

BANGLADESH
UPDATE



467
New cases in 24hrs



15,66,296
Total cases



27,785
Deaths



15,29,028
Recoveries

GLOBAL
UPDATE



4,924,517
Deaths



242,116,347
Total cases

‘E-commerce cannot be shut down’

Cabinet discusses strictly regulating the business

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government wants to bring e-commerce business under a strict monitoring and regulation system to stop fraudulence.

“E-commerce cannot be shut down. That’s why all of them need to be brought under a monitoring and registration system. The [process for] monitoring and registration has been sorted out,” said Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam at a briefing yesterday after the cabinet meeting.

The meeting held at the Secretariat was presided over by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. She joined the meeting virtually from the Gono Bhaban.

The cabinet discussed the e-commerce business at length, the cabinet secretary said, adding that a five-member committee was formed following a meeting chaired by the home minister a few days ago.

“Both the commerce minister and the secretary have told the cabinet that they have made much progress on the issue. They will make detailed proposals,” he said, adding that the committee is expected to submit the report within the next 20 days.

He said the Cabinet Division has held meetings on e-commerce business with intelligence agencies, Bangladesh Bank, Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU) and National Telecommunication Monitoring centre (NTMC).

“In the last two and a half months, we’ve seen that the e-commerce business

has come under control,” he said.

Khandker also advised people to be more conscious when buying goods or availing service from such platforms.

He said the government is also developing a supervision mechanism for payment gateways.

APPROVAL OF DRAFT ACTS

The Cabinet Division approved in principle the draft Bangladesh Public Service Commission Act-2021, which contains the provision of a minimum three years’ and maximum 10 years’ imprisonment and fine to question leakers of public service recruitment tests.

The amount of fines is yet to be set.

There are also provisions for jail terms for examinees, examiners and exam operators for adopting unfair means, answer sheet forgeries and irregularities in the act, Khandker said.

“A hard stance has been taken to prevent question leaking.”

“The current act does not have precise mentions of punishment. It was formulated in 1977. The context has changed over the years,” said Khandker.

The cabinet also approved the draft Zakat Fund Management Act-2021 in principle keeping the provision of collecting and distributing Zakat using information and communication technology by the government.

The act is formulated to encourage people to give zakat and anyone from home and abroad can donate at government-scheduled banks, the cabinet secretary said.

Cops asked to act promptly

FROM PAGE 1

The meeting also asked the field-level officials to prepare a list of those who brought out processions, engaged in and incited violence and vandalism, and quickly bring them to justice, said three DIGs and a superintendent of police who attended the meeting.

Besides, they have been asked to find out the truth behind the fake news that has been spread, and to disseminate the authentic information through loudspeakers in the respective areas, said the meeting sources, adding that field-level officials have also been asked to step up cyber patrolling.

The meeting asked all members of the police force to remain vigilant so that Eid-e-Miladunnabi is observed peacefully today, they added.

The high-level meeting comes amid a series of attacks targeting Hindu communities, starting in Cumilla on October 13, and gradually spreading to at least 13 districts.

The violence and attacks on the Hindu community in Cumilla took place following reports of “demeaning the Holy Quran”, at a time when the community was in the midst of celebrating Durga Puja.

The PHQ in a press release on Monday night said around 450 individuals were detained in at least 71 cases filed over the attacks on temples and houses of the Hindu community.

“We were instructed to make beat policing more active and bring all the community and religious leaders in a single platform so that no one can fish in troubled waters,” said one of the DIGs.

Meanwhile, Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam briefed reporters about the prime minister’s directives after the cabinet meeting virtually presided over by the PM from her Gono Bhaban residence.

“Those who are involved in it [communal attacks] must be held soon. Besides, people are suggested not to be reactive,” he quoted the prime minister as saying.

“There is no scope for reaction. If someone defames the Holy Quran, the holy book does not give us the authority to vandalise properties of someone from another religion,” he said.

“Islam does not give any authority to any Muslim to carry out vandalism on the establishment of another religion. One can lead a protest for defamation of religion and demand justice. But carrying out destructive activities is completely unacceptable in Islam,” said Anwarul quoting Hasina.

In a discussion programme later in the evening, Sheikh Hasina said Islam advises peaceful performance of rituals of all religions.

“Our Prophet [PBUH] advised not to do excesses with religion. We want no one to do excesses with religion,” she said while addressing the discussion on the birth anniversary of Sheikh Russel, the youngest son of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, marking Sheikh Russel Day 2021.

“Bangladesh is a country of secular spirit; the people of all religions will perform their religious rituals freely as our constitution has given that directive,” she said at the programme organised by the Awami League.

‘PRIME SUSPECT UNDER WATCH’ Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal yesterday said the prime suspect in the Cumilla mayhem has been identified and was under their surveillance.

The suspect was frequently changing location since going into hiding following the incident on October 13, he said in a programme titled “Technological Modernisation of Rab” at the force’s headquarters.

“We hope we will be able to arrest him soon. We will definitely catch him and disclose his motive,” he said.

Several groups are trying to destroy

the existing communal harmony in the country by spreading propaganda and carrying out provocative campaigns, said the home boss.

Asaduzzaman Khan said a vested quarter has been trying to destroy the communal harmony in recent times by using video footage of atrocities that have taken place at different times.

He said footage of a brutal murder in the capital’s Pallabi has been misinterpreted as the murder of one of the victims in Noakhali.

The murder in Pallabi took place on May 16, but a vested quarter was propagating that the footage was of the murder of Noakhali victim Jatan Saha.

“It is very sad, ugly and inhuman,” he said.

“I am warning those who are trying to take advantage of this kind of propaganda and they must be found out,” the minister said.

Law enforcement agencies will hunt them down and mete out appropriate punishment to them, he said, adding that these culprits will have to answer why they attempted to destroy the communal harmony and peace.

Referring to previous communal attacks, Asaduzzaman said falsehood and propaganda spread on Facebook created an unsettled situation in Ramu, Nasiragar and Bhola in an attempt to destroy communal harmony.

Meanwhile, the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) has taken over the investigation over the case filed over the attack on the Nanua Dighir Par puja mandap in Cumilla, Anwarul Azim, officer-in-charge of Kotwali Police Station, said yesterday.

He also said three more have been arrested in connection with the case filed under the Special Powers Act.

Meanwhile, the man who posted a Facebook Live video about alleged defamation of the Holy Quran on the morning of October 13 has been remanded for two days, the OC added.

JS SPEAKER VISITS VANDALISED VILLAGE IN PIRGANJ

In Rangpur, Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, speaker of parliament, yesterday visited Pirganj upazila’s Boro Karimpur village, where Hindu houses were torched, vandalized and looted on Sunday night.

Saying the attacks were planned, she urged law enforcers to trace the attackers immediately.

Former information minister Hasanul Haq Inu also visited the area and said local administration cannot avoid responsibility or deny their failure in preventing the attack.

Meanwhile, police yesterday filed two cases in connection with the violence.

In Feni, Anindya Banerjee, Indian assistant high commissioner in Chattogram, visited the Hindu temples and business institutions that were attacked by mobs on Saturday night.

Besides, a local Hindu leader Tapan Kumar Das on Monday night filed a case accusing around 250 unnamed people in connection with attacks on temples in Feni town.

In Kurigram, Sanjeev Kumar Bhati, Indian assistant high commissioner, visited Ulipur upazila where Hindu temples were attacked on October 13 and 14.

In Brahmanbaria, Sommilito Sangskritik Jote held a protest in the town yesterday morning and demanded the resignation of the home minister for “his failure to prevent the attacks on minorities.”

In Munshiganj, police on Monday evening arrested Joy Mandal on charges of making derogatory comments demeaning the Holy Quran on a social media post.

Besides, processions against communal attacks were organised in Dinajpur, Noakhali, Savar, Manikganj and Feni.

(Our correspondents from respective districts contributed to the report)



Four-year-old Aditya Saha is too young to realise his father Jatan Saha is no more. Sitting on his mother’s lap, he waits for his father to return home to have a meal with him. Jatan was beaten to death on Friday during an attack on a Hindu temple in Noakhali’s Begumganj upazila. The photo was taken at Jatan’s sister’s home in Choumuhoni municipality area on Monday.

PHOTO: STAR

A little boy’s world crushed by zealots

FROM PAGE 1

was beaten to death.

Son of late Manaranjan Saha, Jatan, of Gobindpur village in Cumilla’s Titas upazila, was working on a JICA project in Chattogram.

“How do I tell Aditya that his father will never come home, have lunch with him, play with him or cuddle with him again?” a tearful Laki Rana Saha, Jatan’s wife, and resident of Cumilla’s Titas upazila, said.

“On one hand, I am still reeling from the shock of my husband’s death, and on the other, I am worried about my child as he is falling sick due to his father’s absence.”

Every Durga Puja, Jatan used to visit his sister in Narottampur of Begumganj upazila’s Chaumuhoni municipality area.

Jatan’s sister Muktarani Saha said, “Jatan was a very simple and happy person. He used to come to my house every year for Durga Puja and this was the first time he brought his wife and only son along. However, the joy of

worship died along with my brother. I could never imagine something like this would happen. I cannot believe I won’t see my brother’s face again.”

Utpal Saha, Jatan’s brother-in-law, said, “Around 3:00pm on Friday, almost 2,000 people attacked Ganipur Girls’ School. A few moments later, they attacked ISKCON and Bijoya Sarbojonin Durga temples.”

At that time, Jatan was at the ISKCON temple gate and came under attack.

“The attackers broke his leg,” Utpal said.

Jatan then went home and iced his broken leg to reduce pain but he went out again to observe the situation. The attackers spotted him and began beating him severely.

“We called for an ambulance but did not get any. So, we took him to a local private hospital. He was then shifted to Begumganj upazila health complex. But as his condition kept deteriorating, doctors referred him to Noakhali General Hospital. There, on-

duty doctors declared him dead.”

Utpal was shocked and disappointed over the law enforcers’ laxity in response to the unfolding mayhem.

“The attacks lasted for over three hours and yet, no law enforcement agency rushed to the spot... We dialled 999, called the officer-in-charge, upazila nirbahi officer, superintendent of police and the district commissioner over phone. But we did not get any response.

“We are still panicking. How long will the police be deployed for our protection? Can anyone ensure that no such incident will occur again?”

Speaking to The Daily Star on Monday, Jatan’s wife Laki said, “My husband was the lone breadwinner of our family. The attackers heartlessly beat him to death and now my child and I are heading towards a dark future. I don’t know how I will raise my child alone. I demand the highest punishment to my husband’s killers.”

Pattern always the same

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The procession then went back to the intersection, took a U-turn and headed back to the mosque. As it was passing near a mandap at century-old Lakshmi Narayan Akhra -- around 200 yards from the intersection -- the youths started throwing brickbats at its gate.

More people joined the attackers and the group turned into a mob. The attack continued for several minutes. Several Muslim devotees from the mosque tried to stop the mob, but in vain.

Around the same time, brickbats flew in at the mandap over the tarpaulin from its eastern and northern sides. Hindu devotees inside cowered in fear. Some of them were hurt.

The mandap had a CCTV camera but a gate erected right in front of it blocked the view.

Police swung into action within 10 minutes. Initially, they fired teargas canisters and shots in the air to drive the mob away. But the mob did not budge and started throwing bricks at the law enforcers, who took position at the mandap gate. At least 15 policemen were injured.

At one stage, police fired bullets to disperse the attackers. Three people were killed. Two other injured died later -- one of them at Dhaka Medical College yesterday.

The Daily Star has pieced together the sequence of events in Hajiganj after talking to several dozen locals, including members of the temple management committee, political leaders, police, and watching video clips of the incident.

“The attacks were definitely pre-planned,” Soheli Mahmud, additional superintendent of police (Hajiganj circle), told this newspaper.

“It is because the zealots did not stop after swooping on that mandap. They attacked 13 more mandaps in Hajiganj upazila till 1:00am.”

The extent of the subsequent attacks was not as severe as the one on Lakshmi Narayan Akhra, he said, adding that there were 28 puja mandaps in the upazila in total.

Around 9:20pm that night, zealots also hurled brickbats at the Hajiganj Police Station. Most members of the police station were guarding the mandaps at that time.

Three cases were filed against around 2,000 people in connections with the incidents, said Harun-or-Rashad, officer-in-charge of Hajiganj Police Station. Police have arrested 15 people so far, he said.

The communal attacks in Cox’s Bazar’s Ramu in 2012, Pabna’s Santhia in 2013 and Brahmanbaria’s Nasiragar in 2016 had followed a similar pattern. Mobs launched the attacks after being incited on social media.

Communal attacks have been carried out against Hindus in at least 13 districts since the Cumilla incident on October 13.

THE FACEBOOK POST

A post claiming that the Holy Quran was demeaned in Cumilla was uploaded from a Facebook ID under the name of Ariyan Sajjad. Several others were tagged in that post.

According to information available on the Facebook profile, Sajjad is a member of Hajiganj municipality Chhatra League. The pro-Awami League organisation, however, said it had nothing to do with Sajjad.

Mehdi Hasan Rabby, general secretary of the BCL unit, said Sajjad did not belong to the organisation. “He misused the name of BCL,” Rabby said.

He also said he took Sajjad and another youth named Hridoy Hassan Zahid to the Hajiganj circle’s additional superintendent of police hours before the attacks on the ASP’s instruction.

Police reprimanded the two and let them go, he said.

Uphold the spirit of tolerance

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opposed Bangladesh’s independence 50 year ago are still propagating their toxic narratives to instigate violence, hatred and bigotry,” the ministry said.

They are trying to undermine Bangladesh’s secular, non-communal and pluralistic credentials in the international context by deliberately targeting one of the biggest religious festivals of the country, it mentioned.

The government appreciated the Hindu community for concluding the festivities in a befitting spirit and also welcomed the overwhelming show of solidarity by people in general.

When the people of Bangladesh were celebrating the Durga Puja in a

joyous mood, there emerged reports of attacks on Hindu religious sites and idols in different parts of the country.

The government “unequivocally condemned” those incidents and took “serious note of the reactions” from within and outside the Hindu community.

As an immediate measure, the Bangladesh Border Guard was deployed in 22 districts in aid of the civilian administration, the foreign ministry said.

Some 71 cases have been filed in connection with those incidents.

The alleged mastermind behind the Cumilla attacks has already been arrested, said the statement.

The government reiterated that communal harmony and peaceful co-existence are cornerstones of democratic polity. For centuries, people from different faiths, ethnicities and religions have been living in this land in peace and harmony.

The ministry said the Bangladesh government, under the guidance of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, has set an example by advocating the motto of “Each unto his or her religion, festivals are for all.”

Bangladesh is perhaps the only country where the major religious festivals of all religions are observed as public holidays, said the statement.

Stay firm in opposing targeted violence

Says US embassy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The US Embassy in Bangladesh yesterday urged all to remain steadfast in opposing targeted violence and orchestrated hate.

Issuing a statement on the recent communal attacks in the country, the US Embassy expressed condolences to the victims’ families.

“Freedom of religion is sacrosanct. Everyone must remain steadfast in opposing targeted violence and orchestrated hate, and work to ensure all are able to attend a religious service or celebration without fear of violence because of their faith,” said the statement.

“We send our condolences to the families of victims of recent religious violence.”

The statement added that the US stands with Bangladesh to preserve diversity, unity, and mutual respect.

“The United States stands with Bangladeshis of all beliefs calling to preserve diversity, unity, and mutual respect.”

48 Yemen rebels killed near Marib

Says Saudi-led coalition

AFP, Riyadh

The Saudi-led coalition in Yemen said yesterday it killed 48 Huthi rebels in air strikes on two districts near the strategic city of Marib, during intense fighting this week.

The Iran-backed Huthis rarely comment on losses, and the numbers could not be independently verified by AFP.

This is the ninth consecutive day that the coalition has announced strikes around Marib, reporting a total of more than 1,200 rebel fatalities.

The previously announced bombings were in Abdiya about 100 kilometres (60 miles) from Marib -- the internationally recognised government’s last bastion in oil-rich northern Yemen.

Rab launches

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According to the 4G licensing guidelines, all telecommunications agencies providing 4G and LTE services are legally bound to maintain call records and store data session logs along with the IP addresses, for every user, for a period of two years.

The Rab said the use of OSINT will help them identify those spreading rumours and inciting content.

The NTMC director said the country needs an integrated intelligence system to tackle crime and skilled resources are needed to operate it.

The introduction of “data hub” comes at a time when there is no law for the protection of personal data.

Ahsan said, “We might have many concerns about data. Many may think that the government is acquiring all data. The fact is we need to analyse data to ensure that no crime is being committed.”

He said data security and privacy must also be kept in mind.

Rab DG Abdullah Al-Mamun said general people do not feel afraid to share data with the government. “Only criminals are afraid of giving data.”

The Rab also introduced a digital office management system to streamline its administrative functions. It launched a cloud storage to store evidence in digital format.

Senior Secretary Mostofa Kamal Uddin of the home ministry said cybercrime is on the rise in the country and Rab is working to fight it.

Moinur Rahman Chowdhury, acting inspector general of police, said this technological innovation will work to serve the country.

3 crore to get jobs

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With this, the total number of Covid-19 deaths in the country reached 27,785 and the death rate stood at 1.77 percent.

In the same 24 hours, 469 new infections were recorded, taking the number of people infected to 15,66,296, added the release.

Against a total of 21,308 samples tested across the country in those 24 hours, the positivity rate was 2.20 percent.

The overall positivity rate rose to 15.45 percent.

During the period, 697 Covid-19 patients have recovered.

With this, the total number of recoveries reached 15,29,068 and the recovery rate was at 97.62 percent.

Among the seven deceased, five were men and two women. One was aged between 51 and 60, two were between 41 and 50, while four were above 60 years, added the release.

Miladunnabi today

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Different government and non-government organisations, including the Islamic Foundation, have drawn up elaborate programmes to mark the day.

Bangladesh Television (BTV) and Bangladesh Radio will broadcast special programmes highlighting the importance of the day.

The day is a public holiday.