplomat said the Taliban sent their request "too late," paving the way for Isacqai, whom the UN still recognizes as Afghanistan's representative, to speak.

If he does take the opportunity, he could demand a strengthening of sanctions against the Taliban, as he did during a Security Council meeting on September 9.

The week of speeches was originally due to end with Afghanistan, Myanmar and Guinea, but the situation of the

latter two countries also stirred up further intrigue going into the last day.

A high-level UN diplomat told AFP that "an agreement" had been reached between the United States, Russia and China preventing Myanmar's UN ambassador -- an outspoken supporter of the democracy movement who has refused junta orders to quit -- from speaking.

Kyaw Moe Tun, chosen by former leader Aung San Suu Kyi, is supported by the international community and has retained his seat at the United Nations following the February 1 military coup.

In May, the junta appointed a former general to replace him, but the United Nations has not yet approved the appointment.

Kyaw Moe Tun was the victim of a recent alleged conspiracy foiled by US investigators that plotted to either force him to resign or kill him if he refused.

He told AFP his plans for the General Assembly were "low profile."

Diplomats are, however, expecting to hear from Guinea's representative to the UN, Aly Diane, even though he is an appointee of the former president who was deposed in a military coup earlier this month.

It is another curiosity at this year's high-level meet, which saw some 100 leaders descend on the UN headquarters after last year's event was mostly virtual.

"How encouraging to see the General Assembly meet again in person," Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo said Friday.

Target now 75 lakh jobs

FROM PAGE 1

said the government set the target to inoculate 80 lakh people today.

He also mentioned that students aged 18 and above who have registered would also be vaccinated.

However, there was no mention of students in the DG's briefing as well as in the DGHS circular yesterday.

Around 80,000 health staffs and volunteers will work in 16,153 vaccination booths during the campaign.

"The local health officials and other stakeholders, however, can increase the number of vaccination target and booths, if needed," Khurshid said.

For today's special campaign, the government will mainly use the Sinopharm vaccines.

There will be sitting arrangements in each centre for people to wait for half an hour to check any health issues after being vaccinated. A special team will also be present at each centres to tackle any side effects.

"Whatever the situation may be -- rain, cyclone, or anything else -- there is no way to stop the vaccination campaign," Khurshid said, adding that the EPI programme (regular

vaccination) must continue.

The DGHS runs different vaccination programmes round the year under the Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI).

The health DG said they have already held coordination and advocacy meetings with local public representatives and civil society members to carry out the special campaign.

Besides, announcements were made through loudspeakers in this regard.

25 DIE, 1,212 GET COVID
Meanwhile, 25 people died from Covid-19 in 24 hours preceding 8:00am yesterday, said a DGHS press release.

A total of 1,212 people tested positive for the virus during the period.

With the latest counts, the total number of Covid deaths in the country rose to 27,439 and the number of cases went up to 15,52,563.

The death rate stands at 1.77 percent. Against a total of 27,787 samples tested during the 24-hour period, the positivity rate was 4.36 percent. The rate remains below five percent for five days in a row.

Of the 25 deceased, 13 were males and 12 females.

Half yet not registered

FROM PAGE 1

UGC officials said about 24.34 lakh students -- around 54 percent of the total 44.34 lakh studying in universities and their affiliated colleges -- did not register with Suorkkha or the UGC weblink until yesterday.

Most of those students are from colleges under the National University. So, reopening those colleges would be a challenge, said a UGC member, adding that the registration rates among public and private university students were comparatively better.

On August 26, a meeting attended by officials of the two education ministries and other stakeholders had decided that in-person classes at universities and their affiliated colleges would resume from mid-October after vaccinating all students by September.

The government later moved away from the stance. On September 14, it said any university can resume in-person classes if all its students complete the online registration by September 27.

REGISTRATION

One-hundred and seven private universities, 50 public universities and their affiliated colleges have 44.34 lakh students in total, according to the latest UGC annual report.

There are about 3 lakh students at public universities, excluding the National University, the Open University, Islamic Arabic and medical universities.

The private universities have some 3.50 lakh students and colleges affiliated with universities including National University have 37.84 lakh students.

About 90 to 95 percent of about 15,300 public university teachers have received both doses of the vaccine, said UGC officials.

UGC acting secretary Ferdous Zaman yesterday afternoon said about 18 lakh students have so far registered for the vaccination with the government app.

Of them, about 5 lakh students received the first dose and 1.5 lakh got both doses, he said.

UGC officials said most of the students not registering were from the

NU.

Contacted, NU Registrar Mahfuz Al-Hossain said at least 21 lakh students of colleges under the university did not have NID cards.

"These students are facing trouble while registering for the job. We have instructed all students to register with UGC-provided weblink," he said.

The UGC had asked all public universities to provide it with the number of students without the identification card. Till Sunday, 35 public universities informed the UGC that 15,093 students did not have the card.

Meanwhile, 48 private universities informed the UGC that about 21,000 students did not have the NID card, said UGC sources.

In line with a decision of the meeting on September 14, UGC opened the weblink where university students without NID cards can register and then the UGC would forward lists with their details to the health authorities.

After that, those students will be able to complete the registration using the government's Suorkkha app.

UGC had asked all students to complete their registration by visiting the weblink by today. UGC Member Prof Sazzad Hossain yesterday said around two lakh students registered with the link.

"The registration process using the weblink will continue," he said.

PUBLIC UNIVS PREPARE FOR REOPENING

Dhaka University on Sunday reopened the central and other libraries for masters and honours fourth year students, who had received at least one dose of the vaccine.

It will reopen dormitories for such students on October 5.

On Friday, Bangladesh Agricultural University reopened its halls for students of masters and honours final year. They will also have to take at least one dose.

Patuakhali Science and Technology University is set to resume in-person classes for vaccinated students of masters and honours seventh semester from September 30.

The government resumed in-person

Ex-DU student found dead in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A former Dhaka University student, who was preparing for job exams, was found dead at an apartment in the capital's Chankarpool area yesterday afternoon.



Masud Al Mahdi alias Apu, 27, completed his masters in Mass Communication and Journalism in 2018.

He had participated in different movements on the campus and was part of the Ducusu polls, his friends said.

His roommate Al Imran said three people, including Apu, used to live in a room on the seventh floor of an eight-storey building. The top five floors of the building are used as "mess" where nearly 200 students live.

"When I came to the room to have lunch, I found the door locked from inside. Then through the window, I saw him hanging from the ceiling fan. We broke open the door and informed police about it," he said.

On information, police rushed there and sent the body to Dhaka Medical College morgue in the evening for autopsy.

His friends and juniors at the journalism department suspect he was murdered.

They demanded impartial investigation into the incident.

Jasim Uddin Molla, deputy commissioner of Lalbagh Division Police, said the roommates of the victim said he died by suicide.

"We have collected evidence from the spot. We will be able to say for sure whether it was suicide or murder after investigation," he said.

Police recover body in building in Chattogram

Victim was the owner

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cg

Police recovered a body from an under-construction building in Khulshi's Jalalabad area in the port city yesterday.

The dead was identified as Md Nezam Pasha, 65, the owner of the six-storey under-construction building where his body was found.

Md Shahinuazzaman, officer-in-charge of Khulshi Police Station, said Nezam had been constructing this building after he bought a piece of land in the area and he would come every week to pay off the workers and inspect the construction.

"On Sunday, he came to visit the site. After Asr prayers, he said he had chest pain and went to the building's caretaker Hasan's room to take some rest. Since then, Nezam had been unreachable and after finding his phone switched off, his family members went to the site yesterday and found his body."

Nezam's hands and legs were tied and the body was kept under garbage.

On information, police rushed to the spot and sent the body to Chattogram Medical College Hospital (CMCH) for autopsy.

"Primarily, it seems that he was strangled to death. There are injury marks on his back too," the OC said.

He added that Nezam's cash and the mobile phone remained missing and caretaker Hasan has been on the run since the incident.

Police were investigating whether it was a planned murder or an act of extortion as the family alleged that local goons earlier demanded money from them.

A murder case was filed in this connection with Khulshi police.

SSC exams

FROM PAGE 1

and written tests. Covid-19 health guidelines will be strictly followed during these examinations, the authorities said.

The results of the three optional subjects and the Grade Point Average (GPA) and the students' previous public examinations, including Junior School Certificate (JSC) tests, will be taken into consideration while preparing the final results.

On July 15, Education Minister Dipu Moni said SSC examinations would be held in November and HSC in December if the Covid situation improved.

Around 22 lakh students are expected to take the SSC and its equivalent exams and 15 lakh the HSC and its equivalent tests this year.

Last year, the education ministry held the SSC tests in February, but the HSC exams had to be postponed. The HSC results were prepared by averaging the grades in Junior School Certificate (JSC) and SSC tests.

[From newswire.ca, straitsimes.com]