

BANGLADESH UPDATE



794

New cases in 24hrs



15,58,758

Total cases



27,591

Deaths



15,19,588

Recoveries

GLOBAL UPDATE



4,819,247

Deaths



235,949,696

Total cases

SHIMULIA-BANGLABAZAR FERRY SERVICE Now 11hrs a day, only for light vehicles

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

The BIWTC partly resumed its ferry services on Shimulia-Banglabazar route yesterday after 47 days.

Five ferries will operate from 6:00am to 5:00pm every day carrying only light vehicles, including cars, jeeps, minibuses, and ambulances, said officials.

The authorities had suspended the services on August 18 after four ferries hit pillars and a span of the under-construction Padma Bridge.

Speaking to reporters at Shimulia Ghat in Munshiganj yesterday, BIWTC Director (commercial) SM Ashiquzzaman said ferries travelling to Banglabazar Ghat from Shimulia Ghat will go between the bridge pillars 14 and 15. Besides, ferries will cross the Padma between pillars 19 and 20 while travelling from Banglabazar Ghat to Shimulia.

He said they resumed the ferry services after conducting a trial run with ferry 'Kunjilata'.

The vessel carrying 47 vehicles, including motorcycles, cars and pickups, left Ferry Ghat-3 of Shimulia Ghat at 11:00am and reached

Banglabazar Ghat in Madaripur around noon.

The ferry left Banglabazar Ghat at 12:30pm and reached Shimulia Ghat at 1:40pm.

"There are strong currents in the Padma. Although the present river current of 6 to 6.5 km/h is not in favour of running ferries, we have decided to operate five high-speed ferries with only light vehicles from 6:00am to 5:00pm every day. We will take the next decision on operating ferries if the river current decreases further," Ashiquzzaman said.

He said the current is different near each pillar of the Padma Bridge. "Hopefully, the river current will decrease further in the next one to two weeks. We have plans to run other ferries then."

The BIWTC operates 16-17 ferries on this route every when the river current remains normal at 5 to 6 km/h.

The official said, "An army team will be there to guide the ferries navigate under the bridge. Besides, captains of ferries will be under constant monitoring."



Carrying vehicles, ferry Kunjalata plying the Padma after the BIWTC partly resumed ferry services on the route yesterday after a closure of 47 days. The authorities had suspended the services on August 18 after four ferries hit pillars and a span of the under-construction Padma Bridge, a part of which can be seen in the photo.

PHOTO: SAJJAD HOSSAIN

Pori, 2 aides charged in narcotics case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday pressed charges against actress Pori Moni and her two aides Ashraf Islam Dipu and Kabir Hossain in a narcotics case.



Investigation Officer Kazi Golam Mostafa, also an inspector of the Criminal Investigation Department of police, submitted the charge sheet before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka, court sources said.

According to the case statement, members of Rapid Action Battalion on August 4 detained Pori Moni and Dipu and seized alcohol and narcotics from her home.

The following day, the two were shown on paper arrested in the case filed with Banani Police Station under the Narcotics Control Act. Later, Kabir too was shown on paper arrested in the same case.

Pori Moni was later placed on seven days remand in three phases in the case. On August 31, she got ad-interim bail from a Dhaka court.

Pori Moni was released from jail on bail on September 1, four weeks after her arrest.

On September 15, the High Court bench of Justice Mustafa Zaman Islam and Justice KM Zahid Sarwar Kajol expressed discontent at the explanations of the two lower court judges, who had placed her on remand for the second and third time, saying that they had "undermined" this court.

The same bench on September 29 ordered the two lower court judges to give further explanations to it about their conducts over granting remand prayers. The bench also fixed October 24 for passing further order on this issue.

Meanwhile, Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Satyabrata Sikder on September 28 ordered police to return 16 items, including a car, that were seized from Pori Moni's home as evidence.

FB, WhatsApp

FROM PAGE 1

communicate via the popular platforms, a large number of Bangladeshi businesses were also affected as those depend heavily on getting orders, communicating with customers and delivering other services via Facebook, its messenger, and WhatsApp.

The issue affecting the services could not be confirmed but the error message on the webpage of Facebook Inc suggested a problem with Domain Name System (DNS), reports Reuters.

DNS allows web addresses to take users to their destinations. It is kind of the telephone directory of the internet.

Security experts tracking the situation said the outage could have been triggered by a configuration error, which could be the result of an internal mistake, though sabotage by an insider would be theoretically possible.

An outside hack was viewed as less likely.

Facebook acknowledged users were having trouble accessing its apps but did not provide any specifics about the nature of the problem or how many were affected by the outage.

"We're working to get things back to normal as quickly as possible, and we apologize for any inconvenience," Facebook said.

Shares of Facebook, which has nearly 2 billion daily active users, fell 5.5% in afternoon trading yesterday, inching towards its worst day in nearly a year.

Facebook has experienced similar widespread outages with its suite of apps this year in March and July.

Several users using their Facebook credentials to log in to third-party apps were also facing issues.

The outage comes a day after a Facebook whistleblower accused the firm of repeatedly prioritizing profit over clamping down on hate speech and misinformation, and said her lawyers have filed at least eight complaints with the US Securities and Exchange Commission.

7 teens go missing in as many days

All from Mirpur area; cops rescue 2 of them

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Seven girls went missing from Mirpur in the last seven days and two of them were rescued last night.

The two rescued were aged 10 and 13. They had gone missing from Ansar Camp area on Wednesday.

In a drive, the detective branch of police found them in Sadarghat area, Manas Kumar Podder, deputy commissioner of DB (Mirpur Division), told The Daily Star.

"We rescued the two girls and no other people were found with them. They live in two adjacent houses in Mirpur area. We've informed their parents," the official said, adding that they were investing all the missing incidents.

Two other girls, aged 14 and 13, who went missing from Janata Housing area on Friday afternoon, were still traceless.

Mostajizur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Mirpur Police Station, said one of the two missing from Janata Housing area was a schoolgirl. She has no father. Her mother works in a company. Another

was a housemaid in that household.

He added that the father of one of the girls from the Ansar camp area is a rickshaw puller. They could not contact the family of the other girl.

Two general diaries were filed with the police station in these connections.

Earlier on Friday, three teenage friends left their homes without saying anything to their families. One of them took Tk 6 lakh in cash, another took 2.5 tolas of gold ornaments and the other took Tk 75,000. They also took their SSC certificates, birth certificates and several mobile phones from their houses.

Police could not trace them as of yet. Elder sister of one of the missing teenagers filed a case with Pallabi Police Station, under the Women and Child Repression Prevention Act, against 10 people on Saturday -- citing the names of the four. She feared that the girls were trafficked abroad.

A youth was placed on a two-day remand on Sunday while the remand hearing of three other arrestees will be held after determining their age.

Jobs gone, hopes too

FROM PAGE 1

just with the thought of going back to the classroom again but also with a hope of sustained livelihood. His hope, however, was short-lived as his school, Learning Point Cadet Academy, declared shutting down permanently within two weeks amid a poor number of students rejoining.

"I am 35 years old and it is extremely difficult to get a new job at this age. I am trying to go to the Middle East to work as a construction worker. I am in contact with one of my elder brothers for this," said a dejected Kaiser, who used to get a monthly salary of Tk 20,000 from the school.

Like Kaiser, thousands of teachers of kindergarten schools across the country are forced to exchange the tools of their trade -- the traditional chalk and duster -- with jobs like toiling in farms and selling garment products or even vegetables to make ends meet.

The teachers left the job as they were not getting salaries for months and were living inhuman lives. Kindergarten authorities cannot pay salaries to the teachers as guardians of many students did not pay their tuition fees.

The schools and colleges across the country reopened on September 12 after 543 days of closure -- the longest disruption in country's history --, but many kindergartens had to shut their campus permanently as most of their students shifted to government's free primary schools while a good number might have dropped out, said the teachers.

The specific data on the numbers of closed-down schools is hard to come by as the government does not have any data in this regard. However, according to an estimate of kindergarten teachers' associations, around 40 to 50 percent of kindergarten teachers have lost their job. Nearly 20,000 kindergartens are still closed and many of them will never open doors for students, said leaders of the association.

It is with this harsh reality the country is observing World Teachers' Day today. The theme of the day is 'Teachers at the heart of education recovery'.

Teachers in Bangladesh, especially at the kindergartens, normally do not have high salaries and also do not have savings to fall back on. As a result, they switched to different jobs to earn a living.

Amzad Hossain is one of them. This Teachers' Day, his heart is full of remorse. Amzad chose this profession as he wanted to nurture a generation of students.

"It is really heart-breaking and frustrating that I had to leave the noble

profession as the pandemic upended everything. The profession has given us so much love and respect, but that alone cannot fill our stomach," he said.

The 36-year-old head teacher of Vision International School in Chattogram said the authorities closed the school down in January as the total dues of house rent and others stood at Tk 7.5 lakh. The school had 450 students.

"I paid half of the dues by taking loans from others and from my little savings. But I cannot afford anymore."

Amzad is now planning to start a small trade centring garment products, to run his three-member family.

Shafiqur Rahman, a teacher of Rosedale Kindergarten in Meherpur, has a similar story to tell.

As everything came to a grinding halt during the pandemic, his school stopped paying salaries. Left with no other source of income, he opened a tea stall six months ago to run his five-member family in Borobazar area.

"There was a dignified position in society as a teacher. But I did not have any option. I know how people treat tea sellers in society," he said.

Shafiqur said they tried to resume the school, but only 20-25 students out of 300 turned up.

"I don't think the school would be able to continue running in this situation."

Iqbal Bahar Chowdhury, chairman of Bangladesh Kindergarten School and College Oikya Parishad, said an estimated 20,000 kindergartens could not open yet and many of them will never open due to the financial crisis.

"If the kindergartens were given financial assistance in the form of soft loans for owners and waiver of utility bills for the hard-hit schools, they can survive amid the crunch time," he added.

Mizanur Rahman, secretary general of Bangladesh Kindergarten Association, said around 40 to 50 percent of kindergarten teachers have lost their job.

Regrettably, thousands of teachers have switched to other professions and they are working as masons, labourers at shops, selling seasonal fruits, vegetables, or driving auto-rickshaws and three-wheelers, he added.

Directorate of Primary Education Director (Monitoring and Evaluation) Utaam Kumar Das admitted that many schools closed down during the pandemic with their students shifted to government primary schools.

"I am not aware of any plan to give financial assistance to the kindergartens," Utaam said.

EC formation thru' search committee

FROM PAGE 1

said one (Khaleda Zia) is convicted of misappropriating orphans' fund and another (Tarique Rahman) is a fugitive convicted in the August 21 grenade attack and 10-truck arms haul cases.

"They are still there in the leadership. If this is the case, under which consideration would people vote for them?"

Referring to the 2014 general election, Hasina alleged that BNP had made frantic efforts to make it questionable and committed many misdeeds, including arson attacks, to thwart the polls. "Since the election was held [successfully] and then there was stability, it has made it possible to ensure development of what you are witnessing today."

Stating that BNP had no complaint about the 2008 general election, the PM questioned why they could not win that polls.

She mentioned the development activities carried out by her government and questioned who would vote for BNP and why.

Pointing at journalists, she said, "Ask who would vote for them. I asked all journalists first to question their conscience: who and with what hope will vote for BNP and others and why?"

ROHINGYA CRISIS

Talking about the Rohingya issue, Hasina said international pressure on Myanmar would continue for a permanent solution to the protracted Rohingya crisis as the issue was widely discussed in the 76th UNGA session.

"The issue of the Rohingya crisis and its permanent solution was discussed elaborately in the UNGA session which I believe will [help] continue global pressure on Myanmar for taking back their Rohingya nationals from Bangladesh," she said while reading out a written statement at the press conference.

The premier reminded the world leaders that the cause of the Rohingya crisis is in Myanmar, and the solution also lies there.

Calling upon the international community to take constructive steps in this regard, she said, "Only a safe, sustainable and dignified repatriation [of Rohingyas] to their homeland can be a permanent solution to this crisis."

The PM said keeping Rohingyas in Bangladesh has apparently become a business for some organisations.

"I'm very sorry to say it seems that keeping refugees has become a business for some organisations. If they [Rohingyas] are not here, they [NGO officials] will lose jobs," she said.

If Rohingyas stay in Bangladesh,

some people would be benefited, she said, adding that they don't have much concentration on their repatriation.

"Some [organisations] are sincere and we get good response from them. There're others who just hear it [about Rohingyas]. The problem is here."

The PM questioned international organisations as to why they are not mounting pressure and do not act for their repatriation as Rohingyas are damaging the environment of the host country.

She voiced concern that Rohingyas are indulging in misdeeds, including terrorist acts, women and children trafficking and drug peddling.

ECOMMERCE FRAUD
Replying to a question over frauds by some e-commerce firms, including Evaly and E-orange, Hasina said the government continues to do what's necessary on its part.

She said investigations were underway to find out where they took or deposited the money, and the government would return it to the people once the probes were completed.

"Those who swindle people for making money taking advantage of their tough time must be punished."

The PM also said journalists also had the responsibility to find out the fraud firms when things started unfolding. "If you do so, then people will be alert."

BIMAN AIRCRAFT

Hasina said she had been to the US to attend the UNGA session by a Biman Bangladesh Airlines aircraft so that the national carrier gets the money at this tough time caused by the pandemic.

"If I, in fact, strengthen the government's effort to resume Biman's flight operation on Dhaka-New York route. I went to the US by the latest and advanced aircraft, 'Dreamliner', of Biman."

She said her government collected a good number of the latest aircraft for Biman, but many of those sit idle as flights on many routes were suspended due to the pandemic. Besides, Biman has to count maintenance costs even when the aircraft sit idle.

The PM said an effort from the government was underway to resume Dhaka-New York flights.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Hasina said the universal accessibility and availability of Covid vaccines and sustainable recovery from the pandemic naturally dominated the UNGA discussion.

Besides, issues like climate change, women's empowerment, equality and inclusion, racism, sustainable

development goals, disarmament of nuclear weapons etc also came up for discussion, she added.

She said she urged the rich countries to finance and transfer technology freely for sustainable adaptation to the countries at risk of climate change for reducing their damage caused by the pandemic.

The premier said she participated in several bilateral meetings on the sidelines during the UNGA session.

Hasina said as the president of the Climate Vulnerable Forum and Vulnerable-20 Group of Ministers of Finance, she briefed the world leaders on the activities of Bangladesh's 'Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan-Decade 2030'.

She said she was conferred upon with "SDG Progress Award" by the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) on September 20 for Bangladesh's highest success in attaining SDG during the 2015-2020 period.

"This award is a global recognition of Bangladesh's steadfast development even during the Covid-19 pandemic, and that's why I dedicated this award to the people of the country in my thanksgiving speech," the premier said.

KILLINGS DURING ZIA'S REGIME

About the killings of military officers during the regime of military dictator Ziaur Rahman, Hasina said measures should be taken to form a commission to hold trials of the killings of military officers and soldiers during Zia's rule.

"As a demand has been raised in this regard [formation of a commission], I think a step should be taken to this end," she said.

Expressing resentment over not raising the demand for constitution of such a commission much earlier, the PM said mass awareness about the tragic incidents should be built.

She said the trial of the killing of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his other family members was held as she was able to come to power.

Hasina said the BNP also did not hold the trial of Zia's killing. Rather, they illegally hanged 11 military officers for mutiny, she said, adding that she had lodged a protest against the camera trial and demanded unearthing the real matter behind the heinous act.

Some journalists attended the press conference at the Gono Bhaban while others were connected to the event virtually from the Prime Minister's Office.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen and Information Minister Hasan Mahmud were present at the Gono Bhaban.

Enact specific law to pick CEC, ECs

FROM PAGE 1

Recruitment Laws and relevant thoughts" said such a search committee recommends election commissioners who are "party sycophants".

As a result, the last two election commissions had utterly failed to perform their functions properly.

Sushasoneer Jonno Nagorik (Shujan) also prepared a draft of the law.

The draft proposes a six-member search committee led by a retired chief justice and that the president appoints commissioners skilled in running an administration and those who are honest, righteous, neutral and have knowledge of legal matters.

Senior jurist Amir-Ul-Islam, member of the country's constitution formulation committee, said everything related to formulation of a law should be done in line with Article 118 of the constitution.

According to Article 118 (1) of the constitution, "There shall be an Election Commission for Bangladesh consisting of [the chief election commissioner and not more than four election commissioners] and the appointment of the chief election commissioner and other election commissioners (if any) shall, subject to the provisions of any law made on that behalf, be made by the President."

"There is limited scope for innovation

[regarding formulation of the law] ... we can look into the process followed by other countries," Amir-Ul-Islam said.

Retired Justice MA Matin said a search committee chief should not be from among retired or sitting justices; instead, the chief should come from other fields and have experience and knowledge of elections and administration.

He proposed that the very name, "search committee", should be changed as it has become controversial.

Another jurist, Shahdeen Malik, said, "The government is playing tricks with people in the name of search committee to appoint CEC and ECs. The president has no power to form a search committee as he has to consult with the prime minister regarding all matters except the appointment of the PM and the chief justice."

"The government forms the search committee in such way that the committee picks people of its choice ... If the EC is formed with this kind of search committee, it will fail to deliver," he added.

As the five-year tenure of the current Election Commission will expire next February, many believe there is not enough time to pass a specific law to appoint ECs.

But Shahdeen said if the government

and parliament desire, the law can be passed within a short time.

Shujan Secretary Badiul Alam Majumdar said the search committee is created on an ad hoc basis.

"These search committees are not comprised of party-neutral people and they select party sycophants as election commissioners. As a result, we have seen the last two commissions utterly fail to perform, become involved in different anomalies and contributed in creating a broken electoral system," he added.

Shujan President M Hafizuddin Khan said the country's electoral system has been completely destroyed.

"People are not satisfied with the performance of the two search committees. Elections are not fair and acceptable under the current commission. Voters do not want to vote because they think there is no benefit in voting," he added.

Former EC Brig Gen (retired) Sakhawat Hussain said the law to appoint ECs should be prepared based on the constitution. Many South Asian countries have similar laws, he said.

"We prepared a draft of the law during our time and it was sent to the law ministry but it is unfortunate that there are no more discussions about it," he added.

Former cabinet secretary Ali Imam

Majumdar said there should be a shake-up in the governance and government system in order to hold a free and fair election.

Gonoshasthaya Kendra founder Zafullah Chowdhury said the constitution is not a holy book that cannot be changed.

If necessary, the constitution can be changed all the time. He proposed anational government to oversee a national election.

Dhaka University Professor Asif Nazul echoed the need for a law to form an election commission.

"But it is not possible for them to hold a free and fair election under the current government. We need to change the system of government during elections. It could be a caretaker government, interim government, or national government," he added.

Among others, former Secretary Abdul Latif Mondal, rights activist Shireen Huq, renowned photographer Shahidul Alam, CEO of non-government organisation Brotee Sharmeen Murshid, journalist Ajoy Dasgupta, Communist Party of Bangladesh leader Rubin Hossain Prince, Democracy International's Abdul Alim, Article 19's Faruk Faisal, Shujan leaders Prof Sekandar Khan and Zakir Hossain also took part in the discussion.