

BANGLADESH
UPDATE



415
New cases in 24hrs



15,61,878
Total cases



27,674
Deaths



15,23,134
Recoveries

GLOBAL
UPDATE



4,860,490
Deaths



238,190,997
Total cases

In jail, listed ‘criminal’ wins councillor polls

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN

The surprise win of an alleged gangster as the councillor of Ward-16 in Chattogram has shocked many residents of the city.

Nur Mostafa Tutu alias Tinu became the ward councillor following Thursday's by-election in the Chawkbazar area of the city.

Police and Rab officers say he is among the top listed criminal suspects in the area.

Tinu has been in jail since May 23 in an arms case filed by Rab-7. He was arrested multiple times before with firearms.

Members of his gang are suspected of extorting, mugging and engaging in violent fights with local Chhatra League men, locals and law enforcers said.

Following the death of former ward councillor Sayed Golam Haider Mintu, 21 individuals took part in the by-election to be the councillor.

Tinu got 789 votes while his closest contestant Abdur Rauf, who is also known as a racketeer, bagged 776 votes. Out of the 3,2081 constituents, only 6,855 cast their vote.

Officials at the election commission in Chattogram said all the candidates lost their money deposited with the

commission because none of them, including Tinu, got one-eighth of the votes of the total constituents.

Officials said Tinu was arrested on October 22, 2019, in possession of firearms and bullets. After arresting him, Rab said Tinu led several gangs in Chawkbazar, Bakalia and Kapasgola areas in the city.

Officers said the gangs were mostly involved in mugging and extorting.

On April 29, 2003, Detective Branch (DB) of police arrested Tinu along with another man in possession of an AK-47 rifle in the city's Golpahar area.

Police officials said there were four cases and multiple general diaries against Tinu with Chawkbazar and Panchlaish police stations.

A local business owner in Chawkbazar said Tinu's gang members extort roadside shopkeepers, vendors and other establishments every week, even though he was in jail.

"Most of the voters got frustrated and did not go to vote after seeing him run for the position," he said.

Contacted, Bijoy Basak, deputy commissioner (south) of Chattogram Metropolitan Police, said police have been extra-careful since the election result to avert any untoward incident.



This partially collapsed and completely unusable bridge was the only way to a Tripura neighbourhood on a hill in Habiganj's Satchhari National Park. At least 20 Tripura families have not been able to leave their village since Wednesday, when the bridge fell amid heavy showers.

PHOTO: MINTU DESHWARA

70-80pc people to get shots by March 2022

Says health minister

UNB, Dhaka

Health Minister Zahid Maleque yesterday said the government geared up its nationwide vaccination programmes to inoculate 70-80 percent population by March 2022.

Five crore people have already been vaccinated during the nationwide vaccination campaign, he said.

The minister was speaking at a programme arranged by Manikganj Sadar district Puja Celebration Council marking Durga Puja.

Meanwhile, Covid-19 killed 20

more people in Bangladesh and infected 415 others in 24 hours till yesterday morning.

On Friday, the single-day death toll fell to seven, the lowest in eight months, as the country reported 645 cases on the day.

With the fresh numbers, the Covid-19 fatalities reached 27,674 while the caseload mounted to 1,561,878, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

The fresh cases were detected after testing 16,925 samples.

Don't let it hurt

FROM PAGE 1

Ahmed said the international community should convince China, Japan and India to restrict their businesses in Myanmar.

About the "double-standard" maintained by several countries, he said, "They are saying they will not ban businesses in Myanmar for the sake of the general people. How could they then enforce such bans on Iran or North Korea? Are there no general people there?"

He added that Bangladesh failed to keep the issue of Rohingya genocide on top of the agenda in international forums.

Security analyst and retired Brig Gen M Sakhawat Hussain said

Myanmar intelligence groups could have a role in the killing of Muhib Ullah who posed a challenge to the Myanmar government.

"Muhib Ullah was from the youth group that wanted repatriation," Sakhawat said, urging the government to look into why firearms and drugs were available in the refugee camps despite the presence of multiple law enforcement agencies.

Abu Mursheed Chowdhury, co-chairman of the NGO Forum, said young Rohingyas should be given technical training, because "an idle brain is a devil's workshop".

Amir Khasru, coordinator of Study Group on Regional Affairs conducted the webinar.

Award for all journos

FROM PAGE 1

"We do need help on so many fronts -- it is so much more difficult and dangerous to be a journalist today."

Philippine press groups and rights activists hailed Ressa's award as a "triumph" in a country ranked as one of the world's most dangerous for journalists.

Since Duterte was swept to power in 2016, Ressa and Rappler have endured what media advocates say is a grinding series of criminal charges, investigations and online attacks.

Duterte has called Rappler a "fake news outlet", and Ressa has been the target of abusive messages online.

Ressa, 58, said she hoped the prize would provide a protective shield for her and other journalists in the Philippines against physical attacks and online threats.

"This 'us against them' was never the creation of the journalists, it was the creation of the people in power who wanted to use a type of leadership that divides society," Ressa said, describing the award "like a shot of adrenaline".

"I hope... this allows journalists to do our jobs well without fear."

Ressa has been a staunch critic of Duterte and his government's policies, including a drug war that rights groups estimate has killed tens of thousands of mostly poor men.

Rappler was among the domestic and foreign media outlets that published shocking images of the killings and questioned its legal basis.

International Criminal Court judges have authorised a full-blown investigation into a possible crime against humanity during the bloody campaign.

Other media outlets have fallen foul of Duterte, including the Philippine Daily Inquirer and broadcasting giant ABS-CBN, which lost its free-to-air licence last year.

But Ressa said Rappler's independence meant it could fight back. "We have no other businesses

to protect... so it's very easy for us to push back," she said.

Ressa said she had been issued 10 arrest warrants in less than two years and still faced seven court cases, including for tax evasion, which she described as "ludicrous" and would win.

She is on bail pending an appeal against a conviction last year in a cyber libel case, for which she faces up to six years in prison.

Two other cyber libel cases were dismissed earlier this year.

"That abuse of power would have worked if I allowed the fear in my emotions and in my head to dominate our reaction -- the biggest challenge was always to conquer your fear," she said.

"Being fearless doesn't mean not being afraid, it just means knowing how to handle your fear."

The author of "How to Stand Up to a Dictator" hopes to get permission to travel to Norway to pick up her Nobel Prize.

The Philippine election season, which got under way this month with candidates registering for more than 18,000 posts from president to town councillor, would be "critical" for the country, said Ressa, calling it an "existential moment".

Voters will choose in May the successor to Duterte, who is constitutionally barred from seeking a second six-year term.

Surveys show Duterte's daughter, Sara, and the son and namesake of former dictator Ferdinand Marcos among the front runners for the top job. Sara has denied plans to run.

"This is going to be a battle for facts," Ressa said, warning the spread of disinformation on social media platforms could threaten the "integrity" of the election.

Filipinos are among the world's heaviest users of social media, and the country has become a key battleground for fake news.

FROM PAGE 1

"The MoU covers key areas including protection, education, skills-training, livelihoods and health [of the Rohingyas], which will help support the refugees to lead a decent life and prepare better for their sustainable return to Myanmar in future," said a UNHCR statement after the deal was signed.

The UN response will build upon and complement the humanitarian assistance so far provided by Bangladeshi NGOs on the island, it added.

The UN organisations would provide their humanitarian assistance in Bhasan Char as they do in camps in Cox's Bazar, Mohsin said.

The humanitarian assistance will be given under the supervision of the civil administration, he added.

Since December last year, the government has relocated about 18,000 Rohingyas to Bhasan Char from Cox's Bazar in phases.

The government plans to shift about 81,000 more Rohingyas to the island in three months, according to Mohsin.

The facility in Bhasan Char can accommodate about one lakh Rohingyas, he said.

Bangladesh Navy implemented the Tk 3,100 crore housing project with 120 brick-built cluster villages and 120 cyclone shelters, flood protection

embankments, facilities for education, farming and fishing, hospitals and playgrounds.

The UN, however, had raised concerns over risks of tidal surges and cyclones at the remote island despite the government's repeated assurance that the char is a much better living place than the Cox's Bazar camps.

In the absence of the UN in Bhasan Char, Bangladeshi non-governmental organisations (NGOs) began providing humanitarian assistance to the Rohingyas in December last year from their fund. Since then, the government had repeatedly been urging the UN to begin its operations there.

The MoU is a further expression of the government of Bangladesh's generosity and support towards the Rohingya population until they can return safely and sustainably to Myanmar, the UNHCR said in the statement.

The Bangladesh government will look after the security of the Rohingya people living in the Bhasan Char and the security of the local and international aid workers, Mohsin said.

Asked about the measures taken to keep the island's new inhabitants safe, Mohsin said: "Security measures are very good in Bhasan Char."

Besides, an additional 200 Ansar

members will be recruited soon for the island, he said.

The UNHCR said prior to the signing of the MoU, the UN held discussions with the Rohingya refugee community in Cox's Bazar, as well as with those already on the island during a UN visit to Bhasan Char in March 2021, to better understand their needs and views.

"These discussions, as well as those with government counterparts and Bangladeshi NGOs working on the island are expected to continue on a regular basis."

The UN encourages the international community to increase its generous support to the humanitarian response in Bangladesh, recognising that the Joint Response Plan for the Rohingya Humanitarian Response in Cox's Bazar is currently less than half funded for this year, the UNHCR statement said.

State Minister for Disaster Management and Relief M Enamur Rahman was present at the signing ceremony.

Bangladesh has been hosting more than 1.1 million displaced Rohingyas in Cox's Bazar. Most of them arrived after a military crackdown by Myanmar in 2017, which the UN called a "textbook example of ethnic cleansing" and other rights groups called "genocide".

Cutting deeper thru the youth

FROM PAGE 1

On September 24, the RU student died by suicide failing to cope with severe depression.

Imrul is among four university students who died by suicide from September 23 to 30 this year, according to media reports.

A recent survey by Aachol Foundation, a non-profit organisation which creates awareness of mental health among students, found that 14,436 people committed suicide from March 8, 2020 to March 8, 2021. Forty-nine percent of them were aged between 18 and 35.

However, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics data show that about 10,000 people die by suicide in Bangladesh every year on average.

In another study conducted in September on 2,552 tertiary level students from all types of educational institutions across the country, Aachol Foundation found that 84.6 percent of the students suffered from mental health problems during the pandemic.

About 75 percent of the respondents said they lost interest in continuing study and 29 percent of them committed different types of self-harming activities due to depression related to education and their future careers.

Some 21 percent of the youths thought of committing suicide at least once in the last one year.

Uncertainty over their future career, deteriorating financial condition of their families amid the pandemic, death of family members from Covid, loneliness, and breaking up of relationship due to long-term separation during the pandemic are some of the key reasons mentioned by the students for their depression.

Prof Dr Mahjabeen Haque of Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology at Dhaka University said Aachol Foundation's findings were not unexpected at all.

"For our youths, Covid-19 pandemic has suddenly created an uncertain situation. Educational institutions were closed, job market is shrinking and many families were destroyed financial during the pandemic," she told The Daily Star.

"Again, in this age, youths usually develop romantic relationship many of which have also been ruined by the long period of separation during the pandemic. Youths also love to spend a lot of time with their peers which they used to do at their institutions."

As the institutions were closed,

youths could not share their emotions and experiences with their friends, the DU teacher said. "They lost their financial independence and had to remain confined to their home for a long time. For those who live in families which are not very supportive, things became even tougher. In this way, the pandemic has made a devastating impact on the mental health of our youth," Mahjabeen said.

Experts have also pointed out the fact that most cases of mental health problems remain untreated in Bangladesh as the treatment is taboo and there is a severe shortage of trained manpower.

According to the national mental health survey of Bangladesh 2018-19, jointly conducted by the Bangladesh government and World Health Organisation (WHO), 92 percent adults with mental health problems do not get any treatment and 94 percent youths aged between 18 and 23 with mental health problems do not receive any treatment.

The survey found that 18.7 percent of Bangladesh's population aged 18 and above have mental disorders.

Dr Mohammad Muntasir Maruf, assistant registrar at National Institute of Mental Health, said seeking treatment for mental health problems is still taboo in Bangladesh.

"People do not want to share their personal issues of anxiety or frustration fearing harassment and being stigmatised by the society. Patients are taken to hospitals only when they become severely ill."

"Despite this, we are having an increasing number of young patients with anxiety disorders, depression and obsessive compulsive disorders induced by the pandemic."

He said the country's treatment capacity is also highly insufficient as there are only 270 psychiatrists and about 500 psychologists to treat a huge number of patients with mental disorders.

"There is no course or training facility for psychiatric and mental health nurses in Bangladesh. Study of mental health is also very neglected in Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) curricula which exacerbated the scarcity of trained professionals," the physician said.

Experts suggested a unified approach from the family, society and the government to save youths from the imminent mental health disaster.

Prof Mahjabeen said, "It has been found in various studies, including

one conducted by Aachol Foundation, that youths who spend more time on devices and do not maintain regular sleep cycle are more vulnerable to anxiety disorder. It is important to maintain a healthy environment at home so that young members can lead a disciplined life."

Tansen Rose, founder of Aachol Foundation, said: "Our society also has some responsibilities to keep our next generation mentally healthy. Our youths face tough competitions in every step of their life -- from primary school to getting a job. The society puts a lot of expectations and pressure on them. When they fail to meet these expectations, they often face criticism, insult and neglect. Such practices should be stopped. We should keep in mind that when a person suffers from mental health issues, such an act can put pressure on him/her to commit suicide."

Stressing the need for enhancing the country's mental healthcare capacity, Dr Maruf said at least 10 years is needed to produce enough psychiatrists and psychologists to treat a huge number of mental health patients.

"In the meantime, we should train our existing doctors and nurses to treat patients. In this way, we can extend mental healthcare services to general hospitals and upazila health complexes."

He suggested integrating social workers and counsellors into the healthcare system and mobilising them to raise awareness among the youths about mental health issues.

PM opens

The power plant consisting two units with a capacity of 1,200MW each is the country's maiden power project of its kind, he said.

Project Director Shaukat Akbar said work is going on in Rooppur maintaining Covid-19 hygiene rules strictly.

He said installation of almost all types of nuclear equipment will be completed with setting up of the reactor pressure vessel inside the physical structure of unit-1. As a result, the work inside the reactor building of this unit will be almost completed.

The Rooppur power plant project is being implemented by Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission. It is being constructed with technical and financial support from Russia.

Facebook hit with another global outage

Services back after hours

AFP, San Francisco

Facebook on Friday said users around the world again had problems accessing its services for hours due to a tweak of its system, just days after a massive outage caused in a similar fashion.

"Sincere apologies to anyone who wasn't able to access our products in the last couple of hours," a Facebook spokesperson told AFP about 21:30 GMT. "We fixed the issue, and everything should be back to normal now."

Website trouble tracker DownDetector showed spikes in reports of problems accessing or using Facebook and its photo-centric Instagram network as well as Messenger and WhatsApp starting about three hours earlier.

Facebook attributed the trouble to a configuration change at its computing platform and said that it affected users of the social network and Instagram, Messenger and Workplace globally.

People flocked to Twitter to voice frustration.

"What's up with Instagram?" read a tweet that included a picture of cartoon character Bart Simpson sitting in a corner in apparent punishment.

"It's not even 4 days and it's already down again."

"Problems with Instagram, Facebook, Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp AGAIN!" read a lament in a DownDetector chat forum.

Hundreds of millions of people were unable to access Facebook, Instagram or WhatsApp for more than six hours on Monday, underscoring the world's reliance on platforms owned by the Silicon Valley giant.

At least five die in Turag boat capsizes

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

Firefighters rescued five bodies till yesterday afternoon, hours after a trawler capsized in the Turag at Aminbazar point, on the outskirts of the capital.

The death includes a woman and four children -- three boys and a girl.

Divers of fire service rescued the bodies of a woman and children from the river, Nazma Akter, duty officer of Fire Service and Civil Defence control room, confirmed to The Daily Star.

After being hit by a sand-laden cargo vessel, the trawler that was carrying 18 people capsized in the river around 5:30am yesterday in Koilar Ghat area.

On information around 8:45am, firefighters rushed to the spot and started the rescue operations, fire service sources said.

Rescuers recovered the bodies of two children and a woman after the trawler capsized and later divers recovered the two bodies around 3:45 pm and 4:45 pm from the river, Khaleda Yasmin, duty officer of Fire Service and Civil Defence Headquarters told The Daily Star.

Dino Moni Sharma, deputy director of fire service, told reporters on the spot that the rescue operation was suspended at 6:00pm yesterday due to a lack of light and strong current in the river.

"At night, our teams will patrol the river as two people are still missing. We will resume our operation in the morning," the fire service official said.

Police are trying to identify the vessel that hit the trawler, Dino Moni added.

Serum resumes

FROM PAGE 1

a large unexpected order from the Indian government.

Then in April, in the face of a ferocious second coronavirus wave, the Indian government placed a bar on vaccine exports, dealing a major blow to 190 countries including Bangladesh, which counted on the affordable, 90 percent-effective Covishield jab to vaccinate its population.

This sent the government, which by then was battling a spike in cases in Bangladesh, searching high and low for vaccines. It managed the Sinopharm vaccine, which is said to be 79 percent effective in preventing coronavirus infections, from a Chinese state-owned pharmaceutical company.

This, along with donations of Pfizer, Moderna and AstraZeneca jabs from the Covax scheme, the US and a few other countries kept Bangladesh's Covid-19 inoculation drive, which began on February 7 with the Covishield vaccine, ticking along.

Now, with the easing of India's vaccine exports, Bangladesh's vaccine campaign got further momentum.

So far, Bangladesh has inoculated about 15 percent of its population with full doses of the Covid-19 vaccine.

Bangladesh plans to vaccinate 70-80 percent of the population by March next year, said Health Minister Zahid Maleque.

Growing

FROM PAGE 1

Adnan Zillur Morshed, executive director of Brac University's Centre for Inclusive Architecture and Urbanism, said there should be extensive research on the middle-class.

Journalist and writer Faruk Wasif said the new middle-class is more like a consumer group than a class of leaders.

PPRC Chairman Hossain Zillur Rahman moderated the discussion.