

663 New cases in 24hrs



15,60,818 Total cases



27,642 Deaths



15,21,777 Recoveries



4,844,222 Deaths



237,305,508 Total cases

EC body to endorse NID for 16 and above

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

An Election Commission committee is going to place a recommendation of collecting information of students aged above 16 from their educational institutions to provide them with National Identity (NID) cards. The committee will also recommend to the EC to acquire details of out-of-school children from union offices in rural areas and the EC designated places in cities, top EC officials said.

information should be collected via door-to-door campaigns to keep the Rohingyas away from the voters' list and drop the names of voters who died. Shahadat said that after the meeting he sat with field-level officials and discussed the matter with them in a training session. "Rohingyas are not in schools of Bangladesh. There are some other government mechanisms like Office of the Registrar General and Birth and Death Registration that the EC can explore," he said. He said that they were not proposing going door-to-door due to the Covid-19 situation and they would not get enough information collectors as they would not feel positive about it and many families would not entertain information collectors amid this pandemic.



Leaders of Dhaka University Chhatra League "sweep away" dirt from the floor near Madhur Canteen on the campus as dozens of BCL men encircle them and take photos and footage yesterday. The "cleanliness campaign" hardly lasted a few minutes.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Pakistan quake kills at least 20

Hundreds hurt; over 100 houses collapse

Reuters, Quetta An earthquake of magnitude 5.7 hit southern Pakistan in the early hours of yesterday, killing 20 people, most of them women and children, and injuring about 300, at a time when many victims were asleep, authorities said. The earthquake struck at a shallow depth of about 20 km (12 miles), with its epicentre 102 km (62 miles) east of the city of Quetta, the US Geological Survey (USGS) said.

images showed buildings with gaping cracks, caved-in roofs and crumpled walls. About 250 homes collapsed and many people were killed by falling roofs and crumbling walls in the district's Babu Mohallah neighbourhood, said Nawab Khan, a local journalist. "The entire town is a picture of devastation, as no house looks safe, thousands of people are rendered homeless and are under open sky," Khan said, adding that almost 70% of power supply to the district had been disrupted. Prime Minister Imran Khan ordered immediate assessment of the damages and offered condolences to families that lost loved ones, adding, "I have ordered immediate assistance on an emergency basis... for the earthquake victims."

No time to make law

FROM PAGE 1 "But I am not saying that we will never come up with the law, which is mandatory as per the country's constitution," he also said. The minister was replying to queries from reporters after attending a function as chief guest in the capital. The programme was organised by University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB) to launch a book titled "Sharane Sheikh Mujib: Sahasrabder Shreshtha Bangalee". He said, "In her recent press conference, the prime minister made it clear that a new Election Commission would be formed through a search committee. Previously, when the search committee was formed, the president took opinions from all political parties."

decision was taken by the president, it was close to a law. I'm still saying it's not the law; it's closer to the law," said the minister. Earlier, Anisul told the function that Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman believed in constitutional politics and was involved in such politics throughout his life. In his historic March 7 speech, Bangabandhu touched upon all issues and he declared the country's independence only after getting the people's mandate, he said. He said an evil attempt funded by the then government was made to erase Bangabandhu's memories from people's mind after his assassination in 1975. "But we are now getting the opportunity to know about Bangabandhu. People's leader Sheikh Hasina has gifted us the book Karagarer Rojanamcha. The book titled 'Osamapta Atmajiboni' was also published," Anisul added.

Tanzania's Gurnah wins

FROM PAGE 1 Zanzibar in 1984, allowing him to see his father shortly before his death. The prize is awarded by the Swedish Academy and is worth 10 million Swedish crowns (\$1.14 million). The prizes, for achievements in science, literature and peace, were created through a bequest in the will of Swedish dynamite inventor and wealthy businessman Alfred Nobel. They have been awarded since 1901, with the final prize in the line-up - economics - a later addition. Past literature winners have primarily been novelists such as Ernest Hemingway, Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Toni Morrison, poets such as Pablo Neruda, Joseph Brodsky and Rabindranath Tagore, or playwrights such as Harold Pinter and Eugene O'Neill. But writers have also won for bodies of work that include short fiction, history, essays, biography or journalism. Winston Churchill won for his memoirs, Bertrand Russell for his philosophy and Bob Dylan for his lyrics. Last year's award was won by American poet Louise Gluck. Beyond the prize money and prestige, the Nobel literature award generates a vast amount of attention for the winning author, often spurring book sales and introducing less well-known winners to a broader international public.

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Poverty set to drop further

FROM PAGE 1 The WB's forecast is close to the government's poverty rate estimation for ultra-poor in the country. According to the government estimation, the poor constituted 20.5 percent of the population while the ultra-poor made up 10.5 percent in the 2018-19 fiscal year. The new WB report estimated a further drop in the poverty rate -- 11.2 percent -- in the 2022-23 fiscal year, which would be lower than pre-pandemic levels. Speaking on the poverty situation, Zahid Hussain, a former lead economist of the World Bank's Dhaka office, said towards the end of last year, people involved in small businesses like tea stall owners, hairdressers and peddlers returned to work albeit earning less than they did before the pandemic. "It seems the situation of last year is no more. Now, the pre-Covid situation has almost returned. That is why this year's GDP will be higher than last year's. In that case, I assume that the horror of Covid will not come back," he told The Daily Star.

earnings. Estimated poverty remained flat, although food security improved across the country, with the greatest increase in Chattogram," it said. The report said a modest recovery in GDP growth was sustained in the second half of 2020-21, despite ongoing movement restrictions to control the Covid-19 pandemic. The recovery is expected to gradually accelerate, particularly if the supply of vaccines rises and if the economic scarring effects of the pandemic can be contained, the World Bank said. Growth was supported by a demographic dividend, sound macroeconomic policies, and an acceleration in readymade garment (RMG) exports, while job creation and remittance inflows contributed to a sharp decline in poverty, the report said. Zahid Hussain said, "Recovery is happening now, especially in the labour-intensive sectors. Now, it turns out that the possibility of going to the pre-pandemic level is quite bright. "But there is a risk in the form of hike of commodity prices. If the inflation rate rises to 8-9 percent, there could be an impact on poverty. The way energy prices are rising in the international market, it could have an impact on poverty also. This will increase people's income but will reduce their purchasing power," he said. The former lead economist of the WB's Dhaka office said the rise in energy prices is not due to a shortage of production, but mainly due to supply disruption. This means that the price hike is "cost-pushed". If these prices had risen due to a shortage of production, it would have had a long-term effect on the economy. As it is due to supply disruption, this price increase will become normal in

the next six-seven months, he added. While talking about the poverty rate forecast of local agencies, he said their forecasts are temporary and the outcome may change in another survey. But what the World Bank has done is much more extensive, he said. "So, WB's figure is not comparable with theirs." According to the WB, the pandemic is estimated to have created 62.71 million new poor in 2020 and 48.59 million new poor in 2021 in South Asia. GDP TO GROW BY 6.4 PERCENT IN 2021-22 The World Bank projected Bangladesh's economy to grow by 6.4 percent in the 2021-22 fiscal year, which is 1.3 percentage points higher than the global lender's previous forecast. In June, the WB predicted the country's gross domestic product (GDP) would grow at 5.1 percent in the current fiscal year. "In Bangladesh, continued recovery in exports and consumption will help growth rates pick up to 6.4 percent in the fiscal year 2021-22," it said. However, they added, the recovery is still fragile and uneven. Most countries in South Asia are still far behind reaching pre-pandemic economic levels. In June's budget, the government estimated growth to be 7.2 percent, and in September the Asian Development Bank (ADB) said it would be 7.8 percent. "The pandemic has had profound impacts on South Asia's economy. Going forward, much will depend on the speed of vaccination, the possible emergence of new Covid variants, as well as any major slowdown in the momentum of global growth," said Hartwig Schafer, World Bank vice-president for the South Asia Region.

Miladunnabi on Oct 20

BSS, Dhaka

The holy Eid-e-Miladunnabi, marking the anniversary of birth and demise of Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH), will be observed in the country on October 20 with due religious solemnity. The decision was taken at the National Moon Sighting Committee's meeting held at the Islamic Foundation's Baitul Mukarram office last night with State Minister for Religious Affairs Md Faridul Haque Khan in the chair. The meeting informed that the moon of Rabiul Awal of 1443 Hijri was not sighted in Bangladesh sky yesterday and due to that reason, the holy month of Rabiul Awal will be counted from tomorrow. On this day in 570, the 12th of Rabiul Awal of the Hijri calendar, Prophet Muhammad (SM) was born in Makkah of Saudi Arabia with divine blessings and messages of peace for mankind. He also passed away on the same day. The day is a public holiday.

Compromise, yet again

FROM PAGE 1 decision was the outcome of lobbying and demonstrations by transport associations. Contacted, BRTA Chairman Nur Mohammad Mazumder said many vehicle owners could not update the papers due to the lockdown. The latest waiver will give them the chance. He added that the government did not give in to pressure from transport associations. EXEMPTION NOW NORM Exemption from paying the fines was one of the major demands of transport workers who went on strike in November 2019, protesting the supposed implementation of the Road Transport Act-2018. The new law stipulated hefty fines on vehicles with outdated papers. The government on January 20, 2020 waived the fine until June that year. The waiver was later extended to June this year.

transport association leaders and BRTA officials. Contacted, BRTA Chairman Nur Mohammad Mazumder said many vehicle owners could not update the papers due to the lockdown. The latest waiver will give them the chance. He added that the government did not give in to pressure from transport associations. EXEMPTION NOW NORM Exemption from paying the fines was one of the major demands of transport workers who went on strike in November 2019, protesting the supposed implementation of the Road Transport Act-2018. The new law stipulated hefty fines on vehicles with outdated papers. The government on January 20, 2020 waived the fine until June that year. The waiver was later extended to June this year.

"We wanted not to extend the period of remission after June. We realised the fines from July 1 to today [October 7]. But the situation changed after the recent strike," a BRTA official told The Daily Star. Khondaker Enayet Ullah, secretary general of Bangladesh Road Transport Owners Association, said many of his fellows could not reap the benefit of previous waivers because of coronavirus restrictions. "Our demand is not illogical. The government will benefit when more people update the documents," said Enayet, also the owner of Ena Transport. Rustam Ali Khan, general secretary of Bangladesh Truck Covered-Van Owners Association, said many members of the association could not update the papers because of the lockdown. BRTA Chairman Nur Mohammad

Mazumder said BRTA offices remained closed during the lockdowns, making it impossible for the motorists to get their papers updated even if they wanted to. He added that the latest decision came after the finance ministry's approval. Bangladesh Covered-Van, Truck, Prime Mover, Goods Transport Owners Association and Bangladesh Truck Drivers Workers Federation, observed a one-and-a-half-day strike from September 21 to press home their demands for the waiver among other things. Bangladesh Truck-Covered Van, Tank Lorry, Prime Mover Owners and Workers' Coordination Council also announced similar programmes, but did not eventually observe, following government assurance to meet the demands.

Only 'real' tourists to fly

FROM PAGE 1 "Bangladeshis coming to the departure terminal trying to go to Dubai for work on a visit visa will not be cleared through immigration," said the letter signed by Saleh Muhammad Zakaria, assistant superintendent of police (immigration) at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport. The letter was issued in line with an order by the additional inspector general of police (Special Branch). "Only the real tourists, business people, civil servants, parliamentarians, ministers, politicians, and job holders will have their immigration formalities processed," it said. In other words, holders of UAE visit visas showing up at the departure terminal will have to undergo profiling. Sources in the police said this directive was issued to curb the abuse of the UAE visit visa by traffickers and manpower recruiting agencies. However, law enforcement agencies have expressed concern that the directive may have just created a scope for the airport authorities to extort migrant workers.

"The immigration formalities of those who had been to Dubai for work or have residency permits may be processed," read the letter. Those willing to travel on legal residency visas and work permits can pass through immigration without any obstacles, it added. The new directive came as a surprise for Bijoy who had no idea that he won't be allowed to fly to Dubai for work on a tourist visa. "I've already spent Tk 2 lakh taking loans from various sources. I will now pay for the air ticket and hope I can pass through the airport immigration," he said. Dubai stopped issuing work permits for Bangladesh workers in 2015. But that did not stem the tide of workers heading to the glitzy emirate for work. Employers in the Gulf state bring migrant workers under tourist visa which is later converted to work visas, said industry insiders. Should a worker find an employment, he can pay 2,000 dirham (about Tk 50,000) to get his tourist visa converted to a work permit. According to the Special Branch

statistics, around 3.17 lakh people left the country for Dubai on tourist visas from October 2019 to March this year. Of them, only about 22,000 returned home. The rest either converted their tourist visas into work visas or were trafficked to other countries. Dubai is used as a transit point of major labour trafficking routes, mainly to countries with which Bangladesh does not have any agreement regarding migrant workers. It is evident in many Facebook groups of Dubai-based migrant workers that the UAE work visa is synonymous with tourist visa and people face little or no trouble in getting past immigration at Dhaka airport. Facebook groups are rife with posts by travel agencies offering packages under the headlines: "Visit visa, ticket, insurance, airport support" or "Dubai visit visa 3-month and 1-month full package". Gulshan-based travel agency Dhaka Trip's Hossain Faruk explained what "airport support" means. "The airport authorities create some obstacles to letting people fly

on tourist visas, so we arrange help for them at the airport," said Faruk. The "full package" costs Tk 125,000. Asked whether the "airport support" can be purchased separately, he replied in the negative. "It is managed with support from friends and relatives at the airport. This is not a service we sell commercially," he said. Munir Saleheen, secretary of the expatriates welfare ministry, yesterday said they were aware of how the migrant workers abuse tourist visa to go to Dubai for work. "We also want to encourage workers seeking employment in Dubai. To address this problem, there will be a meeting of the ministers concerned by the end of this month. The meeting may make some decisions in this regard." A high official of Special Branch of police told this newspaper that they found a huge number of people were trafficked to other countries after they reached Dubai on visit visa. "We have imposed the ban to stop this practice and bar human traffickers from having this scope," said the official, requesting anonymity.