

BANGLADESH UPDATE



1,310
New cases in 24hrs



15,53,873
Total cases



27,470
Deaths



15,13,876
Recoveries

GLOBAL UPDATE



4,782,874
Deaths



233,792,867
Total cases

Covid transmission declining

Says DGHS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With Covid-19 transmission rates declining – yesterday's daily positivity rate of 4.12 percent marked the seventh consecutive day of sub-five percent infection rates – Bangladesh has ranked 39th among 53 countries in Bloomberg's Covid Resilience Ranking for September.

In the 24 hours preceding 8:00am yesterday, the Directorate General of Health Services reported 17 deaths – the lowest number since May 26 this year, when there were also 17 fatalities from Covid.

Bangladesh is ahead of India and Pakistan in the Bloomberg rankings published on Tuesday.

The country has moved up five places from its August ranking of 44 as it recorded its lowest number of average daily deaths in nearly four months and schools reopened after being shut for more than 500 days, according to the Bloomberg report.

The Covid Resilience Ranking is a monthly snapshot of where the virus is being handled the most effectively with the least social and economic upheaval.

Compiled using 12 data indicators – including containment, quality of healthcare, vaccination coverage, overall mortality and progress toward restarting travel and easing border curbs – the ranking depicts how the world's 53

biggest economies are responding best to the once-in-a-generation threat.

In the 24 hours, the DGHS reported 1,178 new Covid cases out of 28,599 samples tested countrywide.

DGHS officials, meanwhile, said transmission of novel coronavirus has been showing a downward trend throughout September.

"We have been observing for the past month that the Covid-19 transmission trend, which was increasing earlier, is declining," Dr Nazmul Islam, spokesperson and a line director of the DGHS, said in an online briefing yesterday.

The 17 deaths recorded yesterday – 10 male and seven female – bring the overall number of Covid deaths in the country to 27,487, around 1.77 percent of all confirmed cases.

Meanwhile, the total number of confirmed cases rose to 15,55,051, since the first three cases were reported on March 8 last year.

Since early August, the positivity rate has been on the decline following spikes in deaths and infections in the wake of the countrywide spread of the more contagious Delta variant throughout June and July.

According to the World Health Organization, a positivity rate of below five percent for two weeks in a row indicates that transmission is under control.

China clamps down on pop culture in bid to 'control' youth

AFP, Beijing

From reality TV to online gaming and even pop fandom, China's leadership has launched a crackdown on youth culture in what experts say is a bid to ramp up "ideological control".

In a series of sweeping measures, Beijing has moved to check what it considers the excesses of modern entertainment, and urged social media platforms to promote patriotic content.

Authorities say they are targeting unhealthy values and "abnormal aesthetics", but the moves are a bid

to check outside influences and snuff any resistance to the Communist Party, analysts say.

The changes represent a "very concerted effort at ramping up of ideological control," Cara Wallis, a scholar of media studies at Texas A&M University, told AFP.

Colourful and often outlandish entertainment formats have mushroomed in China over the past decade, including boot camp-style talent TV shows inspired by Japanese and Korean pop culture and celebrity gossip.

Embezzlement planned

FROM PAGE 1

Its Managing Director Jashim Uddin Chishty and his family are absconding since July.

Since June 30, the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of the police has been investigating money laundering allegations against Dhamaka Shopping.

On September 9, the CID filed a Tk 116.68 crore money laundering case against the company with Banani Police Station.

The platform, which has about 3 lakh customers and 600 vendors, owes Tk 200 crore to merchants, Tk 150 crore to customers and another Tk 35-40 crore in refund cheques to customers, according to Moin.

One such aggrieved customer, who is owed Tk 11.55 lakh, filed a case on September 23 against 11 executives of the e-commerce platform with Tongi West Police Station.

The accused include Chishty; Saida Rokshana Khanam, wife of Chishty and director of Invariant Telecom; Tashrif Ridwan Chishty, son of Chishty and chairman of Invariant Technologies; Mashfique Ridwan Chishty, another son of Chishty and director of Invariant Technologies; Nazim Uddin Asif, managing director of Invariant Technologies; and Safwan Ahmed, director of Dhamaka

Shopping and Invariant Telecom.

Following this, the elite force yesterday arrested Sirajul Islam Rana, Dhamaka Shopping's chief operating officer; Imtiaz Hasan Shobuj, its head of mobile fashion & lifestyle category; and Ibrahim Shwapon, its head of electronics category, from the capital's Tejaon area.

The CID investigators found out that Invariant Telecom took permission from the Office of the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms on February 25, 2015 for importing and exporting software, telecom systems, smartphones, IP phones and internet services equipment.

Later in October last year, the company started the e-commerce platform Dhamaka Shopping without any approval.

The customers' money deposited in Invariant Telecom's accounts with three private banks were transferred to the accounts of the other companies owned by Chishty: Micro Trade, Invariant Technologies and Micro Trade Food and Beverage.

Of the sum, Tk 58.5 crore went to Invariant Technology's accounts, Tk 42.17 crore to another account of Invariant Telecom, Tk 2.29 crore to the Micro Trade Food and Beverage and Tk 23.5 crore to Micro Trade.

Rohingya leader Mohibullah

FROM PAGE 1

Rohingya Society for Peace & Human Rights (ARSPH) and played a vital role in the Rohingya repatriation process, according to police.

Rohingya sources said Mohibullah was a very popular leader in the community and had a great role in uniting Rohingyas who fled Myanmar fearing persecution by the security forces of that country.

The sources said Rohingyas had staged a mass rally led by Mohibullah voicing their demands, which made headlines.

He also visited the White House in July 2019 and talked to former president Donald Trump about the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar.

However, talking to the Daily Star, Rahman Nasir Uddin, professor of Chittagong University's (CU's) anthropology department and also someone who has been researching the Rohingya crisis for two decades, said, "Rohingya repatriation will face difficulties now as Mohibullah was a renowned Rohingya leader.

"In the last few days, he mobilised and geared up Rohingyas to raise their voices for repatriation, drawing international attention. Rohingyas who are against Rohingya terrorist groups, relied on Mohibullah and listened to his directives in moments of crises," he said.

"ASRPH is an internationally

recognized organisation, the fate of which now hangs in balance as there is no alternative to Mohibullah in the community," said the teacher.

Human rights activist Noor Khan Liton, who worked with Mohibullah, said the Rohingya leader was one of the progressive forces and mobilised people of the community in demanding repatriation and justice for the genocide against them.

"There is no doubt that extremist forces are behind his killing," Liton told The Daily Star.

LOSS OF A VITAL VOICE FOR ROHINGYAS

In a statement issued by Human Rights Watch after Mohibullah's death, Meenakshi Ganguly, South Asia director of the organisation, said Mohibullah was someone who "always defended the rights of the Rohingya to safe and dignified returns and to have a say in the decisions concerning their lives and future."

"His killing is a stark demonstration of the risks faced by those in the camps who speak up for freedom and against violence," she said, adding that his death undermines Rohingyas' struggle for greater rights and their efforts to safely return to Myanmar.

"Bangladesh authorities should urgently investigate Mohibullah's killing along with other attacks on Rohingya activists in the camps."



Commuters in the capital endured excessive traffic jams on the streets yesterday. The photo was taken on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue at Farmgate in the afternoon.

PHOTO: STAR

Riddled with graft

FROM PAGE 1

teacher appointments, transfers and other [administrative] actions. We have seen lack of good governance, transparency and accountability in the secondary education sector," TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman said at the programme.

Commenting on the lack of a system of proper accountability, monitoring and supervision in the sector, Iftekhar said: "E-GP [Electronic Government Procurement] is widely used in government procurement, but it has not been introduced in the secondary education sector yet. As a result, irregularities and corruption are going on, which is a real concern and becoming a major obstacle in building a knowledge-based society."

THE STUDY
TIB collected information from 54 secondary level educational institutions between May and October 2019. Of the schools, 36 were non-government MPO schools and the rest are government schools from 18 upazilas.

They collected information through focus group interviews of 325 regional and field level officers of Department of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE), teachers, school managing committee members and others. They also collected information from annual and other reports of secondary level education offices till September 15 this year.

Taslima Akter, a researcher of the study, said unauthorised financial transactions between Tk 3.5 lakh and Tk 15 lakh take place for the appointment of head teachers or assistant head teachers to a school.

She said the head teacher or assistant head teacher needs to pay the amount to local political leaders, members of school managing committee or governing body.

Illegal financial transactions of Tk 50,000 to Tk 2 lakh take place when a Non-Government Teachers' Registration & Certification Authority (NTRCA) recommends a teacher to a school. In this case, the aspiring teacher needs to pay the money to the head teacher, members of the school managing committee or the governing body.

Unauthorised financial transactions between Tk 2 lakh and Tk 3 lakh take place for people to become librarians in

schools. The aspirant pays the money to the head teacher, members of school managing committee or the governing body.

Unauthorised financial transactions between Tk 50,000 and Tk 5 lakh take place when a DIA official goes for school audits. School teachers pay the amount to DIA officials.

A non-government teacher has to pay Tk 5,000 to Tk 1 lakh to DSHE officials and staffers for inclusion into the MPO scheme, Taslima said.

Illegal transactions of Tk 1 lakh to Tk 2 lakh centring teacher transfer and transactions of Tk 1 lakh to Tk 5 lakh take place when someone seeks academic approval for the school. Victims pay the amount to the DSHE and education board officials, said Taslima.

The study also found an instance when a project director of ICT education at the secondary and higher secondary levels was made "Officer on Special Duty" when allegations of corruption surfaced against him.

There are specific allegations of officials of the same project spending Tk 2.25 crore on training manuals, certificates and training materials without tenders.

There are also allegations that project officials took "honorariums" without attending the training.

The study said supervision of academic and other activities at schools by supervisors are facing a lot of hurdles as many positions of overseers are currently vacant.

The study said around 38 percent of 64 district education officers, 64 percent of 513 upazila assistant education officer posts and 12 percent of 513 upazila education officer posts are vacant now.

Moreover, 58 percent of auditors out of 130 positions at the DIA are also vacant now.

The study said the Covid-19 pandemic has brought new challenges to the education sector. It said many students cannot take online classes due to lack of access to digital devices and internet facilities.

It also said the difference in education access between rural and urban, rich and poor has widened further and many students have been facing learning losses.

Iftekharuzzaman said although nearly 11 years have passed since the formulation of the National Education Policy, many important issues have not been implemented and progress to make an education law was not at the expected level.

Comparing to the international standards, budget allocations in education is inadequate and as a result, achievement in the infrastructural and institutional facilities sector is unfulfilled.

Facilities and scope of promotion of teachers is also limited. Many teachers' salaries, allowances and incentives are comparatively less here than in other sectors, he said, adding that "as a result, the chances of excellence in secondary education are naturally low".
WHAT AUTHORITIES SAY
DSHE Director (administration) Prof Shahedul Khabir Chowdhury, Dhaka Education Board Chairman Prof Nehal Ahmed and DIA Director Prof Waliulla Md Ajmotgir all said they would be able to comment only after seeing the TIB report.

They, however, said they will take actions against officials involved in irregularities and corruption if they get specific allegations.

Shahedul and Nehal both raised questions about the credibility of the TIB study. "All these allegations are false," Nehal said.

"Nationally, there are some questions about TIB study and methodology," Shahedul added.

"I can't comment about the past but after joining DIA in December 2019 I have transferred many from their workstations," Waliulla said.

RECOMMENDATIONS

TIB in the study recommended proper planning in light of the education policy, and implementation of the policy. It also suggested taking steps to increase capacity of teachers to take online classes, bringing back all students who are at risk of dropping out, decreasing rural-urban and other gaps in education.

It also suggested increasing the education budget, formation of a teacher appointment commission to appoint non-government teachers and creating scope for promotion of teachers.

How many must die before they wake up?

FROM PAGE 1

"It has been just two years since we were handed over the drains. What did the city corporation do before that? It did not build any safety enclosures along the drains," he said.

Besides, it is the duty of the city corporation to keep the drains clean, he said.

Asked why CDA did not build any such enclosures, he said they would start putting up fences once a project to mitigate waterlogging is completed. For the time being, they will set up temporary safety enclosures along under-construction drains.

When queried further what caused them to make delay in setting up the temporary fences for the safety of pedestrians, he chose to keep mum.

He claimed that the drain where Monday's incident took place was a minor one and thus it was completely under the jurisdiction of CCC.

Rafiqul Islam, chief engineer of CCC, did not respond when these correspondents tried to reach him over the phone.

CCC Mayor Rezaul Karim while visiting the spot Tuesday took a rather indirect line to shift the blame on CDA.

He told reporters he won't say who was responsible for the incident. There was a railing along the drain but it was removed when the construction work of an elevated expressway began.

"If there were a warning sign or a red flag, people would have been alerted to the danger. So, there was some negligence on part of those [CDA] who are constructing the expressway," he added.

Locals and eyewitnesses say CDA took the slab off the drain where the accident took place and downsized the footpath to 1.5 feet from around 5 feet.

Visiting the spot yesterday, it was seen that the CCC has erected a

bamboo fence on the spot.

Parimal Barua, a shopkeeper in Agrabad Badamtali area, said at least seven people, including two women, fell into the drain on the same spot in the last five days.

"We could rescue them somehow," he said, adding, "Most of those accidents occurred at night as the place remains dark and pedestrians often fail to notice the drain."

As per the last annual report of CCC, the port city has 946 kilometres of drains, most of which are open, narrowed and clogged with plastic and other trash.

CDA has been implementing a project to mitigate waterlogging in the port city. And CCC has handed over the drains to CDA as it has been widening the drains to facilitate the water flow into rivers under the project.

CDA will renovate and expand 1,008 kilometres of drains crisscrossing the city.

The drains that have been widened so far are left to lie open, making it difficult for pedestrians to locate them when it's dark and when the areas are waterlogged.

During a visit across the city, two kilometres of drains under CDA was found open from the city's Dui Number Gate to Bahaddardarhat. The area is exposed to severe waterlogging. The drains along Agrabad's Access Road, Port Connecting Road, and part of Sheikh Mujib Road were found open too.

Shahidul Islam Swapan, a resident in Bahaddardarhat area, told The Daily Star it was really tough to tell a drain from a street during waterlogging.

"If there is at least a warning sign, people would be able to avoid slipping into the drains," he said.

Town planner engineer Subhash Barua said the terms and conditions of any public project given to a

contractor clearly state that public safety has to be maintained strictly during the work. But in many CDA projects, contractors are seen violating the instructions, he said.

"Drains and canals are left open, posing risk of accidents to the pedestrians," he said adding, "CCC also cannot skirt the responsibility as it has left most of the drains without lids and railings."

In the meantime, people are dying falling into drains.

On August 15, a vegetable vendor, Saleh Ahmed, 50, slipped into a drain in the city's Muradpur area. Firefighters could not even locate his body and called off the rescue operation after three days.

Earlier on June 30, a CNG-run auto-rickshaw plunged into a drain in Sholosohor area. Two passengers died on the spot.

Hours after Sadiya's body was recovered, her classmates blocked Sheikh Mujib Road, protesting negligence by the authorities and demanding trial of those responsible for the death.

Land wasn't

FROM PAGE 1

Cooperatives Division, said while addressing a programme at Jashore's Monirampur upazila.

"It was a week ago. I did not share this with anyone as I felt ashamed," said Swapan who was speaking at the very sub-registry office premises.

"False information should not be disseminated. Here, a signboard says 'I and my office is free from corruption'," he said pointing to a signboard there.

"Does any one of Monirampur believe this? Does anybody believe that corruption does not take place in sub-registry office? I don't believe it..." he said.

A video clip of his speech was making the rounds in social media last night.

Modi greets Hasina on her birthday

UNB, Dhaka

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has greeted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on her 75th birthday.

"Warmest good wishes on your 75th birthday! Wish you many more years of health and success in service to the people of Bangladesh," reads the message shared by the Indian High Commission in Dhaka.

The Chinese Embassy in Dhaka also greeted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

"Our warmest wishes to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on her birthday! Wishing her a long and prosperous life with continued success in taking Bangladesh to great heights!" said the Embassy in a message shared on its verified page.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's birthday was on Tuesday.

DU ENTRANCE TESTS

Now being held outside Dhaka

Exams begin tomorrow

DU CORRESPONDENT

The tests for admission to Dhaka University's undergraduate courses will be held from tomorrow in all eight divisions for the first time.

The exams will be held from 11:00am to 12:30pm in eight public universities of those divisions.

On average, a total of 45 students will vie for each seat in the university.

"We have decided to hold the tests in eight divisional cities to reduce the hassle of spending time and money by the students and their guardians," DU Vice Chancellor Prof Akhtaruzzaman said at a press conference on the campus yesterday.

The universities outside Dhaka are: Chittagong University, Rajshahi University, Khulna University, Bangladesh Agricultural University in Mymensingh, Shahjalal University of Science and Technology in Sylhet, Barisal University, and Begum Rokeya University in Rangpur.

The exam for the "Ka" unit will be held on October 1, followed by "Kha" unit on October 2, "Ga" unit on October 22, and "Gha" unit on October 23. The exam for "Cha" unit will take place on October 9.

There will be multiple-choice questions (MCQs) and written questions in the exams for "Ka", "Kha", "Ga", and "Gha" units. The MCQ part will carry 60 marks, while the written part will be worth 40 marks.

A total of 3,24,340 students have applied for the test against the total 7,148 seats under five units.

Of them, the highest 1,64,606 students will take the entry tests in Dhaka while the lowest 7,091 will sit for the tests in Sylhet.

Should've held her

FROM PAGE 1

Sehrin Mahbub Sadiya, only 19, was a first-year honours student of computer science at International Islamic University in the port city.

While returning home with her grandfather and uncle from a doctor's chamber on Monday night, she slipped into a drain in Agrabad Badamtali area.

Firefighters were able to recover her body a few hours later, after removing a few tonnes of waste from the drain.

Sadiya was the eldest of four siblings and her parents' hopes and dreams revolved around her.

Now, a pall of gloom hangs over their house in Halishahar Mainnappara area.

Her mother Sheli Akter was still looking for her.

"My Sadiya, where have you gone?" she cried out. "She was the guardian of my other children. We shared many dreams ... of her getting higher education and bringing pride to our name and home ... It's all shattered now."

Sadiya's father Mohammad Ali stared blankly into space. When he did speak, he did so with immense pain.

"My daughter wanted to be a computer engineer. My Sadiya, where are you?"

Sadiya's younger sister Sinthia said she had requested her sister to take her along to the doctor's chamber. "Had I been there with her..." she stopped there as her voice began to choke.

Meanwhile, Sadiya's classmates held a protest in area where the incident took place, demanding punishment to those responsible for her death.

Chatogram City Corporation has cordoned off the spot with a fence after Sadiya's death.

Santosh Mallick, a local, could not hold back his anger: "Why did not they not put up a fence before such accidents occurred?... Most of drains and canals in the city have become death traps as they have been left open for year after year."