

**BANGLADESH UPDATE**



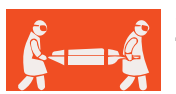
466

New cases in 24hrs



15,46,485

Total cases



27,737

Deaths



15,26,368

Recoveries

**GLOBAL UPDATE**



4,892,618

Deaths



240,147,984

Total cases

WEBINAR ON ROHINGYA CRISIS

## Repatriation the only solution

Academicians urge int'l community to mount pressure on Myanmar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Saying that repatriation is the only solution to the Rohingya crisis, academicians in a webinar yesterday urged the international community to mount pressure on Myanmar so that it takes back its nationals stuck in Bangladesh.

They also accused the international community of having a double standard regarding the Rohingya issue.

The academicians were from different fields of studies, including international relations, geography, disaster management, social sciences, environmental sciences, and peace and conflicts.

Department of Disaster Science and Management, University of Dhaka, and Institute for Risk and Disaster Reduction, University College London (UCL), jointly organised the webinar, titled "Rohingyas in Bangladesh: Socio-Political and Environmental Perspectives".

Presenting a paper at the programme, Prof Intiaz Ahmed, of DU's international relations, asked if the international community could impose sanctions on Iran and North Korea, then why Myanmar would not be slapped with such sanctions.

"It is a double standard policy. It is not good for the international community. If you maintain a double role in the global world, people will not take you [the international community] seriously," he said.

Prof Intiaz said the Rohingya diaspora should be engaged in the repatriation process and suggested that the diaspora choose several leaders, instead of one, to avoid being a "target". "The Rohingya leadership should be a civil entity of a diverse group. There are windows of opportunities for the international community to put pressure on the Myanmar authorities to resolve the Rohingya crisis. And there is no other option than repatriation to resolve the crisis."

Prof ASM Maksud Kamal, of department of disaster science and management and also pro-vice chancellor (Academic) of Dhaka University, said following the Rohingya influx deforestation occurred that causes flash flood, land erosion and regular fire incidents in the camp areas.

Due to hill cutting, deforestation and unplanned settlements in the camps, the camp area lost around 70 percent

protected vegetation after 2017, Prof Kamal said.

He also said in 20 years, around 10 percent camp area would be susceptible to experiencing landslides.

He said the sooner the Rohingyas are repatriated the better for both Bangladesh and Myanmar.

Prof Kazi Matin Ahmed, of department of geology at Dhaka University, said groundwater is a vital resource for sustaining livelihood of the host communities as well as providing humanitarian services to the displaced Rohingyas.

There are potential risks to groundwater resources in Ukhia-Teknaf area associated with the Rohingya influx. The resources need to be protected from undesired impacts by undertaking appropriate management plans, he said.

DU Prof Md Rafiqul Islam said mistrust and grievances of the local community over the Rohingya issue were increasing day by day.

"To resolve the crisis, there is no option other than repatriation of all Rohingya people to Myanmar."

Zillur Rahman, professor of department of disaster science and management, talked about the Bhasan Char where the government is targeting to relocate one lakh Rohingyas from the Cox's Bazar camps.

The island is tectonically stable, he said, adding that from 2014 to 2020, the island was enlarged and approached to a rounded shape that seems more stable than the previous years.

"The accredited land is higher than the eroded land indicating the island is becoming more stable," Prof Zillur said.

Prof Sadeka Halim, dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences at Dhaka University, posed a question: Is Bhasan Char really the answer to the Rohingya problem?

"Bhasan Char is not the answer. We need to repatriate them [the Rohingyas]. We need to have a lot of dialogues with our counterparts in the Myanmar, including civil society, academicians and Rohingya diasporas, to mount pressure on the Myanmar government for the repatriation."

Taking part in the webinar as the chief guest, State Minister for the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief Md Enamur Rahman said repatriation was the only measure required to protect both the host and the Rohingya communities.



Vehicles stuck in a long tailback in Nalka bridge area on the western side of the Bangabandhu Bridge in Sirajganj yesterday. Work on expansion of Nalka Bridge has narrowed the highway in the area, causing excruciating jam.

PHOTO:

STAR

## Culprits to be hunted down

FROM PAGE 1

do so [engaging in communal incidents] in future."

Terming vandalising of temples in Cumilla "very unfortunate", Hasina said, "This is an era of technology and those involved in the incident will definitely be found out using technology."

She said people irrespective of caste, creed and religion in Bangladesh celebrate all festivals together. "Religion is for individuals and festival is for all and we enjoy every festival together."

But there are a few cliques who are out to destroy the spirit by carrying out some communal incidents, she added.

"Some people are religiously blind and they always want to create communal conflicts. Such people belong not only to the Muslim community, but also to all other religions. In that case, if we all work together, they can't do any harm."

Hasina said the Cumilla incident occurred at a time when the country was progressing towards development at full speed and it was aimed at hampering the journey of the nation's uplift and creating a problem in the country.

She said those who can't earn people's confidence and trust and have no ideology can carry out such incidents.

As a Hindu community leader sought the government's intervention

regarding the information that some people were planning to attack them during immersion of the idols of Goddess Durga tomorrow, the PM said they are aware of it and measures have already been taken to this end.

She called upon the Hindu community leaders, particularly those of the Bangladesh Puja Udjapon Committee, to formulate a policy to determine how many Puja mandaps will be set up across the country to celebrate Durga Puja keeping in mind the constraint of security personnel to ensure safety and security of the mandaps.

Hasina urged the Hindus community people not to consider themselves as minority people and perform their religious rituals with the same rights enjoyed by followers of other religions as they are born and brought up in the country and fought shoulder to shoulder to liberate it during the Liberation War.

In this connection, the premier recalled the memory of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, saying that he had turned Bangladesh into a secular country by incorporating the matter in the constitution.

"Bangabandhu wanted people of all faiths to practice their respective religions freely."

REQUEST TO INDIA

The PM said not only Bangladesh but also neighbouring India needs to be

aware and careful about communal harmony. She said Bangladesh always remembered with gratitude the help India provided during the 1971 Liberation War.

"So, my request is that they should be a little more aware so that nothing is done there that affects our country," she said.

Describing Bangladesh as a country of religious harmony, Hasina said "people will perform their religious rituals with dignity and sincerity."

She renewed her determination to build Bangladesh as a peaceful country where there will be no room for militancy and terrorism.

Highlighting various measures taken by her government for the uplift of the Hindu community, the PM said her government was committed to ensuring welfare of all irrespective of caste, creed and religion.

Hasina said the dignity of Bangladesh has been established in the global stage as it has turned into a developing nation. "We want the country to be a developed and prosperous one by 2041 with upholding the dignity."

Bangladesh Puja Udjapon Parishad President Milon Kanti Datta and the principal of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission in Dhaka, Swami Purnatmananda Maharaj, spoke at the function, chaired by Mahanagar Sarbojanin Puja Committee President Shailendra Nath Majumder.

WORK ON BRIDGE

## 20km tailback on Sirajganj highway

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

The expansion work of Nalka Bridge, on the western end of the Bangabandhu Bridge, has caused a long tailback since Wednesday.

The tailback extended for around 20 kilometres on both sides of the bridge that is situated on the Karatoa in Sirajganj's Raiganj upazila.

At worst, the stretch goes up to 40 kilometres at nights, reported our correspondent.

Rafiqul Islam, traffic inspector in Sirajganj, said a large number of vehicles remained stranded on both sides of the bridge.

The vehicles on the route were plying using a single lane due to the ongoing construction work. As a result, vehicles on one side of the bridge remain stranded, he added.

Additional policemen were deployed on the highway to ease the movement of the vehicles and control the heavy traffic, he further said.

Meanwhile, because of the long tailback, vehicles were taking turns to sub-roads, eventually causing traffic jams across the district.

The jam at the Nalka Bridge impacted traffic pressure on Bonpara, Bogura and Nagarbari highways, reported our correspondent.

Talking to The Daily Star, some drivers alleged that they had to remain stuck in the jam for over five hours to cross the 20-kilometre stretch.

Thousands of vehicles from 16 northern districts and five to six southern districts use Bangabandhu Bridge regularly and those would face difficulties plying on the highway due to the tailback, said the police official.

## AL tickets

FROM PAGE 1

In a statement yesterday, the central committee of AL said Mohammad Wasim, instead of Atikur, will run for chairman in Haripur union while Putul Rani Biswas, not Hashem, will vie for the post in Nasimgar sadar union.

Asked, AL Office Secretary Barrister Biplob Barua said the decision to nominate the two accused was made as they hid the information on their nomination forms. After AL President Sheikh Hasina learnt that they were facing charges of carrying out communal attacks, she took the decision to scrap their nomination on Wednesday night.

The attacks on Hindu villagers' houses shocked the nation in 2016. Police pressed charges against the suspects in December 2017, said sources at Brahmanbaria Chief Judicial Magistrate Court.

Police arrested Atikur on January 5, 2017, in the capital's Bhatara area. The local government ministry suspended him from his post of UP chairman on January 23, 2017. The suspension was withdrawn later and he walked out of jail on bail on November 6, 2017.

On October 29, 2016, a group of villagers assaulted a Hindu man in Nasimgar, saying he had hurt their religious sentiment with a Facebook post, and handed him to police.

The next day, 15 temples and more than 100 houses of Hindu villagers were vandalised. Valuables were looted and many of the houses were set on fire. Further attacks took place in the following weeks.

The Criminal Investigation Department later found out that the Hindu man who was assaulted and arrested over the Facebook post, did not make the post. Someone else gained access to his Facebook ID and made the post.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Puja Udjapon Parishad yesterday announced a sit-in programme at all puja mandaps today for three hours from 11:00am, protesting the attacks on Wednesday.

A statement from the parishad also said one of its teams visited the mandaps in Cumilla which were attacked.

## It may be 'last chance' to find Covid origins: WHO

REUTERS, Geneva

The World Health Organization said on Wednesday its newly formed advisory group on dangerous pathogens may be "our last chance" to determine the origins of the SARS-CoV-2 virus and urged China to provide data from early cases.

The first human cases of Covid-19 were reported in the central Chinese city of Wuhan in December 2019. China has repeatedly dismissed theories that the virus leaked from one of its laboratories and has said no more visits are needed.

A WHO-led team spent four weeks in and around Wuhan earlier this year with Chinese scientists, and said in a joint report in March that the virus had probably been transmitted from bats to humans through another animal but further research was needed.

WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has said the investigation was hampered by a dearth of raw data pertaining to the first days of the outbreak and has called for lab audits.

The WHO on Wednesday named the 26 proposed members of its Scientific Advisory Group on the Origins of Novel Pathogens (SAGO). They include Marion Koopmans, Thea Fischer, Hung Nguyen and Chinese animal health expert Yang Yungui, who took part in the joint investigation in Wuhan.

Maria van Kerkhove, WHO technical lead on Covid-19, voiced hope that there would be further WHO-led international missions to China which would engage the country's cooperation.

She told a news conference that "more than three dozen recommended studies" must still be carried out to determine how the virus crossed from the animal species to humans.

Reported Chinese testing for antibodies in Wuhan residents in 2019 will be "absolutely critical" to understanding the virus's origins, van Kerkhove said.

The WHO, in an editorial in Science, said that detailed investigations of the earliest known and suspected cases in China prior to December 2019 were still needed, including analyses of stored blood samples from 2019 in Wuhan and retrospective searches of hospital and mortality data for earlier cases.

Labs in the area where the first reports of human infections emerged in Wuhan must be a focus, as ruling out an accident requires sufficient evidence, it said.

Mike Ryan, WHO's top emergency expert, said the new panel may be the last chance to establish the origin of SARS-CoV-2, "a virus that has stopped our whole world".

The WHO was seeking to "take a step back, create an environment where we can again look at the scientific issues", he said. "This is our best chance, and it may be our last chance to understand the origins of this virus."

Chen Xu, China's ambassador to the UN in Geneva, told a separate news conference the conclusions of the joint study were "quite clear", adding that as international teams had been sent to China twice already, "it is time to send teams to other places."

## On course to firing

FROM PAGE 1

Energy Agency (IAEA) to send the fuel to the Bangladesh territory.

Upon its arrival in Bangladesh, the fuel would be taken to the base station in Pabna with the highest security protocol, he said.

He hopes that fuel for the plant could be brought within the middle of 2023 and then a trial run of the plant would start.

"We are constructing the infrastructure following the guidelines of the IAEA and they have expressed satisfaction over the works so far."

Asked about the risk of radiation, Akbar said the construction of the nuclear project is designed in such a way that the amount of radiation emitted from the plant during its normal operation would be so insignificant that it will never rise above the level set for a person who will work on the site.

Apart from the active and passive safety systems, there are five layers of

safety in the design documentation of the Rooppur Power Plant.

It is guaranteed by the design as well confirmed by the vendor country that the radiation limit beyond the 300 metres of our reactor building will never exceed above the internationally acceptable level in any condition, either in normal operation or in an emergency.

The limit of radiation within the 300-metre periphery -- which would include those operating and maintaining the plant -- would be different from that for the general public beyond the periphery.

"There is no risk of radiation after the 300 metres of this nuclear power plant or even for anyone who will work on the site."

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

FROM PAGE 1

College Hospital around noon.

Of those vaccinated yesterday, 50 students each were from Government High School and SK Government Girls High School, and 10 each were from Jatir Janak Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman High School of Sadar upazila and Garpara Zahid Maleque High School.

Mobassir Rahman Rafid, Afnan Azad, Israt Jahan Joynab and Tasmia Akter were among the first to receive the shots.

All of them were kept under close observation in the vaccination centre for an hour. No side effect was reported at that time.

"We returned to school after one and a half years. But there was a fear of getting Covid-19. We will stay relaxed now after receiving the vaccine," said Israt Jahan, a 10th-grader of SK Government Girls High School.

According to health officials, all these children will be kept under observation for seven to 14 days. If the trial run is successful, the child

vaccination campaign will be launched on a large scale in Dhaka soon.

Then the campaign will be expanded to 20 other districts under which around 30 lakh schoolchildren will get the Pfizer jabs, they added.

Speaking at the event, Zahid Maleque said the government will vaccinate 30 lakh schoolchildren initially.

"There are over a crore [school] children in the country. We will vaccinate every one of them gradually," he said. "We have 60 lakh Pfizer doses currently."

He added that around half of the population will get vaccines by January.

So far around 5 crore, or 21 percent of the total population, have received the first dose of Covid-19 vaccines.

About the novel coronavirus transmission, the minister said, "The Covid-19 situation is under control now. The positivity rate is 2.4 percent now with a lower death rate. Despite this, we have to follow the health

safety rules."

Prof Abul Bashar Mohammad Khurshid Alam, director general of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), among others, were present at the event.

7 DIE, 466 GET COVID

Seven more people died from Covid-19 in the 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, said a DGHS press release.

With this, the total number of Covid deaths in the country now stands at 27,737 and the death rate is 1.77 percent.

At least 466 new infections were recorded during the period, taking the number of people infected to 15,64,485, added the release.

The positivity rate was 2.16 percent against 21,568 samples tested across the country in the 24 hours.

At least 695 Covid patients recovered during the period. The number of recoveries rose to 15,26,368 and the recovery rate was 97.56 percent.

Among the seven deceased, three were men and four women.