

396
New cases in 24hrs



15,64,881
Total cases



27,746
Deaths



15,26,891
Recoveries



4,900,281
Deaths



240,543,401
Total cases



Road crashes claim 6 lives in Pabna, Feni

STAR REPORT

Three people were killed as a truck hit a rickshaw van carrying passengers and a motorcycle in Pabna's Iswardi upazila yesterday.

The accident took place on Pabna-Pakshi road in Tetultola around 6:30am, reports our Pabna correspondent.

Sub-Inspector Kamruzzaman of Iswardi Police Station said the accident happened as the driver of the Iswardi-bound truck lost control.

The victims are: Monsur Ali Khan, 35, of Basherabad in Iswardi; Saidul Shah, 50, of Char Awtapara; and Asifuzzaman, 30, of Pabna Sadar upazila.

Three-wheeler passenger Monsur and pillion passenger of the motorcycle, Asifuzzaman, died on the spot. Another three-wheeler passenger Saidul died on the way to a hospital, he said.

The SI said the truck driver managed to flee.

He added that after the accident, locals tried to put up a barricade on the road. Police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control.

THREE MORE KILLED IN FENI

In another incident, three shoe factory workers were killed and two others injured as a lorry hit them from behind at Muhuriganj in Feni's Chhagalnaiya on Thursday night, reports our local correspondent.

Sergeant Monirul Islam Bhuiyan, in-charge of Muhuriganj highway police outpost, said police held the lorry driver and seized the vehicle.

The bodies were sent to Feni General Hospital morgue for autopsies, he added.

The deceased are: Mosharrif Hossain, 32, Md Shaju, 35, and Jahirul Islam, 28.

Hailing from Jamalpur, all the victims were workers of a shoe factory in Muhuriganj.

One of the injured was admitted to a private hospital in Chattogram.



A woman blows a conch while others light lamps during the celebration of Dashai Karam puja, a major festival of the local ethnic minority community Turi, in Madhaurpur area of Chapainawabganj's Gomostapur upazila on Thursday evening. Community leaders said they celebrated the festival after at least 40 years as they could not arrange the event due to poverty and lack of awareness. The two-day event ended yesterday morning.

PHOTO: RABIUL HASAN

Four migrants dead, 21 missing off coast of Spain

AFP, Madrid

The bodies of four migrants have been found off southern Spain, the coast guard said yesterday, adding that it was looking for 21 others still missing after their boat sank.

Rescuers saved the three people from the sinking boat late Thursday, and appealed for other vessels to look out for the missing migrants, a coast guard spokeswoman said.

One body was recovered from the boat while the other three were found floating nearby, she added.

The vessel was first spotted around 70 kilometres (40 miles) west

of Spain's Cape Trafalgar by a passing merchant ship which sounded the alarm.

Two men were found alive on board the boat while a woman was rescued from the water.

The survivors said the boat had departed for Spain with 28 people on board.

A helicopter was dispatched in the search for the missing migrants, which began on Thursday night.

Spain is one of the largest gateways for migrants departing from North Africa and seeking a better life in Europe.

Another mosque attack kills 41

FROM PAGE 1

In a video statement, Mehmood said security for the mosque had been provided by guards from the Shia community but that henceforth the Taliban would take charge of its protection.

Hafiz Abdulhai Abbas, director of health for Kandahar, told AFP: "Information from the hospitals shows 41 killed, about 70 wounded in today's mosque attack."

At least 15 ambulances were seen rushing to and from the scene, as Taliban security threw a cordon around the area.

"We are overwhelmed," a doctor at the city's central Mirwais hospital told AFP.

"There are too many dead bodies and wounded people brought to our hospital. We are expecting more to come. We are in urgent need of blood. We have asked all the local media in Kandahar to ask people to come and donate blood."

Eyewitnesses spoke of gunfire alongside the explosions, and a security guard assigned to protect the mosque said three of his comrades had been shot as the bombers fought their way in.

Sayed Rohullah told AFP: "It was the Friday prayer time, and when we were preparing I heard shots. Two people had entered the mosque."

"They had opened fire on the guards and in response the guards had also opened fire on them. One of them committed a suicide blast inside the mosque."

Two more attackers detonated their bombs in crowded areas outside the main building, he and other witnesses said.

"We are saddened to learn that an explosion took place in a mosque of the Shiite brotherhood in the first district of Kandahar city in which a number of our compatriots were martyred and wounded," tweeted Taliban interior ministry spokesman Qari Sayed Khosti.

Inside the mosque, after the blast, the walls were pockmarked with shrapnel and volunteers swept up debris in the ornately painted prayer hall. Rubble lay in an entrance corridor.

Last Friday, an Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K) suicide bomber targeted a Shiite mosque in Kunduz, killing scores of people.

The group, a bitter rival of fellow Sunni Islamist movement the Taliban, claimed responsibility for the attacks against Shia worshippers, whom it regards as heretics.

UK-based conflict analysis firm ExIrac said that if claimed by IS-K, yesterday's assault would be the first by the group in Kandahar, and the fourth mass casualty massacre since the Taliban took Kabul.

ExIrac researcher Abdul Sayed told AFP the attack was "challenging the Taliban claims of holding control on the country. If the Taliban can't protect Kandahar from an IS-K attack, how could it protect the rest of the country?"

The UN mission in Afghanistan tweeted: "The UN condemns latest atrocity targeting a religious institution and worshippers. Those responsible need to be held to account."

The Taliban, which seized control of Afghanistan in mid-August after overthrowing the US-backed government, has its own history of persecuting Shiites.

But the new Taliban-led administration has vowed to stabilise the country, and in the wake of the Kunduz attack promised to protect the Shia minority now living under its rule.

Shias are estimated to make up roughly 10 percent of the Afghan population. Many of them are Hazara, an ethnic group that has been persecuted in Afghanistan for decades.

In October 2017, an IS suicide attacker struck a Shia mosque in the west of Kabul, killing 56 people and wounding 55.

Bangladesh's status

FROM PAGE 1

"Bangladesh has experienced an impressive decline in GHI scores since 2012, dropping from 28.6 points, considered serious, to 19.1 points, considered moderate...These improvements are underpinned by the government's firm commitment, determination, and action to tackle malnutrition as part of the country's path toward developed-country status by 2041," said the report.

Out of 100 points, 0 is the best score (no hunger) and 100 is the worst. In practice, neither of these extremes is reached.

The GHI score is calculated on four indicators - undernourishment, child wasting, child stunting, and child mortality.

According to the report, Bangladesh improved in child stunting. In 2000, the child stunting -- the share of children under five with low height for their age, reflecting chronic undernutrition -- was 51.1 percent, which has now come down to 28 percent.

The country's undernourished population -- the share of the population with insufficient caloric

intake -- now stands at 9.7 percent, down from 15.7 percent in 2000.

On the other hand, the prevalence of child wasting is now 9.8 percent, down from 12.5 percent in 2000. Child wasting is the share of children under five having low weight for their height, reflecting acute undernutrition.

The country saw small progress in the under-five child mortality rate -- the mortality rate of children under five, partly reflecting the fatal mix of inadequate nutrition and unhealthy environments -- which currently stands at 3.1 percent, down from 8.7 percent in 2000.

Eighteen countries, including China, Brazil and Kuwait, shared the top rank with a GHI score of less than five, said the report that tracks hunger and malnutrition.

According to the index, three countries -- Somalia, Yemen and Central African Republic -- suffer from levels of hunger that are alarming.

Conflict, climate change, and the Covid-19 pandemic -- three of the most powerful and toxic forces driving hunger -- threaten to wipe out any progress that has been made against hunger in recent years, said the report.

Foot-dragging at its best

FROM PAGE 1

On July 18 last year, BMRC approved human trials of China's Sinovac vaccine at seven hospitals. The country could have received a considerable number of doses of the vaccine if the trial took place here, experts said.

But the health ministry sat on the decision for over a month and by then, the parties concerned lost interest in holding the trial in Bangladesh.

BMRC, as an independent authority, could have taken a proactive role and urged the ministry to make prompt decisions in this regard, considering the urgency of the matter. But it hadn't, public health experts said.

Prof Nazrul Islam, a member of National Technical Advisory Committee on Covid-19, said, "BMRC could have done a lot of things to facilitate research during the pandemic. But I don't know what role it has played."

In February this year, 11 months after the first cases of Covid-19 were detected in Dhaka, BMRC published a list of areas on which it would fund and facilitate research. In the following months, BMRC funded 51 studies in the field, officials said.

Contacted, Dr Ruhul Amin, one of the directors of BMRC, said, "Some of the research is at final stages." He

couldn't give a more specific answer regarding the status of the studies.

Compared to what research organisations in other countries have achieved, he added, BMRC's accomplishment amid the pandemic may seem underwhelming.

Dr Mahmud-Uz-Jahan, who was the director of BMRC until February, said fund shortage was mostly responsible for BMRC's lackluster performance.

FOOT-DRAGGING AT ITS BEST

On July 20 last year, Globe Biotech Ltd announced that it developed a Covid vaccine called Bangavax. On January 17 this year, Biotech's contract research organisation (CRO) submitted to BMRC the protocol for the first and second phase human trials of Bangavax.

On February 9, BMRC asked for additional information regarding over 100 issues of the proposed trial. The CRO submitted the information eight days later.

BMRC then took five months to say that Bangavax should be trialed first on monkeys or chimpanzees.

"Instead of helping us, BMRC created obstacles at every step of the process and caused unnecessary delays," Mohammad Mohiuddin, senior manager at Biotech, told

The Daily Star, adding that this had happened at a time when regulators in other parts of the world were relaxing strict rules to expedite research.

On May 29, National Professor Shahla Khatun, chief of the ethical committee at BMRC, said, "The government's policy is to go slow..."

Asked whether government policy should be the deciding factor in a matter of science, Prof Shahla said, "That is not for me to say. We gave our decision regarding the trial [of Bangavax]. It was up to them [the executive body of the BMRC to formally announce the approval]."

BMRC Director Ruhul Amin refused to comment on why Biotech had to wait for five months for a response.

Prof Nazrul, also former vice chancellor of Bangladesh Sheikh Mujib Medical University, said, "There may have been some issues with the Biotech's vaccine. Despite this, I don't think BMRC played a supportive role."

A prominent scientist and public health expert, requesting not to be named, said, "Most of the individuals at the council were appointed because of their political affiliations rather than their research backgrounds."

This is why the council is in this state, said the expert.

Violence, vandalism in several districts

FROM PAGE 1

the violence, he said, "Investigation is underway. We are hopeful about identifying them. Law enforcement agencies are also on alert to avert any untoward situation in future."

The violence took place yesterday after processions were brought out following Juma prayers protesting the incident in Cumilla on Wednesday.

In Noakhali, attackers from a procession of several thousand people stormed into the Bijoya Durga Temple on College Road in Begumganj around 2:30pm. At one stage, the mob beat and stabbed Jatan Kumar Saha, 38, a member of the executive committee of the temple management committee. He died in Noakhali Sadar Hospital later.

Shah Imran, additional superintendent of police, Begumganj circle in Noakhali, confirmed Jatan's death and said the chaos started after Juma prayers.

With Jatan, five people have been killed as violence erupted in several places following reports that "the Holy Quran was demeaned" in Cumilla. Four of them were killed in clashes between a mob and law enforcers in Hajiganj of Chandpur.

Several processions joined by thousands of people attacked and vandalised at least 10 temples and over 50 businesses of the Hindu community on College Road, DB Road, Bank Road, Chowmuhoni, Chowmuhoni Dakkhin Bazar, Radha Madhab Temple and Ram Thakur Ashram in Noakhali, said Gowtam Saha, a Hindu Community leader of Begumganj.

His car was set ablaze inside the ashram, he said.

Additional members of police, Rab and BGB brought the situation under control around 5:00pm. At least 50 people, including cops, were injured as the law enforcers swung into action, said police sources.

In Chattogram, a group of zealots from a procession brought out in Andarkilla area started throwing brickbats targeting the Jemson Hall Puja Mandap in the district.

Witnesses said as the group threw brickbats at the temple housing the mandap and tried to vandalise it, police chased them away leading to a clash between the law enforcers and the zealots.

Police fired shots in the air and lobbed tear gas canisters to disperse the attackers, who had brought out the procession after Juma prayers, Bijoy Bashak, deputy commissioner of south

division of Chattogram Metropolitan Police, told The Daily Star.

Police said they detained around 50 protesters from the spot.

In Sylhet, religious zealots went to Bhadi-Bangla Durga Mandap in Hawladarpara area of the city, vandalised the entrance gate and five houses and three shops owned by Hindu people, locals and witnesses said.

Advocate Dilip Kumar, a resident of the area, said the attackers first tried to attack the Kali Temple and then attacked the Durga Mandap with bamboo sticks. They also attacked several houses of local Hindus and a few shops owned by Hindu people, he added.

The lawyer alleged that police were on the spot during the attack but they did not try to stop the attackers.

In Dhaka, five policemen were injured and at least five people were detained after a group of protesters clashed with on-duty police personnel at the Kakrail intersection yesterday following a protest procession which was brought out from Baitul Mukarram after Juma prayers.

Witnesses said a large number of people came out from the national mosque after the Juma prayers, chanting slogans. They proceeded towards Nightingale intersection. As police tried to intercept the procession at the Nightingale crossing, they threw brickbats at the law enforcers. Police charged batons, and lobbed teargas shells triggering a chase-and-counter-chase between the protesters and the cops.

Traffic on the roads in the areas came to a complete halt during the clash.

Sajjadur Rahman, deputy commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police's (DMP's) Ramna division, told The Daily Star that law enforcers charged batons and fired teargas shells to control the situation as the protesters threw brickbats at them.

Bayezidur Rahman, assistant commissioner, Ramna Zone, along with four other officials, were injured in the clash.

Earlier, security around the national mosque was beefed up and members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) and different intelligence agencies were deployed alongside the police to avert any untoward incident.

Meanwhile, police on Thursday night filed two cases over the attacks

on a puja mandap and clash between zealots and law enforcers in Hajiganj, Chandpur against five to six identified and 2,000 unidentified people, said Abdur Rashid, officer-in-charge of Hajiganj Police Station, yesterday.

Bangladesh Puja Uldjapan Parishad in a statement yesterday said communal forces attacked puja mandaps and houses in Chattogram, Noakhali and Kishoreganj.

It strongly condemned the incidents and demanded that the culprits be punished.

It also announced demonstration across the country today protesting the incidents. A demonstration will take place in Shahbagh intersection at 4:00pm, said the statement.

UNB adds: Condemning attacks on the Hindu community in the country's different places, Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday urged all to identify and hand over those who create rumour on social media to the law enforcement agencies.

He, in a statement, said the culprits behind the communal attacks would be brought to justice and the masterminds would be hunted down soon.

[Our correspondents in Noakhali, Ctg and Sylhet contributed to this report]

Armenia says six troops injured in Azerbaijan attack

AFP, Yerevan

Armenia said yesterday that six of its soldiers had been injured by Azerbaijani forces in the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region, which was at the centre of a war last year.

"Six servicemen were wounded in an attack by Azerbaijan armed forces" in Karabakh's Nor Shen community, Armenia's rights ombudsman, Arman Tatoyan, said on Facebook, adding that two soldiers were in a critical condition.

The war for Nagorno-Karabakh last autumn claimed about 6,500 lives and saw Armenia cede territories it had controlled for decades, while Russia deployed peacekeepers in the area.

The region was also at the centre of a 1990s war that cost 30,000 lives during the death throes of the Soviet Union, when ethnic Armenian separatists broke away from Azerbaijan.

Anguish, anger after Taiwan building blaze kills 46

AFP, Kaohsiung

Taiwanese residents voiced anguish and outrage yesterday after 46 people perished in an inferno that tore through a dilapidated housing block, as investigators searched for what sparked the island's deadliest fire in decades.

The blaze is the latest tragedy to highlight concerns over lax safety standards in Taiwan and has exposed the poor living conditions of many elderly in a society that is rapidly ageing.

The fire broke out during Thursday's early hours in a 13-storey, mixed-use building in the southern city of Kaohsiung, raging through multiple floors before firefighters finally got it under control.

The run-down housing block was in poor condition and many of those killed were low-income elderly people, some of whom had disabilities and dementia. Officials said 41 people were hospitalised.

Yesterday morning, Lee Mao-shen, 61, was watching pigeons land on the railings of an apartment where a friend had died the night before.

Lee, who has lived in a building opposite for 40 years, said his friend Cheng Yong-kang raised pigeons from his seventh-floor balcony and was among those who never made it out.

"We met every day to chat, we chatted the evening he died," he told AFP.

Lee described the neighbourhood where the fire broke out as "mostly working-class folks and old people".

The gutted complex where his friend died used to be a vibrant spot but, much like the rest of the district, it had fallen on hard times.

"There was a shopping mall, a cinema in there," he recalled. But in recent years the commercial floors were empty and abandoned.

Shortly afterwards the sounds of cymbals echoed around the neighbourhood as a Taoist priest led prayers alongside some of those who survived the inferno and lost loved ones.

Fire officials said one of the reasons the blaze burned so fiercely was that the bottom five commercial floors were filled with debris and discarded items that generated huge amounts of smoke, which then engulfed the residential apartments above.

Service resumes

FROM PAGE 1

During the outage, operations of Point of Sale (POS) devices, online banking, ride-hailing services, and e-commerce sites were severely affected. Users who rely on mobile data, particularly the ones in rural areas, were left clueless.

Sharmin Akhter, who runs an online home-cooked meal business in Khulna, mostly relies on 4G mobile data.

"Weekends are usually my busiest days and I start getting orders in the morning. Today, however, everything's on hold," said Sharmin.

Md Imran, a driver for a ride-hailing service in Dhaka, said he could not get a single ride in the morning. "I usually get at least four to five ride requests before Juma prayers, but today I didn't get any," he told The Daily Star.

Nowrin Jahan, a development worker, who was returning to Dhaka by a bus in the morning, informed that she was stuck with heavy luggage and could not use any of the ride-hailing services.

"Initially, I thought there was a problem with my internet. If I were sent a text informing about the outage, I would have taken alternate measures," said Hasan, a government employee, who was trying to make a purchase using his credit card as he was low on cash at a convenience store.

Unable to make the purchase as the transaction was not going through, he had to leave empty-handed.

According to the BTRC, Bangladesh had 115.41 million mobile internet users as of August 2021.

Although two-thirds of the population use mobile data, the government ordered suspension of the internet and social media in the past.

Farewell, Durga

FROM PAGE 1

Juma prayers of the Muslim community at that time.

The five-day Durga Puja began on October 11 with holding Maha Shasthi Puja, Chondipath, incarnation (Bodhon) of the Goddess Durga and Adhibas at temples across the country amid festivity and religious fervour maintaining health guidelines.

Representative of different political and social organizations as well as cabinet members and members of parliament visited different Puja mandaps in the capital yesterday.

This year festival was celebrated at 32,118 puja mandaps across the country and at 238 in the capital.