

BANGLADESH UPDATE



617

New cases in 24hrs



15,57,964

Total cases



27,573

Deaths



15,18,754

Recoveries

GLOBAL UPDATE



4,814,256

Deaths



235,608,268

Total cases

Bring the real money launderers to book

HC asks ACC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A High Court bench yesterday observed that instead of harassing real businessmen, the Anti-Corruption Commission has to take appropriate action against the corrupt people who have laundered money to foreign countries.

"If you chase the businessmen in such a way, how will the country's development take place? Justice Md Nazrul Islam Talukder and Justice KM Zahid Sarwar Kajol told ACC lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan during the hearing of bail petition for a businessman.

The bench said the ACC should bring to the book the people who laundered money and established "Begumparas" in Canada, Malaysia, and the US.

Md Khalilullah Azad, a businessman and former local Awami League leader of Dinajpur, recently filed the petition with the HC seeking anticipatory bail in a money laundering case filed with Dinajpur Police Station.

The HC bench granted him eight weeks' anticipatory bail.

Lawyer Jyotirmoy Barua appeared for Khalilullah, while ACC lawyer Khurshid vehemently opposed the bail.

Deputy Attorney General (DAG) Amit Talukder represented the state during the virtual hearing.

Lawyer Jyotirmoy told The Daily Star that the Criminal Investigation Department lodged the case with Dinajpur Police Station against his client Khalilullah in connection with laundering Tk 35 crore even though the ACC is supposed to file such a case.

He claimed that Khalilullah is a real businessman, but 17 cases have been filed against him and that he had obtained bail in all of them.

DAG Amit told this correspondent that the government would move an appeal before the Supreme Court's Appellate Division challenging the HC bail for Khalilullah.

ACC lawyer Khurshid could not be reached for comments.

BNP wants clean slate

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According to the primary decision, the existing committees of the front and associate bodies will be dissolved by December, and the new committees will be formed in phases.

The BNP high-ups believe that this move will infuse enthusiasm into the party's activities and help minimise internal feuds.

In one of such meetings, the top leaders expressed anger over the allegations and counter-allegations raised by the leaders of various committees.

"You all are talking about movement. You are talking about strengthening the organisations. Who will do these? You should do these," a top leader said in one of the closed-door meetings, addressing leaders of front and associate bodies.

The BNP is planning to wage movement demanding an election-time non-partisan government and a neutral EC. Before launching the movement, it wants to complete the process of re-organisation of the party's front and associate bodies, according to the party sources.

"We are preparing ourselves for the movement and the front and associate bodies will play a key role in the movement," BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi told The Daily Star.

The party has already dissolved committees of Krishak Dal and Jatiyatabadi Sangskritik Sangstha (Jasas). The tenure of Chhatra Dal expired on September 18.

The tenure of committees of Mahila

Dal, Swachhasebak Dal, Juba Dal, Sramik Dal, Tanti Dal, Matsyajibi Dal, Muktijoddha Dal and Olama Dal expired years ago.

Party sources said adverse political atmosphere, Covid-19 pandemic coupled with intra-party conflicts slumped the organisational activities.

Rizvi said, "The re-organising process of the party is going on. Already a partial committee of Krishak Dal has been formed and subsequently new committees of the expired ones of the front and associate bodies will be formed."

He said the party is considering the performance of the leaders of front and associate bodies to bring new leadership in those committees.

The top leaders warned the leaders of the party's front and associate organisations that they would lose their posts if they fail to hit the streets during an upcoming anti-government movement.

Party sources said the partial committee of Mahila Dal was formed in 2016, but in the last five years it could not form the complete committee.

In 2017, the partial committee of Juba Dal was formed, but the announcement of a full committee is yet to come.

Swachhasebak Dal central committee was formed in 2016. The tenure of the committee expired in 2018, but till then no committee was formed. The Chhatra Dal central committee was elected in 2019 and its tenure expired this year.

AL serves mayor Zahangir

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The notice was undersigned by Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader, said Gazipur City AL President Md Azmat Ullah Khan.

Mayor Zahangir, also Gazipur metropolitan unit Awami League general secretary, has been asked by the party to submit his explanation within 15 days.

Meanwhile, Zahangir's comments caused a war of words between Obaidul Quader and AL central committee member Iqbal Hossain Opu at Sheikh Hasina's Dhanmondi office on Saturday night, insiders told The Daily Star yesterday.

The Gazipur mayor said he will reply to the notice on time and accept the party president's decision.

Zahangir termed the allegations a conspiracy against him ahead of the Gazipur mayoral elections, saying his political opponents and some conspirators were spreading propaganda against him.

Recently, Zahangir at a programme made some comments about Bangabandhu and questioned the actual number of martyred freedom fighters, and the video of the comments went viral.

Amid protests from party men, Zahangir termed the video's content "false and fabricated".

In a video statement on September 22, he also claimed that his rivals edited the contents of the video and released it on social media to make him, his party and the government appear "questionable".

Tensions within the party became obvious on September 24, when the mayor's supporters and opponents demonstrated by blocking the highway near Board Bazar.

Since then, party supporters of the rival groups have been staging protests and counter-protests in the city. **PROTESTS AGAINST GAZIPUR MAYOR**

A group of AL men yesterday demonstrated and blocked highways for hours demanding removal of Gazipur Mayor Zahangir from his post. They also demanded that Zahangir be

expelled from the AL.

They demonstrated on Tongi Station Road, and in Cherag Ali, Chandona Intersection and Rajbari Road areas.

They blockaded the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway for around two hours to press home their demands.

Earlier yesterday, a section of journalists also formed human chain around 11:00am in front of the deputy commissioner's (DC's) office in Gazipur to press home the same demands.

AL LEADERS' WAR OF WORDS

On Saturday, like any other day, several AL central leaders including Presidium Member Matia Chowdhury, Joint General Secretary AFM Bahauddin Nasim, Freedom Fighter Affairs Secretary Mrinal Kanti Das, Organising Secretary Afzal Hossain, central committee member Iqbal Hossain Opu and Awal Shamim were present at AL President Sheikh Hasina's Dhanmondi office.

Party insiders said tensions rose once Obaidul Quader entered the office.

The sources said when Quader entered in the room, Iqbal Hossain Opu wanted to know why the AL general secretary was not taking action against the Gazipur mayor following his derogatory remarks on Bangabandhu and freedom fighters.

"Quader bhai, you helped Zahangir get elected and now you are not taking any action against him," an AL leader who was present there quoted Opu as saying.

In reply, Quader asked Opu how he became MP from Shariatpur-1 in the last election. Then, both angrily and loudly questioned the other's popularity in their respective constituencies.

The other leaders present at the time tried to bring the situation under control and eventually, the duo left the party office.

Wishing anonymity, several AL leaders said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had expressed disappointment over the heated argument at her political office.



Cars are seen abandoned on a flooded street as Cyclone Shaheen makes landfall in Muscat Oman yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

18 more die, 617 get Covid

STAFF CORRESPONDENTS

Eighteen people died from Covid-19 in 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, read a press release issued by the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

The total number of Covid-19 deaths in the country now stands at 27,573 and the death rate stands at 1.77 percent.

At least 617 new infections were recorded during the period, taking the total number of people infected to 1,557,964, added the release.

The current positivity rate is 2.90 percent while the total positivity rate stands at 15.91 percent.

A total of 21,246 samples were tested across the country in those 24 hours.

At least 1,112 Covid-19 patients have recovered during the period.

The total number of recoveries now stands at 1,518,754 and the recovery rate at 97.48 percent.

Among the 18 deceased, nine were men and nine were women.

Of them, one was under 10, two were between 31 and 40, five between 41 and 50, five between 51 and 60 and five were above 60 years old, added the release.

Mamata keeps

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by a record margin, five months after a stunning defeat in the assembly elections in Nandigram.

Mamata, the Trinamool Congress supremo, won the bypoll in Bhabanipur by a massive margin 58,835 votes against her nearest rival and Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) candidate Priyanka Tibrewal.

The win in Bhabanipur bypoll was crucial for Mamata who needed to be elected a member of the assembly within the Constitution-stipulated time of six months to continue as the chief minister.

Although Mamata had spearheaded TMC to a landslide win in the assembly poll earlier this year, her own loss in Nandigram took some sheen away from it forcing her to contest the bypoll.

The Bhabanipur bypoll saw a one-sided contest. At the end of the 21st round of counting of votes polled for Bhabanipur byelection, Mamata secured 85,263 votes while Priyanka bagged 26,428 votes, including the postal ballots. CPI(M)'s Srijib Biswas managed to get just 4,226 votes.

According to the Election Commission, Mamata has secured 71.9% of the votes polled in Bhabanipur while Priyanka Tibrewal managed only 22.29 percent in an election where 53.32 percent of the 2,06,389 electorate turned up to exercise their franchise in the bypoll.

In winning Bhabanipur bypoll, Mamata broke her own previous records of winning margins. She had won in this constituency in 2011 (in a bypoll) by 52,213 votes and by 25,301 votes in 2016 assembly elections.

Mamata also made it a point that she won in all the seven municipal wards comprising Bhabanipur assembly constituency in the bypoll in contrast to 2016 assembly when she had trailed in a couple of wards. She also said the electorate of Bhabanipur voted for her despite 46 percent of the people of the constituency being non-Bengalis.

The Bhabanipur seat was vacated for her by state's Agriculture Minister Shovandebe Chattopadhyay who won the April vote by a margin of 28,000-plus votes.

Adding to the jubilation in the TMC camp yesterday was the fact the ruling party in the state was poised to wrest two other assembly constituencies Jangipur and Shamsrganj with emphatic margins.

The bypoll in Bhabanipur was held on held on September 30.

The voting in Jangipur and Shamsrganj had to be conducted also on September 30 due to the death of two candidates there.

Supporters of Trinamool Congress broke into celebrations outside the residence of Mamata in Kalighat which is part of Bhabanipur constituency.

Expressing her gratitude towards the people her constituency, Mamata asked her party workers to help the flood-affected people in districts saying that would be the real celebration.

"I thank the people of Bhabanipur and the people of this state and the country who had been waiting for this election result. Our victory inspires me to work more for people. If our workers want to celebrate, they should do so by helping the flood-affected people in the districts. That will be the real celebration," Mamata told TMC supporters and the media outside her house.

But even in her hour of triumph in Bhabanipur yesterday, the defeat in Nandigram to BJP's Suvendu Adhikari by 1,956 votes in May was on Mamata's mind.

"The people of Bhabanipur gave a befitting reply to the conspiracy that was hatched in Nandigram," the Trinamool Congress chief said. She has challenged the Nandigram verdict in court.

Priyanka acknowledged that BJP's ground-level mobilization was weak in Bhabanipur. We have to improve this," she told the media after her defeat.

World leaders' hidden assets exposed

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records of King Abdullah II, the King of Jordan; the presidents of Ukraine, Kenya and Ecuador; the prime minister of the Czech Republic and former British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

The 2.94 terabytes of data also detail the financial activities of Russian President Vladimir Putin's "unofficial minister of propaganda" as well as celebrities, rock stars, business leaders, fugitives, con artists and murderers.

In short, the 2.94 terabytes of data offer the most comprehensive look into the hidden operations of a global offshore economy that enables some of the world's richest people to hide their wealth and in some cases pay little or no tax.

The corrosive effects of this shadow financial world can span generations -- draining significant sums from government treasuries, worsening wealth disparities and shielding the riches of those who cheat and steal while impeding authorities and victims in their efforts to find or recover hidden assets.

At least \$11.3 trillion in wealth is held offshore, according to a 2020 study by the Paris-based Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

The Pandora Papers were obtained by the Washington-based International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) two years ago and since then, more than 650 journalists from ICIJ's 150 partner news outlets around the world traveled through the files.

The disclosure that raised the most eyebrows was that of King Abdullah II, who, the leaked documents reveal, has amassed a secret \$100 million property empire spanning Malibu, Washington and London in the years after Jordanians filled the streets during Arab Spring to protest joblessness and corruption.

The king of Jordan declined to answer specific questions but said there would be nothing improper about him owning properties via offshore companies.

Jordan appeared to have blocked the ICIJ website yesterday, hours before the Pandora Papers were dropped.

Politicians and the wealthy from neighbouring India, Pakistan and Nepal were also named in the leaks, said to be a sequel to 2016's Panama Papers that had already exposed thousands of people around the world as well as revealed their secret e-mail correspondence with banks and investment partners to hide their wealth.

Six politicians from India were said to be in the leaks. Their identities are yet to be disclosed by The Indian Express, which investigated the data linked to the neighbouring country.

The documents show Indian

sports icon Sachin Tendulkar had asked for the liquidation of his entity in the British Virgin Islands just three months after the Panama Papers expose.

Indian billionaire Anil Ambani, who declared bankruptcy in one UK court, has 18 asset holding offshore companies; fugitive Indian jeweller Nirav Modi's sister sets up a trust just one month before he fled India.

Key members of Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan's inner circle, including cabinet ministers, their families and major financial backers have been exposed too by the leaks. Military leaders have been implicated as well. The documents contain no suggestion that Khan himself owns offshore companies.

Among those whose holdings have been exposed are Khan's Finance Minister Shaukat Fayaz Ahmed Tarin and his family, and the son of Khan's former adviser for finance and revenue, Waqar Masood Khan.

The records also reveal the offshore dealings of a top Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf donor, Arif Naqvi, who is facing fraud charges in the US.

Nepal's richest man Binod Chaudhary as well as other prominent businessmen from the country were named in the leaks.

The Pandora Papers reveal that Chaudhary has companies in the British Virgin Islands and Singapore in the names of his wife and three sons, Nirvan, Varun, and Rahul.

The family has registered the companies Cinnovation Incorporated, CG Hotels and Resorts Limited, Sensei Capital Partners Inc. in the British Virgin Islands and CG Hospitality Holdings Global Pte Ltd in Singapore.

The Pandora Papers have minute details of company correspondence, shares and money transfers and other transactions between Chaudhary family members and partners. Some of the names mentioned are Pakistani, Singaporean, Sri Lankan and Bangladeshi.

One of those involved in Cinnovation, Chaudhary's company registered in BVI is US national of Bangladeshi descent, Abdul Awal Mintoo, a former president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry, reports the Centre for Investigative Journalism Nepal (CIJ), ICIJ's partner organisation in the country.

Mintoo could not be reached by The Daily Star at the time of filing the report.

Officials at Nepal Rastra Bank told the CIJ that Chaudhary did not have permission to hold these investments abroad.

The documents also revealed a \$22 million chateau in the French Riviera -- replete with a cinema and two swimming pools -- purchased through offshore companies by the Czech Republic's populist prime

minister, Andrej Babiš -- a billionaire who has railed against the corruption of economic and political elites.

Babiš is up for election this week. He declined to comment on the leaks.

The Pandora papers are also threatening to cause a political upset in Cyprus, itself a controversial offshore centre: its president, Nicos Anastasiades, may be asked to explain why a law firm he founded was accused of hiding the assets of a controversial Russian billionaire behind fake company owners.

The firm denies any wrongdoing, while the Cypriot president says he ceased having an active role in its affairs after becoming leader of the opposition in 1997.

The files also show that Azerbaijan's ruling Aliyev family has traded close to £400 million of UK property in recent years.

One of their properties was sold to the Queen's crown estate, which is now looking into how it came to pay £67 million to a company that operated as a front for the family that runs a country routinely accused of corruption. The Aliyevs declined to comment.

Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who was elected in 2019 on a pledge to clean up his country's notoriously corrupt and oligarch-influenced economy, is also named in the leak.

During the campaign, Zelenskyy transferred his 25 percent stake in an offshore company to a close friend who now works as the president's top adviser, the files suggest.

Zelenskyy declined to comment and it is unclear if he remains a beneficiary.

The Russian president, Vladimir Putin, whom the US suspects of having a secret fortune, does not appear in the files by name.

But numerous close associates do, including his best friend from childhood -- the late Petr Kolbin -- whom critics have called a "wallet" for Putin's own wealth, and a woman the Russian leader was allegedly once romantically involved with. None responded to invitations to comment.

Not everyone named in the Pandora papers is accused of wrongdoing.

The leaked files reveal that Tony and Cherie Blair saved £312,000 in property taxes when they purchased a London building partially owned by the family of a prominent Bahraini minister.

The former prime minister and his wife bought the £6.5 million office in Marylebone by acquiring a British Virgin Islands offshore company.

While the move was not illegal, and there is no evidence the Blairs proactively sought to avoid property taxes, the deal highlights a loophole that has enabled wealthy property owners not to pay a tax that is commonplace for ordinary Britons.

Perpetrators will be tried

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be completed in a few days. The government has also been setting up watchtowers at the Cox's Bazar Rohingya camps to ensure security.

"The law-and-order situation is still good as our law enforcement forces are doing a good job in coordination with the army. Cox's Bazar is a tourist destination where millions of tourists are going. Everything is in good condition because our security forces are working there."

Meanwhile, a Cox's Bazar court yesterday placed two people on a three-day each remand in a case filed over the murder of Rohingya leader Mohib Ullah.

Cox's Bazar Senior Judicial Magistrate Tamanna Farah passed the

order after a hearing.

Those remanded are Mohammad Selim Ullah and Shawkat Ullah, from the Kutupalong Lombashia refugee camp in Ukhiya upazila, Chandan Kumar Chakraborty, Cox's Bazar court's police inspector, told The Daily Star.

Selim was arrested on Friday and Shawkat on Saturday from the refugee camp area.

Meanwhile, members of the Armed Police Battalion (APBn) yesterday noon arrested Mohammad Elias, 35, on suspicion of his involvement with Mohib Ullah's murder.

Elias, a Rohingya youth from Camp No 5 in Kutupalong, was later handed over to Ukhiya Police Station, said APBn-14 Commanding Officer

Naimul Huq.

With this, five people have so far been arrested in connection with the murder case.

The other two arrestees are Ziaur Rahman and Abdus Salam, also from the Kutupalong refugee camp.

On September 29, unidentified criminals shot dead Mohib Ullah, Rohingya rights activist and leader, at his office in the camp around 8:30pm.

Mohib Ullah was the chairman of the Arakan Rohingya Society for Peace & Human Rights and played a vital role in the Rohingya repatriation process, according to police.

The victim's brother Maulana Habibullah filed a murder case accusing some 20 to 25 unidentified people with Ukhiya Police Station.