

BANGLADESH UPDATE

276
New cases in 24hrs

15,68,257
Total cases

27,834
Deaths

15,32,180
Recoveries

GLOBAL UPDATE

4,974,361
Deaths

245,025,101
Total cases

Identify new export items

PM calls for diversification as she opens Trade, Investment Summit



UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked private entrepreneurs to identify new market demands and trends across the world to diversify the country's export items.

"We have to find out through market research what new items we can produce to boost up our export... We need to focus on that."

Hasina said this while inaugurating the Bangladesh Trade and Investment Summit 2021 at the Bangabandhu International Conference Center. She joined the programme virtually from the Gonobhaban.

The commerce ministry and Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) jointly arranged the week-long summit to mark the Mujib Year and the golden jubilee of the country's Independence, aiming to connect traders and investors from around the world.

The PM said exporters have to identify which country looks for what kind of products, and the producers and manufacturers should think about producing those.

"I request business organisations, especially the private sector, to give due attention to this issue because I think we need to increase the number of items in our export basket."

She also mentioned that different countries have different demands. "Bangladesh is a country that can do [produce] anything, if we want... I have that confidence."

About Bangladesh's geographical position, the PM said domestic and foreign investors can export their items to South Asian and South-East Asian countries from here.

"They'll get opportunities to grab markets in these countries and export items."

Hasina mentioned that Bangladesh will become a bridge between the east and the west in the future. "This will help us flourish our trade and business further."

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen, Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi, PM's Private Industries and Investment Affairs Adviser Salman Fazlur Rahman, Commerce Secretary Tapan Kanti Ghosh, President of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) Md Jasim Uddin and DCCI President Rizwan Rahman were present at the inauguration.

A video was screened at the event highlighting the country's development in trade, business and investment.

Some 552 companies from countries, including Bangladesh, of five continents will participate in 450 business-to-business (B2B) match-making sessions, which will help explore new business opportunities in Bangladesh and attract FDIs into the country.

Hasina urged entrepreneurs both at home and abroad to invest in Bangladesh, availing themselves of the advantages of an investment-friendly environment, big regional markets and strong connectivity.

She pointed out various facilities that are being created by the government by modernising road, river, rail and air connectivity. "The government has also strengthened trade diplomacy in the international arena."

Our staff correspondent adds: Prime Minister's Private Industries and Investment Affairs Salman F Rahman said Bangladesh's economy grew significantly during the Covid-19 pandemic -- at a time when many economies struggled to prevent recession.

Bangladesh has stable currency and steady exchange rate which are essential for any investor, he said.

Jashim Uddin, FBCCI president, said our business community is working closely with the government to address major concerns related to infrastructure development, energy, power, ICT, networks, and education.

"Now, Bangladesh offers one of the largest and best competitive fiscal and non-fiscal incentives, including profit repatriation, tax holiday, duty-free import of capital machineries, and 100 economic zones... We are ready with our regional hub and connectivity."

Tapan Kanti Ghosh, secretary to the commerce ministry, said Bangladesh has become a competitive investment and trade hub. The government is working relentlessly to ease doing business and improve competitiveness through regulatory reforms.

"So, it has a bright prospect to be a manufacturing hub whereby investors can invest and produce a wide range of products and they can easily take duty-free facilities throughout the world."

DCCI President Rizwan Rahman also talked at the event.



Fishermen caught a record quantity of hilsa in Barishal yesterday, causing a price drop in the division's largest wholesale market. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

10 lakh jabs a day

FROM PAGE 1

To strengthen the vaccination campaign, the government has purchased nine crore syringes, which will start arriving next month, he said.

The country has so far received around 8.82 crore vaccine doses of different brands from various sources, shows data from the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Around 4.02 crore people have got their first dose while around 2.05 crore people got both doses, shows DGHS data.

It is around 15 percent of the targeted population, aged 18 and above.

"If we administer 18 crore doses in the next six months, then another nine crore people will be fully vaccinated. So, our goal of vaccinating 80 percent of the [targeted] population is likely to be achieved by April next year," said the health minister.

Bangladesh has so far purchased around 10 crore doses of vaccine -- 7.5 crore from Sinopharm and 3 crore AstraZeneca doses from Serum Institute of India.

Besides, the country has got a commitment of 10.50 crore doses of Sinopharm and Sinovac vaccines from

Covax.

Officials said Covax, a global facility for ensuring equitable access to Covid vaccines for low- and middle-income countries, has also committed to giving Bangladesh 1.60 crore Pfizer vaccines as part of its commitment to provide 6.8 crore doses of vaccine this year.

"We have got enough commitment from Covax. If we get the vaccines on time, we will be able to scale up the vaccination campaign," said a top official of the DGHS.

He said two recent special vaccination drives gave them the confidence that it is very much possible to administer 10 lakh doses daily.

Around one crore doses were administered in the two special drives held in August and September.

"Now we are working on scaling up the vaccination campaign. We are giving around four to five lakh vaccine doses in a single day and are hopeful about administering 10 lakh doses per day. Apart from this, we are also planning to hold special campaigns every month," said Shamsul Haque, member secretary of the Covid-19 Vaccine Management Taskforce Committee of the DGHS.

The country has suffered frequent

hicups in its regular mass inoculation since it began in February due to a dearth of doses caused by a yawning gap between commitments and compliance in vaccine supply.

The regular vaccine campaign remained postponed for around a month due to a sudden suspension of vaccine supply from Serum Institute of India.

The campaign got momentum after the government purchased 1.5 crore doses of Sinopharm vaccine from China in June.

To bring more people under the vaccination drive, the government has already lowered the age bar to 18 years. Besides, the government has decided to administer the Pfizer vaccine to the 12-17 age group.

"The education ministry will send a list of the students and then the students will be able to register on the Surokha app for vaccination," said the health minister.

Bangladesh has been witnessing a gradual decline in the number of Covid deaths and infections over the last one month after the Delta variant of the coronavirus, detected in May, ravaged the country in June and July.

'BNP's Bulu, others linked'; SP cites 164

FROM PAGE 1

interrogation, he said. "You will also have heard of those names, as some are very familiar to you."

Asaduzzaman made the remarks while participating in a dialogue organised by the Bangladesh Secretariat Reporters Forum at the Secretariat.

The minister said those arrested in connection with the Rangpur and Noakhali incidents have disclosed the names of their instigators while giving their confessional statements under Section 164.

Additionally, two individuals arrested in Feni also gave their confessional statements to the court.

"I do not want to say now whether the BNP-Jamaat is there or not but we will let you know for sure," said the minister.

"We primarily assumed that the Holy Quran that was kept [on a puja mandap in Cumilla's Nana Dighir Par on October 13], had come from somewhere. We took it as a challenge and sent police teams of all levels there to uncover the facts.

"We saw that there was a pond next to the mosque where fish farming took place. The fisherman had set up a camera on the verandah of the mosque. In the camera, it was clearly seen that someone took the Holy Quran from the mosque and left it on the idol," said the home boss.

"We had the idea that there could be difficulties after the Friday prayers [in Noakhali on October 15]. We had requested Hindu devotees to immerse their idols [while observing Durga Puja] before the Friday prayers and they did so. The Friday prayers also ended peacefully.

"But an altercation began later. One group kept the police busy and another group carried out the violence," he added.

"There has been a lot of vandalism. It was at that moment that one person died after jumping into a pond," said the minister.

The minister further said that the violence was planned by a group to destabilise the country and destroy communal harmony. It would be

possible soon to find out who caused it, he added.

The police chief yesterday ordered officials to identify the culprits by scrutinising the footage from CCTVs, as well as those seen in the media and on social media.

Inspector General of Police Benazir Ahmed instructed police officials to complete investigations of the cases filed quickly so that the culprits can be punished. He also asked the officials to be careful so that no innocent people are harassed.

The IGP gave the instructions yesterday afternoon while holding a zoom meeting with officials ranked SP and upwards, according to sources.

Multiple sources who attended the meeting said the IGP asked field-level police officials to organise harmony rallies with people from all faiths.

He also asked field-level officials to ensure that protection around renowned Hindu temples and large businesses are amped up over the next couple of months, so that none can carry out any subversive activities.

Tigers up against the might of England

FROM PAGE 1

Opener Liton Das has been under the scanner for his lean patch with the bat, the right-hander managing only 66 runs in his last five innings and there are chances he might be dropped for today's game. However, there was a slight injury to wicketkeeper Nurul Hasan Sohan during training and if he misses the game, Liton will take his place behind the stumps.

But it will be interesting to see whether the team management can move away from their fondness of keeping a left-and-right-hand combination by including Soumya Sarkar at the top, with the left-hander having been dropped since the opening qualifier game against Scotland.

Naim Sheikh, the other opener, has been in prime form with two fifties in four games in the tournament while a lot will depend on star all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan both with the ball and bat.

Mushfiqur Rahim's return to form

will also give huge relief to the team management following his unbeaten fifty against Sri Lanka.

The Tigers will have to put their best against England, who have been in terrific form with eight wins in 12 games played this year.

England's batting unit poses great threat, with the likes of Jos Buttler and Jason Roy in excellent form at the top of the order. The middle-order is loaded with some hard-hitting batters with the likes of Jonny Bairstow, Morgan, Moeen Ali, Liam Livingstone and David Malan able to change the course of the game in a matter of overs.

The bowling unit also packs a punch with off-spinner Moeen and leg-spinner Adil Rashid sharing six wickets on their way to bundling out West Indies for a low total in their opening game. The three seamers -- Chris Woakes, Tymal Mills and Chris Jordan -- were among the wickets in the first game and will be a massive to the Bangladesh batting unit.

EU concerned over

FROM PAGE 1

Bangladesh delegation was led by Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen.

The joint statement read, "The EU encouraged Bangladesh to implement the recommendations made during the last Universal Periodic Review."

It said the Bangladesh side provided updates and shared its perspectives in this regard.

"Both sides agreed on the need to strengthen democratic governance in post-Covid recovery and condemned communal or sectarian violence and discrimination in any form or manifestation, anywhere."

The statement said the consultations were held in a constructive and cordial atmosphere against the backdrop of the 50th anniversary of Bangladesh's independence and the birth centenary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The EU and Bangladesh agreed to step up cooperation on climate action, digitalisation, connectivity and security, taking into account the EU strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific.

In this regard, both sides discussed initiating a regular political dialogue for providing strategic guidance and intensifying foreign and security policy cooperation, read the statement.

The EU presented its new strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. Both sides discussed the political and security situation in the region, maritime security, as well as counter-terrorism and cooperation within the UN fora.

"Both sides agreed to work on this common agenda with a view to reaching concrete progress and deliverables, which will be reviewed in the course of the next consultations, to be held in Dhaka in 2023."

Pilots demand pre-Covid

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discussions with Biman Managing Director and CEO Abu Saleh Mostafa Kamal, Bapa has decided to give the authorities the four-day ultimatum till Saturday to realise its demand.

"We won't operate aircraft beyond the contracted working hours if our demand is not met by that time."

He said the Biman administration had given them a "false assurance" that their salaries would be adjusted from August.

Asked, the Biman MD and CEO said the Biman board was making a decision that pilots will get allowances on hour basis, which is Tk 5,000 an hour, when they will fly aircraft on international routes.

"But they are demanding that all the pilots get overseas allowance on a monthly basis, which is Tk 2.16 lakh," he added.

The Biman boss said he would place

the pilots' demand before the Biman board meeting, which is likely to be held on Saturday.

He admitted that flight operations of Biman were being disrupted due to the pilot's latest decision.

On July 14 this year, Biman pilots threatened that they would refrain from flying additional or extra flights if the authorities do not address salary disparity between its pilots and other employees by July 30.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the salaries of Biman's employees, including pilots, were curtailed to reduce the cost of Biman in May last year, a decision that irked the pilots.

Pilots' salaries have decreased up to 25-50 percent. Overseas allowance, which is a part of their fixed salary, has also been halted. As a result, the total

salary reduction rate has stood at 57-65 percent. Several other benefits of pilots have also been halted.

According to an order in July, the airlines decided to deduct 10 percent of the salary of those who were in the pay scale from six to eight and 15 percent for those who were above pay scale nine.

As per the order, cockpit crew (pilots) having service period of five years will get 15 percent reduced salary; those five-10 years 20 percent and those over 10 years 40 percent reduced salary.

Capt Mahbubur said due to the discriminatory decision, the salary of a senior pilot has been reduced to Tk 5 lakh a month.

He said the salaries of other Biman officials have been adjusted in the last three months, but no action has been taken yet to adjust pilot's salaries.

JS body slates irregularities in dev projects

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The meeting discussed the ongoing projects of Dhaka, Sylhet, Mymensingh and Gopalganj zones of RTHD and the ministry of social welfare.

According to meeting sources, the JS watchdog yesterday mostly discussed the RTHD's ongoing projects.

The committee sought explanations as to why the projects were not implemented on time, why the durations of different projects were increased repeatedly causing increase in project costs.

The parliamentary body was not satisfied with the replies and arguments made by the officials concerned, said the sources.

The officials tried to explain that project deadlines were extended without increasing expenditures.

However, the committee argued that extending the duration without increasing the expenditure is also a kind of irregularity.

A committee member told the meeting that people were being deprived of benefits as projects were not being implemented on time. People were also suffering due to the delay in completion of projects.

Asked about the meeting, Abdus Shahid said, "We have discussed four zones of the Road Transport and Highways Division. There are several projects which are yet to be completed although the duration of those was

over. Even the officials concerned could not say when the work would be completed."

He said the RTHD officials couldn't respond to many of their queries satisfactorily.

Asked if the committee members expressed disappointment, the committee chief said, "They [government officials concerned] are educated individuals. We did not use indecent language."

Meanwhile, a press release issued by the Parliament Secretariat yesterday said the meeting recommended sending a report to the committee explaining reasons for extending the duration of nine incomplete projects under the RTHD's Dhaka zone.

Hilsa ban lifted

Fishermen catch record quantity

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

Fishermen caught this season's record quantity of hilsa in Barishal division yesterday as the government-imposed ban on fishing hilsa was lifted after 22 days.

The division's largest wholesale fish market on Barishal Port Road had at least 5,000 mounds of hilsa traded yesterday, said traders.

The price of hilsa remained between Tk 600 and Tk 1,000 a kg, depending on the size, they said.

Zahir Sikder, one of the fish traders in the market, said fish weighing below 600gm was sold at Tk 600 a kg; 600 to 800gm at Tk 800; 800 to 900gm at Tk 900; and above a kg at Tk 1,000.

The price has dropped compared to the pre-ban time, he added.

According to the fisheries department, at least half of the fish caught were carrying eggs. There were allegations that some of the fish was caught before the ban was lifted.

Anisur Rahman Talukder, chief scientist of Bangladesh Fisheries Research Institute, said he thought that the egg laying rate would be 42 percent, but it was between 45 to 50 percent due to favourable condition.

He added that 680 people were sent to jail by 899 mobile courts for violating the ban. Around Tk 2,330,300 were collected as fine during the ban. Besides, 900,000 tonnes of fish and 6,000,000 meters of fishing nets were seized.

Police, BNP

FROM PAGE 1

number of law enforcers were deployed in the Nayapaltan area.

The rally ended briefly after it was addressed by BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir. Several thousand BNP leaders and activists joined the rally carrying banners, placards and festoons.

Speaking at the rally, Fakhrul said: "We were supposed to hold a rally protesting the government's attempt to foil communal harmony in the country. We wrote to the authorities concerned about the rally. But unfortunately, police are arresting our leaders and activists. We are shortening the programme now."

The demonstration started at 11:00am and ended at 11:28am.

Fakhrul thanked the party men for attending the rally. "I am requesting you all to return home peacefully. We will not bring out any procession in the interest of maintaining harmony."

Police officials said the procession was not a part of the BNP's scheduled programme. However, the party leaders said they informed police beforehand about the procession.

"You saw that the leaders and activists have hurled brick chips at police when they reached Kakrail. Police were forced to use truncheons as many of us were injured. Such an attack is never expected in a civilised country," DMP Deputy Commissioner (Motijheel zone) Abdul Ahad told reporters.

The BNP leaders denied the allegation of attacking police and blamed law enforcers for attacking their peaceful rally.

Speaking to reporters at the party office after the clash, Fakhrul said police attacked BNP men suddenly when they were returning home after joining the rally.

"Police opened fire. Many were injured and many others were detained," he alleged.

The BNP leader said the government has completely failed to maintain communal harmony in the country.

"We were supposed to bring out a procession but police started arresting our leaders and activists even before the programme started."

Fakhrul condemned the police attack and demanded immediate release of the detainees.

"We want to clearly say that a change of the government is the demand of the people. The Awami League has no right to stay in the office," he said.

Meanwhile, traffic came to a standstill in Nayapaltan and its adjoining areas during the clash.

Khaleda Zia

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was found in her body. The lump was sent for biopsy to know its nature.

Asked about the biopsy result, Zahid said, "The medical board is waiting for the biopsy report. Biopsy is not treatment; it is instead a part of the diagnostic process. The treatment will depend on the biopsy report."

Khaleda is 76 years old and has been suffering from various health-related complications including arthritis, diabetes, as well as dental and eye problems.

The former premier was admitted to Evercare Hospital on 12 October. Her body temperature had started fluctuating a few days before that. Since her admission to the hospital, she has undergone several tests.

In April this year she contracted Covid-19. She recovered while under treatment at home, but as other health complications cropped up, she was admitted to Evercare Hospital on April 27.

She was admitted to the coronary care unit (CCU) and remained there for almost two months. She returned home on June 19.

Khaleda was sent to jail on February 8, 2018 in a corruption case. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, she was given temporary release on March 25 last year on certain conditions. The term of her release has been extended four times so far.