

BANGLADESH UPDATE

314
New cases in 24hrs

15,65,488
Total cases

27,768
Deaths

15,27,862
Recoveries

GLOBAL UPDATE

4,912,752
Deaths

241,372,880
Total cases

ROHINGYAS, STRANDED PAKISTANIS

A burden for Bangladesh: PM

'They're putting pressure on economy'

Bss, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday called the displaced Rohingyas and stranded Pakistanis "a burden for Bangladesh", saying they are putting pressure on the country's economy.

"Three years have already passed after Rohingya influx in Bangladesh and it's a burden for us," she said.

The prime minister said this while newly appointed Ambassador of the Netherlands to Bangladesh Anne Gerard Van Leeuwen paid a courtesy call on her at her official residence the Gono Bhaban.

She added that the Rohingyas are also destroying the environment and forest resources of Cox's Bazar.

She also talked about the stranded Pakistanis, saying, "They [Rohingyas and stranded Pakistanis] are creating economic pressure on Bangladesh."

PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim briefed the newsmen after the meeting.

Talking about the Rohingya issue, the Netherlands envoy was appraised of his talking about the issue with the refugees and NGO activists.

He expressed his realisation that the solution is rooted in sending back the Rohingyas to their native land Myanmar.

Sheikh Hasina appreciated the Netherlands contribution to her country's development and formulate the Delta Plan-2100.

To this end, she recalled the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's stance to develop Bangladesh through land reclamation like the Netherlands.

Recalling her last visit to the Netherlands the prime minister said that she was overwhelmed to see the production and preservation of agricultural items using the Green House system.

"We can also adopt the system as our country is an agro-based one," she said.

The Dutch envoy said they are eager to share their experience to this end.

Sheikh Hasina said her government is doing the river dredging in the

country as part of the measures to increase water reservoirs to preserve water.

The prime minister said that they are converting Cox's Bazar airport into an international airport to attract more tourists in the world's longest unbroken sandy sea beach.

She said her government is setting up 100 economic zones in different parts of the country to attract more domestic and foreign investment and thus spur the country's overall development.

Dutch Ambassador Anne Gerard Van Leeuwen appreciated Bangladesh's development under the visionary and dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

The envoy said that he had travelled to Bangladesh by air and witnessed the landscape of the country which he said was similar to his own country.

Later, the Ambassador of Nepal in Bangladesh Dr Banshidhar Mishra paid a farewell call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Gono Bhaban.

The prime minister said Bangladesh is developing the Syedpur Airport as a regional one and Nepal can use the airport.

She also offered Nepal to use Mongla and Paipa ports.

The premier also recalled with gratitude Nepal's support during the War of Liberation.

PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim briefed the newsmen after the call on.

The Nepalese envoy has sought cooperation from Bangladesh for the development of its agriculture sector.

He also praised Bangladesh's overall development saying that they are moved with its development.

The Nepalese envoy thanked the prime minister as Nepal always gets Bangladesh's support in their needs and recalled Bangladesh's medical assistance after the earthquake hit their country.

He thanked the Bangladesh prime minister on behalf of his country's President and prime minister as she sent Haribhanga mangoes.

Ambassador-at-Large Mohammad Ziauddin and Principal Secretary Dr Ahmad Kaikaus were present at the meetings.



Residents of Bastuhara area of Khalishpur, Khulna, register for inoculation against Covid-19. Employees of Care Bangladesh have been going to different neighbourhoods to help people who would find the online registration difficult.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

A chronicle of hate unleashed

FROM PAGE 1

sports jerseys, got into a fierce argument with them.

They demanded that worshipping be stopped right away, the idols be smashed into pieces, and the marquee pulled down. They chanted: "Bondho Bondho, Puja Bondho [stop worshipping]", "Legechhe Re Legechhe, Rokte Agun Legechhe [our blood has been set on fire]".

They kept whipping up a mob that started hurling stones at the mandap around 11:00. Meantime, the mob grew, and by 11:30, they started vandalising the mandap.

A few minutes later, additional police forces were called in. Policemen opened fire to disperse the crowds. Around 50 people received minor injuries. The DC, SP and the mayor took shelter at a nearby house during that time.

Chase and counter-chase between police and the crowds went on until 4:00pm.

Both Foyez and Ekram were arrested that morning and are now behind bars.

Between 12 noon and 2:00pm, processions from at least 10 areas on the outskirts of Cumilla marched to Pubali Chattar, considered the city centre. They fanned across the city and vandalised three temples -- Kalighat Tola, Chanmoyee Kalibari Mandir, Anandamoyee -- and 14 puja mandaps.

The Daily Star has pieced together the sequence of events after talking to at least 50 locals and watching over a dozen video clips.

Some clips show the processions being spearheaded mostly by teenagers. They went around vandalising temples and mandaps chanting blood-curdling slogans.

Achintyo Das Titu, general secretary of Cumilla City Puja Udayan Parishad, said the mayhem started around 11:00am and went on until midnight. There were 91 puja mandaps in the city this year.

WHO ARE THE ATTACKERS? Locals of Nanua Dighir Par, where it all started, said the attackers were outsiders and mostly teenagers. They came from the city outskirts.

Amanat Majumdar, 90, a resident of Majumdar Bari adjacent to Nanua Dighir Par, told The Daily Star that many locals tried their best to stop the attackers but failed, as they came like a deluge.

"Hindus are the majority in the

neighbourhood we live in. But that never caused any problem for us. We have been living in harmony for over 100 years. In my entire life, I did not see any such incident in Cumilla," he said.

Another resident of the area, Islam Ahmed, said the alleged demeaning of Islam couldn't have been done by a Hindu person.

"It [the alleged demeaning of Quran] seems pre-planned. Some people might have done it to destroy harmony," he said.

Puja at Nanua Dighir Uttar Par Mandap has been held since 1990.

The Daily Star talked to the caretaker of a building a few yards away from the mandap to know what happened on the morning of Ashtami, the third day of Durga Puja.

"I joined duty at 7:00am every day. When I came here, I saw two women and two young men. One of the youths called 999 and the OC of Kotwali Police Station came within 20 minutes. As there is a curtain to prevent outsiders peering into the mandap, I did not see exactly what happened inside," he said.

Dozens of people gathered there after 7:00am, he added.

Ekram Hossain, who dialled 999, lives one and a half kilometres away from the spot, and Foyez Ahmed was an expatriate who came home from Saudi Arabia a year ago. He now owns two shops selling clothes and mobile accessories in Sattar Khan area of Cumilla city, said locals.

Ekram's mother Selina Akther told The Daily Star, "My son has gone astray. He left home after a fight in the family on October 12. On October 13, we learned police arrested him."

Supervisor of the mandap told The Daily Star that he left the mandap at 2:30am on October 13 after wrapping up worship formalities. At 7:30am, he came to know over the phone that someone placed the Holy Quran at the pantheon of Ghanesh.

"I immediately informed the high-ups of the puja committee. When I reached the mandap, I saw the OC and two people talking. A crowd soon gathered on the west and east sides of the Dighi [pond]," he said.

"Given the bonding and harmony between Hindus and Muslims in our area, no CCTV was installed at the mandap. We never thought extra security would be needed. Some people took the opportunity," he added.

MAYOR ARRIVED LATE

Contacted, Mayor Monirul Haque Sakku said, "I usually get up at 8:00am. I could not receive a call from the OC at 7:00am."

He said the OC requested him to come to the spot when he called him back at 8:00am.

"I said it would take me an hour and half to come. In the meantime, some of the puja committee members came to my house and described the incident. I requested them to stay at the spot. I went there around 9:30am. There were 100 to 150 people. I requested them to stay calm, tried to convince the crowd in the presence of DC and SP, but in vain.

"At one stage, as the situation started deteriorating, I called 40 workers from the city corporation and removed what remained of the mandap. There was no CCTV though I asked the puja committee to set up some."

Asked why he came so late even though he lived so close, he could not say anything clearly.

"I had to get up, bathe, dress up and step out of home and it all takes time," he said.

DELAYED POLICE ACTION

The Kotwali OC reached the spot alone between 7:00am and 7:30am. The SP went to there around 10:00am. The attack started at 11:00am. In between, the mob grew bigger and got organised.

After the attack, Rab forces and additional police forces dispersed the attackers.

Asked why it took four hours to draft in more forces, Faruk Ahmed, SP of Cumilla, said they had enough forces to contain the situation and then he declined to elaborate on the issue.

Anwarul Azim, Kotwali OC, told The Daily Star both Ekram and Foyez, who were on the spot before the others, have been arrested.

"We are trying to glean information on why they went there so early and the motive behind the Facebook live," he said.

Asked why he could not stop the man from filming him and the mandap, he told the correspondents, "Collect information, but don't ask any question."

Police filed four cases and Rab filed one case over the attacks. One case was filed for hurting religious sentiment, one under Digital Security Act while two others under Special Powers Act.

Police said they have arrested 39 people as of 16 October.

Scotland stun

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With the defeat in the first game, the equation appears to be a tight one for Bangladesh, who will need to win both their matches against Oman and Papua New Guinea to qualify for the Super 12.

With Naim Sheikh, who played the last 16 T20s for Bangladesh this year, surprisingly not included in the eleven, Bangladesh made a disastrous start to their chase as Liton Das and Soumya Sarkar failed to make an impact.

Both Soumya and Liton gifted their wickets with straight-forward catches as Bangladesh slumped to 18 for two inside first four overs. However Shakib Al Hasan and Mushfiqur Rahim steadied the ship and added 47 runs for the third wicket but both seemed to struggle during their stay.

Shakib was the first to depart when he handed a simple catch at deep mid-wicket off a long hop from leg-spinner Chris Greaves after scoring 20 off 28 deliveries. Mushfiqur looked to open up a bit after striking two sixes but he, too, perished in the next over from Greaves while trying to scoop one, losing his stumps in the process after scoring innings-high 38.

With the required run rate starting to climb, the game was going away from the Tigers, who needed 61 runs off the last six overs.

Bangladesh desperately needed some lusty blows but pacer Brad Wheal removed Affif for 18 while Nurul Hasan departed for two. Hope was entirely on Mahmudullah, but when the skipper was caught at long on after scoring 23, it was all but over for Bangladesh.

Earlier, Bangladesh did a decent job with the ball, courtesy of Mahedi's three wickets and two from Shakib, who became the highest wicket taker in T20s with 108 scalps surpassing Sri Lanka's Lasith Malinga. Pacer Mustafizur Rahman picked up a couple of wickets.

Greaves, who picked up the player-of-the-match award, was instrumental with the bat, scoring 45 off 28 balls, his innings featuring two sixes and four fours as Scotland added 53 runs in the last five overs.

Eight more dead

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opened indiscriminate fire targeting non-local labourers, reports NDTV.

More than 1,000 people suspected to have links with banned religious and militant groups have been detained in a crackdown as part of the investigation into the civilian killings, a police officer told AFP.

Kashmir has been divided between India and Pakistan since their independence in 1947 and an insurgency that erupted in 1989 has claimed tens of thousands of lives.

Tensions have mounted again since the Indian government annulled Kashmir's semi-autonomy in August 2019 and put it under direct New Delhi rule.

The government has said it took the measures to bring peace and prosperity to the restive region.

But Mirwaiz Umer Farooq, Kashmir's chief Muslim cleric who has been under house arrest for more than two years, warned in a statement Saturday that "systemic oppression" was pushing many Kashmir youths into the underground.

Pro-army protesters rally again in tense Sudan

AFP, Khartoum

Hundreds of pro-military Sudanese protesters rallied for a second day yesterday, aggravating what Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok called the "worst and most dangerous crisis" of the country's precarious transition.

The protesters rallying in Khartoum are demanding the dissolution of Sudan's post-dictatorship interim government, saying it has "failed" them politically and economically.

"The sit-in continues, we will not leave until the government is dismissed," Ali Askouri, one of the organisers, told AFP.

"We have officially asked the Sovereign Council," the military-civilian body that oversees the transition, "not to interact with this government anymore," he added.

The protests come as Sudanese politics reels from divisions among the factions steering the rocky transition from three decades of iron-fisted rule by Omar al-Bashir.

Bashir was ousted by the army in April 2019 in the face of mass protests driven by the Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC), a civilian alliance that became a key plank of the transition.

The latest demonstrations, left undisturbed by security forces, have been organised by a splinter faction of the FFC. Critics allege that these protests are being driven by members of the military and security forces, and involve counter-revolutionary sympathisers with the former regime.

The protesters have converged on the presidential palace where the transitional authorities are based, shouting "One army, one people" and demanding "a military government".

Joyous reunion at DU

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inside the classroom, teachers and students said.

"In-person classes and exams have resumed and all the students are complying with the health safety guidelines," said Prof Abu Md Delwar Hossain, dean of the arts faculty.

AKM Haroon Rashid, chairman of the university's philosophy department, said about 90 percent of his students attended class.

Jatiyotabadi Chhatra Dal leaders, after a rally at Shoparjito Shadhinota Chattar, said that they would remain beside the general students' rights. Chhatra League (JASAD) also brought out a procession, protesting the recent communal attacks across the country.

DU Vice-Chancellor M Akhtaruzzaman said, "It is positive that all students are vaccinated and are happy to return to classes."

He expressed satisfaction as students maintained proper health safety guidelines.

The VC also said the university has planned a series of steps to help students recover from academic losses

education losses of students.

The DU academic council in a meeting a few months ago had decided to shorten the semester and academic year, reduce vacations and take others such steps to cover up for the loss.

RUI HALLS REOPEN

Meanwhile, students of Rajshahi University started moving into their residential halls, or student dormitories, yesterday morning, reported our university correspondent.

After the gates opened around 10:30am, students, who had at least one dose of the Covid-19 vaccine, moved into their respective halls after showing their vaccination certificates and hall IDs.

Hundreds of students belonging to different halls waited in line at the gate and were greeted with flowers and sweets by the provost and residential teachers.

"It [the hall] is like our second home... Returning to the campus and having fun with friends after so long is overwhelming," said Bablu Hasan, a resident of Shaheed Habibur Rahman Hall.

Fresh attack in Rangpur

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Contacted, Asif Ahasan, deputy commissioner of Rangpur, said they rushed to Karimganj village along with law enforcers and public representatives after learning about tensions over a Facebook post and calmed the situation.

"But by this time, miscreants set fire to some Hindu houses in other villages in Pirganj," he said over phone from Karimganj.

He added that they were taking preparations to visit the affected villages.

During the Durga Puja, zealots ran amok, vandalising Hindu idols, temples and shops in several district after word spread that "the Holy Quran was demeaned" in Cumilla.

Idols were vandalised in Munshiganj and Kishoreganj even on Friday and Saturday.

Yesterday, while taking to journalists about these incidents, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal said through a fair probe, the law enforcement agencies will identify the culprits.

"We're seeing and assuming many things. We're waiting for evidence. Once we get the evidence, we'll present it before you," he said.

"We've taken the Cumilla incident very seriously. We'll let you know after a proper investigation. We hope to let

you know very soon," he said.

Pointing out the incidents of Ramu of Cox's Bazar and Nasiragar in Brahmanbaria, he said the main purposes of these incidents were to create anarchy in the country.

"We're confirmed that it was a purposeful incident carried out to create anarchy and damage [communal] harmony in the country. Upon someone's instigation, it was carried out," Asaduzzaman told journalists at his office in the Secretariat.

He added that exemplary punishment would be ensured following probe so that no one attempts to damage communal harmony in the country.

In reply to a query, he said, "In the investigation, it will be found whether anyone from abroad had any role in it."

"There is no shortage of instigators inside the country."

"We've arrested two-three suspects in the Cumilla incident. Those involved will be identified soon."

He said the intelligence agencies are handling the issues very professionally. "With utmost patience, security forces are handling the situation."

After the incident, the BNP blamed the government for it.

Asked, the home minister said, "Many people have said many things, but these have no basis."

Dhaka-Ctg expressway project shelved

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The daily traffic volume was expected to increase to about 35,000 in 2020 and 66,000 in 2030, according to the documents.

In March 2013, the Economic Committee on Economic Affairs gave the approval to implement the project under PPP, and in the following month, the government signed a deal with the ADB for carrying out the feasibility study and detailed design for Tk 97.87 crore.

The RHD hired a joint venture firm led by SMEC International of Australia for the works. The firm submitted the study report in August next year.

In October 2015, the study, which suggested three possible alignments, was placed before Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who gave consent to building the expressway comprising of elevated and at grade sections.

The construction cost for the

217-kilometre-long expressway was estimated to be \$2.5 billion, sources said.

In September 2016, another joint venture firm was appointed as transaction advisor (consultants) to help the RHD implement the project under PPP.

Meanwhile, in October 2016, the Bangladesh Bridge Authority took an initiative to build an elevated expressway on the same corridor.

Later, the roads transport and bridges minister asked the BBA to drop their initiative and asked the RHD to go ahead with their plan.

The RHD took several steps to implement the project under PPP.

But, the prime minister in October 2019 gave a directive for cancelling the Dhaka-Chattoogram Expressway project and constructing service lanes on either side of the four-lane highway instead, sources said.

Meanwhile, the committee approved the procurement of 9 crore syringes from a Chinese company and 50 sports utility vehicles for UNOs following the direct procurement method.

In another development, the Cabinet Committee on Government Purchase yesterday extended the tenure for exporting electricity from India's Tripura for five years up to 2026.

The committee also increased the amount of electricity to 160 megawatts from 100MW. Arefin said, adding that the move will save Tk 706 crore from electricity import.

As per the new import rate, the price per kilowatt of electricity would be Tk 7.13 in the first year. The rate would rise by 2 percent per year, in contrast to 5 percent at present.

As per the existing tariff, the overall rate is Tk 7.61 per kw.

Russia reports record daily virus cases again

AFP, Moscow

Russia yesterday reported a new record for coronavirus infections for a fourth day in a row, a day after the worst-affected country in Europe set a new death toll high.

There were 34,303 new infections

and 997 deaths registered in the country over 24 hours, according to the official toll.

On Saturday, Russia recorded 1,002 deaths -- the first time daily deaths hit the one thousand mark -- and 33,208 new infections.

The climbing Covid-19 statistics

come as the nation's vaccination drive is at a standstill and with few restrictions in place.

The Kremlin, which says authorities have to ensure "the economy continues working", has avoided re-introducing major measures despite calling the vaccination rate unacceptably low.