

BANGLADESH UPDATE

847
New cases in 24hrs

15,56,758
Total cases

27,531
Deaths

15,16,901
Recoveries

GLOBAL UPDATE

4,801,936
Deaths

234,841,335
Total cases

48 killed in custody, 'gunfights'

Finds ASK report covering Jan-Sept

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Forty-eight people died in custody of law enforcement agencies and in "gunfights" in the first nine months of this year, said rights body Ain o Salish Kendro yesterday.

Of them, 34 were killed in so-called "crossfire", "gunfight", "exchange of fire" or "encounters" with law enforcement agencies, nine in firing, while four from torture by law enforcement agencies. Besides, one died of a heart attack after being arrested as claimed by police, according to an ASK report.

The report, prepared based on the news run by different national dailies, said a journalist was shot dead while 154 others became victims of torture, attacks, cases and harassment during the period.

The rights body said incidents of rape, sexual harassment and violence against women, torture and acid throwing increased in the nine months compared to the corresponding period last year.

At least 1,085 women were raped in the last nine months. Of them, 203 were gang-raped, 39 were killed after being raped while eight died by suicide after being raped. Besides, 256 attempted rape incidents were reported during the period, found the report.

In the corresponding period last year, at least 975 women were raped, according to the report.

ASK further said 101 women became victims of sexual harassment in the nine months this year. Ten of them died by suicide while three were killed.

The report found that 71 men came under attack for protesting sexual harassment of women and four of them were killed. Besides, 527 women became victims of family violence. Of them, 303 were killed.

It said 182 women were tortured for dowry, including 60 killed. A total of 38 domestic helps were tortured and 12 of them were killed, the report mentioned.



Family members of former Army and Air Force men, who were hanged, jailed and sacked in the name of preventing a mutiny on October 2, 1977, form a human chain in front of the old Dhaka Central Jail yesterday, demanding posthumous trial of late president Ziaur Rahman.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Where shall we seek justice?

FROM PAGE 1

"I don't know any of them... They were wielding the guns," said Nasima.

Born in 1974, Mohib Ullah was the chairman of the Arakan Rohingya Society for Peace and Human Rights. He was shot dead around 8:30pm on Wednesday inside his bamboo-fenced office.

The 30 feet by 10 feet office, which is just steps away from the house, was under lock and key yesterday.

Recalling the fateful evening, Nasima said soon after his dinner, some of Mohib's followers came to see him. They were talking to him standing in front of the house.

Mohib told his followers that good days were coming as repatriation could take place soon and every Rohingya should be ready to go to Myanmar, said Nasima.

Mohib then asked them to go to the office to continue the conversation.

"In just five minutes, I heard the gunshots. I thought it was from the main street [around 100 feet away from the house]."

Eighteen-year-old Shamima then stepped outside and saw people running here and there.

She was about to go to Mohib's office when she fell to the ground after an unknown man kicked her, she said.

"I stood up and entered the office only to see my father lying on the floor in a pool of blood. I lifted his head up. His mouth was open and eyes closed."

Nasima then said there were around 10-12 people with her husband, but they ran away after the gunmen opened fire.

None of Mohib's followers came forward to take Mohib to the hospital

even after the assailants were gone, she alleged.

Mohib believed that no Rohingya would ever harm him, she said.

"He had confidence and trust in his community because he fought for them throughout his life."

Mohib spent most of his time for the community rather than his family, she said, he was a meritorious student and completed graduation from Akyab College in Myanmar.

"I studied upto class eight. I am from a town called Akyab. When he went there for higher studies, he came into close contact with our family and we got married."

After the Myanmar government restricted the movement of Rohingyas in Akyab, they could no longer go there.

"My parents are still there. I have no relatives here [in the refugee camp] from my side."

Mohib was a Rohingya leader in Myanmar, but the international recognition came after they travelled to Bangladesh.

"None of our family members or his brothers are capable [of being leaders]. I will not take any leadership role."

At this point, Shamima said, "We want nothing but safety. We want the safety of my family. We don't want justice. I want my father's dream to be fulfilled."

As these correspondents were leaving, Mohib's eight-year-old daughter Afnan was seen looking for her father, peeping into her father's office.

"Where has my father gone? When would he come back?" asked the mentally challenged girl.



Deceased Rohingya leader Mohib Ullah's wife Nasima, left, and daughter Shamima speak to The Daily Star at their home in Lambashia camp of Cox's Bazar yesterday. The family members are struggling to come to terms with his death.

PHOTO: STAR

Closure no solution

FROM PAGE 1

but the move put the students in uncertainty.

"We wanted [Farhana's] expulsion, not the university's closure," she said.

On September 26, the teacher asked university employees to cut the hair of male students who had long hair before they are allowed to enter examination halls.

She then herself cut the hair of many students, said the agitators.

Unable to bear the humiliation, one of the students tried to die by suicide, sparking protests.

A probe committee later found proof that she had indeed cut the students' hair against their will.

"We examined the university's CCTV footage which clearly shows Farhana Yeasmin Baten cutting the students' hair," said Laila Fardous Himel, chairman of Rabindra Studies department and the head of the five-member probe committee.

Amid the student protest, Farhana

announced stepping down as the head of the Department of History, Culture and Bangladesh Studies of the university.

On Thursday night, the university called an urgent meeting of its syndicate, which decided to close down the university and suspended Farhana.

Yesterday, the students besieged the acting VC, Prof Abdul Latif, and university officials to the building for hours.

Contacted, Rawshon Alom, acting proctor, said, "Students are continuing their demonstrations because they don't seem to understand the reality."

"The university authorities called an urgent syndicate meeting and took action against the teacher. A probe committee has already been investigating the incident. After getting the probe report, the university will take further action. We urge the students to have patience."

Budget boosted for job campaign

FROM PAGE 1

Each dose would cost around \$6, said the official.

Besides, the country is expected to get three crore doses of the single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine under the Covax facility by the first quarter of next year. The vaccine will be purchased using the World Bank funds, said finance ministry sources.

The government initially sought seven crore doses of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, called Janssen, but Covax primarily agreed to three crore doses.

The Covax facility is a global initiative coordinated by the World Health Organization, the Vaccine Alliance Gavi, and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations. The facility is working to ensure that low- and middle-income countries have equitable access to Covid-19 vaccines.

Other than the global arrangement, the government also secured 10.7 crore doses through bilateral arrangements. Of the doses, 7.7 crore will be purchased from Sinopharm and the rest will be from Serum Institute of India (SII).

The government has already paid Tk 3,310 crore from the government's own fund for this purpose.

"We have set aside an estimated Tk 4,250 crore for logistics like buying syringes and administering the jabs," said the finance ministry official.

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

Bangladesh started the mass vaccination programme on February 7 this year for people aged 65 and above with 70 lakh Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine shots, produced by SII.

In phases, the government eventually lowered the age bar to 18 years to include university students.

In November last year, the government had signed a tripartite deal with SII and its local distributor for purchasing 3 crore doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine in phases from January to June.

But the country suffered frequent hiccups in its mass inoculation campaigns, mainly due to shortage of doses caused by a yawning gap between supply commitments and actual delivery.

Serum delivered 70 lakh doses in two shipments in January and February, but stopped shipment since then as Covid cases surged in India.

Besides, the government is yet to get a quarter of the 6.8 crore free doses that Covax promised to deliver by June this year. Uncertainty remains over whether the global facility would be able to keep its commitment to supply all the doses by December this year.

The dearth in supply from SII and Covax led to suspension of administering the first dose of the vaccine on April 26.

Gradually, however, the situation improved as supplies started coming in from the US, China and Japan, helping the government to resume administering the first dose on June 19 on a limited scale, and gradually expand in scale from that point.

The government has now planned to inoculate on a massive scale in the coming months to make up for lost time.

"We are confident that a large portion of the country's population would be inoculated by this fiscal

year," said a finance ministry official.

Bangladesh has so far received more than five crore doses of different vaccine from various sources, according to the health directorate.

Around 3.33 crore people have gotten their first doses while around 1.69 crore people have received both doses as of September 30, according to data from the directorate.

Around 12.77 percent of the target -- inoculating 80 percent of the total population aged 18 and above -- has been met so far.

Bangladesh has been witnessing a gradual decline in the number of Covid deaths and infections over the last two weeks after the Delta variant of the virus ravaged the country in June and July.

The number of deaths shot up to over 200 a day at that time and remained above 100 a day for several weeks. However, deaths from the deadly virus have been declining steadily, and came down to 21 in the 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday.

The total death count stands at 27,531, said a press release issued by the DGHS.

7.9 LAKH DOSES FROM GERMANY TO ARRIVE TODAY

The country will receive 7.9 lakh more doses of AstraZeneca vaccine from Germany today, reports UNB.

A cargo flight of Qatar Airlines carrying the vaccine doses will land at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport around 5:00pm, said officials at the health ministry.

German Ambassador to Bangladesh Achim Troster and Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) Senior Secretary Lokman Hossain Miah will be present at the airport to receive the consignment.

Caught between fear and distrust

FROM PAGE 1

Yesterday, the Armed Police Battalion detained Md Selim alias Lomba Selim, 27-year-old Rohingya man, on suspicion of involvement in the killing.

"It is an irreparable loss for the entire community," said Syed Alam, a neighbour of Mohib, talking to these correspondents in front of the slain Rohingya leader's office, guarded by members of Armed Police Battalion.

He said 10-12 people were present nearby when the killers attacked Mohib but everyone went into hiding in fear.

"The criminals, though few in number, are everywhere," he said, without mentioning any name. "It is distrust. We cannot trust anyone anymore. If Mohib's life is not secure, then whose life is?"

Mohib had received death threats several times but he never gave up and worked for the repatriation of the refugees. "Now all our efforts to return to Burma seem pointless."

A top official of law enforcement agencies wishing not to be named said Rohingyas are tight-lipped about the incident. "No one trusts anyone. Everyone keeps mum. The killers left the place when there were hundreds of people in the area, but everyone was silent."

Mohib was eldest among the four brothers and dedicated his entire life for the Rohingya community.

"He was our only ray of hope," said Ahmed Ullah, younger brother of Mohib.

"With his killing, our hopes and aspirations also got killed. He never

harmed anyone -- then why was he killed?"

He added at least 12 people were present when Mohib was attacked. If they came forward, his brother might have survived.

Mohib was one of the most recognised Rohingya voices. He came to Bangladesh in 2017 when about 700,000 Rohingyas fled Myanmar amid a violent crackdown by the Myanmar army.

He attained widespread recognition after a group led by him organised a huge rally in the camp in 2019.

Later that year, he was invited to Geneva to address the UN Human Rights Council and to the White House, where he spoke with the then president Trump as part of a meeting with survivors of religious persecution.

Viewers vexed as foreign TV channels blocked

FROM PAGE 1

There is a good number of fans of foreign soap operas in the country. They have also expressed fury over the decision.

The section 19 of Cable Television Network Operation Act, 2006 put embargoes on operators in broadcasting advertisement to local viewers through foreign channels.

Though COAB has stopped the broadcast, Akash subscribers were able to watch foreign channels. Akash is a direct-to-home service introduced by Beximco.

Contacted, Zahidul Karim, public relations officer, BEXIMCO Holdings Limited said, "BEXIMCO group and its subsidiaries are compliant of all government rules and regulations, so Akash DTH has already taken steps to block all foreign channels one by one which don't comply with government directives."

"Akash authorities assure all

responsible media outlets that by tonight, all non-compliant channels will be blocked and will remain blocked until further directives from the government comes," he added.

Meanwhile, Association of Television Channel Owners Association (ATCO) and Broadcast Journalist Centre (BJC) welcomed the government's move for banning programmes with advertisements on foreign channels.

Speaking at a programme on the celebration of the 22nd anniversary of Channel i, the information minister said several thousand crore taka are being invested in foreign channels since the operators do not implement clean feed.

"Local media industry will be benefited if advertisements are not aired on foreign channels. Country's economy will get a boost," said Hasan Mahmud.

The minister also said the

country's economy, media industry, artists and culture have been harmed in want of clean feed. That is why the decision has been taken, reads a press release.

SM Anwar Parvez, founding president of COAB, said foreign channels that broadcast programmes with advertisements cannot be shown in the country as per government guidelines and so they have stopped broadcasting those.

He said if the government gives any new instructions or takes steps in future, then they will take action accordingly.

In its statement, BJC said though there was an embargo mentioned in the act, no measures were taken to implement it.

"The government move will lessen the financial crisis of local television channels. Alongside the owners, media staffers will be benefited as well," it reads.



PM returns home from US

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina returned home last night from Washington DC via Helsinki wrapping up her US visit to attend the 76th United Nations General Assembly and other high level side events.

"A VIP chartered flight of Biman Bangladesh Airlines carrying the premier and her entourage members reached the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport at 11:15pm," PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim told BSS.

After a brief stopover in Helsinki, the flight departed the Vantaa International Airport at 10:55am (local time) for Dhaka.

Ambassador of Bangladesh in Finland (non-resident) Md Nazmul Islam saw the PM off at the airport.

Earlier, the flight departed the Dallas International Airport in Washington DC for Helsinki at 5:27pm on Thursday (Washington DC time).

Bangladesh Ambassador to the US M Shahidul Islam saw the premier off at the airport.

The PM reached New York on September 19 to attend the UNGA after a two-day stopover in Helsinki.

During her stay in New York from September 19 to 24, she joined the UNGA at the UN Headquarters and some high level side events.

Hasina on September 25 left New York for Washington DC.

UN, US condemn killing of Mohib Ullah

REUTERS, Washington

The United Nations and the United States on Thursday spoke out over the killing of Rohingya leader Mohib Ullah and called on Bangladeshi authorities to investigate his shooting.

Mohib Ullah, who was in his late 40s, was killed by unknown gunmen in a camp in Cox's Bazar on Wednesday night.

He led one of the largest of several community groups to emerge since more than 730,000 Rohingya Muslims fled Myanmar after a military crackdown in August 2017.

"The UN urges the Bangladeshi authorities to undertake an investigation and to hold those responsible to account," UN spokesperson Stephanie Tremblay told a press briefing in New York on Thursday.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said he was "saddened and disturbed" by Mohib Ullah's murder, calling him "a brave and fierce advocate for the human rights of Rohingya Muslims around the world."

"We urge a full and transparent investigation into his death with the goal of holding the perpetrators of this heinous crime accountable," Blinken said in a statement.

Booters

FROM PAGE 1

Playing in front of a crowd mostly made up of Bangladeshi expatriates, the men in red and green dominated the game with 58 per cent ball possession. However, Bangladesh, sitting 16 places above Sri Lanka in FIFA ranking, suffered in finishing, losing the ball in the final third often and having only four out of 20 shots on target.

Topu, however, came close to putting the booters ahead just minutes before referee blew the whistle for half-time. The Bashundhara Kings centre-back's well-timed header off a cross from left-back Yeasin Arafat forced a fingertip save from Sri Lanka goalkeeper Sujjan Perera.

Ten-men Sri Lanka produced a few attacks near the end of the game but none could trouble Bangladesh stopper Anisur Rahman Zico.

Bangladesh will face seven-time India in their next game on Monday at the same venue.

UN reports 'unprecedented' malnutrition in Tigray

AFP, ADDIS ABABA

The UN warned of "unprecedented" malnutrition among pregnant and lactating women in Ethiopia's war-hit Tigray region, in a report published hours after the government sparked outrage by expelling senior UN officials.

The latest situation report from the UN's humanitarian coordination office, posted online late Thursday, also described "alarming" malnutrition among children as fears of mass starvation grow nearly 11 months after northern Ethiopia erupted in conflict.