

BANGLADESH UPDATE

166
New cases in 24hrs

15,69,328
Total cases

27,862
Deaths

15,33,147
Recoveries

GLOBAL UPDATE

50,08,143
Deaths

246,986,380
Total cases

BD to play crucial role at COP26

Says FM; PM leaves for UK today to attend the climate summit

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen yesterday said Bangladesh would play a significant role at the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) that is set to begin in Glasgow today.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, also Chair of the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF), will lead the Bangladesh delegation at the COP26 Summit.

"Under the prime minister's leadership, Bangladesh will play a very important role at the COP26 Summit," Momen told journalists at a media briefing held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Environment, Forest and Climate Change Minister Shahab Uddin, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam and Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen were also present.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will leave for the United Kingdom today to attend the COP26 and other bilateral meetings.

The prime minister is scheduled to leave for Glasgow at 9:00am and will reach there at 2:45pm.

The COP26 Summit, hosted by the UK, will bring parties together to accelerate action towards the goals of the Paris Agreement and the UN Framework Convention on Climate

Change.

She will address the key segment of the COP26 on November 1. The same day, the Prime Minister will attend a joint meeting of the CVF and Commonwealth as the chief guest.

Hasina will also attend a meeting titled "Action and Solidarity—the critical decade" at the invitation of her British counterpart Boris Johnson on November 1. On November 2, the Prime Minister will attend a meeting titled "Women and Climate."

The foreign minister said the prime minister would hold bilateral meetings with her British counterpart Boris Johnson, Sri Lanka's President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and other leaders during her visit there.

After Glasgow, she will visit London from November 3 to 8 before heading towards Paris, France.

Meanwhile, the "Dhaka-Glasgow Declaration" is likely to be adopted during the COP26 to address the climate change-related challenges.

The prime minister is likely to deliver a speech on "A Call for Climate Prosperity."

In London, she will deliver a speech for the British MPs at the Palace of Westminster and will join a virtual investment summit hosted by Bangladesh.

Hundi, layoffs pull it down

FROM PAGE 1

year even as the pandemic wreaked havoc on the global economy. The expats sent home a record \$24.7 billion contributing to the country's economic recovery.

Prof Selim Raihan, executive director of South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM), said the rise in remittance amid the pandemic surprised many.

"What happened was the cash flow took place through formal channels as informal channels like hundi could not operate due to the travel restrictions and shutdown of economies in different countries," he said.

But the informal channels reopened once the restrictions were lifted. "As a result, the formal channels are seeing a decline."

In the last one year or so, many workers could not go abroad and it has left a "cumulative effect" on remittance, he added.

Prof Mustafizur Rahman, distinguished fellow at Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), said many expatriates sent home their savings or came back home with those. But it was a one-time phenomenon.

Besides, there are now fewer overseas employment opportunities for migrants, he said.

In 2020, the number of new workers with jobs abroad was 2.17 lakh, down from 7 lakh in 2019, the BMET data said.

SHARP DECLINE
Bangladeshi expatriates from Malaysia sent home about \$607.24 million in remittance in July-September, 2020. The amount fell to \$290.85 million this year, marking a \$316.39 million year-on-year decline.

From Saudi Arabia, migrants remitted over \$1.6 billion in the first quarter of last fiscal year while they sent \$1.3 billion during the same period this year.

The remittance from the UAE was \$752.47 million during July-September last year. But it was \$446.17 million this year.

Remittance from the UK and Kuwait saw \$64.18 million and \$24.33 million year-on-year declines.

Shariful Islam, who sells mobile accessories in Kuala Lumpur, said he

sent home 100 ringgit through a bank on October 4.

"I paid five ringgits in service charge while the exchange rate was Tk 20.35," he told The Daily Star over phone. "But you can get at least one taka more for each ringgit if you send money through hundi. Besides, they do not ask for service charges."

Since July 2019, the government has been giving a two percent cash incentive on the amounts sent from abroad. State-run Agrani Bank Limited gave an additional one percent incentive, but stopped the service in September this year.

Shariful said many of his fellow Bangladeshi workers used to send money through Agrani Bank when it was giving the additional incentive.

Mohammad Musa, a Bangladeshi trader in UAE's Ras Al Khaimah, said many of his fellow countrymen were facing job losses and were unable to send home anything.

REASON TO BE WORRY
"The dip in remittance through formal channels will create pressure on the government's foreign currency reserve and exchange rate. Since remittance is crucial for the government, there is reason to worry," said Prof Raihan.

Prof Mustafizur said there should be stronger monitoring by the central bank to discourage the informal channels.

Besides, the government needs to keep the exchange rate stable, he added.

Mohammad Shams-Ul Islam, managing director and chief executive officer of Agrani Bank, said the recent decline will be short-lived.

He added that the government was considering whether to give three percent incentive on the amounts remitted to Bangladesh.

To encourage remitters, Agrani Bank introduced an app-based service to send money from Singapore, he added.

Speaking at a meeting of the cabinet committee on economic affairs on October 6, Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal said he was hopeful that the remittance flow would return to normalcy in about three months because many Bangladeshis who returned home amid the pandemic are now going back.

Ctg Medical College shut

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Chowdhury Nowfel, the deputy minister for education.

The injured have been identified as Md Akib Hossain, Mahfuzul Haque and Naimul Islam. Hossain is said to be a follower of Nowfel and the other two underlings of Nasir Uddin.

On Friday night, Nowfel's men had beaten up two BCL activists who were adherents of Nasir Uddin, which led to a tit-for-tat brawl the following morning, according to CMC sources.

On both occasions, police had to be brought in to bring the situation under control.

To diffuse the tension on campus, the CMC academic committee has decided to keep the college closed indefinitely.

The students of the male hostel were ordered to vacate their rooms by 5:00pm yesterday while the female students have been given 24 hours, said Shahena Akter, principal of CMC.

All the examinations for the undergraduate courses will be postponed but those for the postgraduate courses would continue, she said.

A five-member committee has been formed to investigate the incidents and submit a report in a week.

CLASH AT DU

Meanwhile, in the capital, MM Abdullah Al Hadi, the president of BCL's Sylhet Kanaighat Government College unit, has alleged that he was beaten up on Friday night by members

of BCL's Dhaka University unit on the campus, reports UNB.

On Saturday morning, he lodged a complaint at the Shahbagh Police Station against 12 people, three named and nine unnamed.

The three accused named in the complaint are Amir Hamza, joint general secretary of Shaheed Sergeant Zahurul Haque Hall BCL; Palash, member of Jagannath Hall BCL; and Rudrik Rabbir of Dhaka College BCL unit.

According to the complaint, Hadi went to DU on Friday evening to meet the central wing president of BCL. Around 10 pm, when he was sitting at the university snacks counter, Hamza and others started abusing him verbally and then beat him up.

The accused also snatched his wallet and mobile phone and also threatened him with dire consequences.

Hadi claimed that locals took him to the emergency department of Dhaka Medical College and Hospital, where doctors administered 13 stitches to his forehead.

Action will be taken after a proper investigation, said Mowdud Howladar, officer-in-charge of Shahbagh police station.

"We will also speak to the university authorities as well," he said.

Contacted, Hamza refuted the allegations. "I was at the birthday celebrations of the BCL president at the university's Rokeya Hall at the time," he added.



From left, Samakal acting editor Mustafiz Shafi, The Financial Herald Editor Reazuddin Ahmed, Bhorer Kagaj Editor Shyamal Dutta, The Daily Star Editor Mahfuz Anam, New Age Editor Nurul Kabir, Dhaka Tribune Editor Zafar Sobhan, Dainik Azadi Editor MA Malek, Bonik Barta Editor Dewan Hanif Mahmud pose for a photo after a discussion on mass media's accomplishments and challenges at Cirdap yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Editors voice concern over press freedom

FROM PAGE 1

Manzoorul said newspapers are not corporate entities.

Shyamol Dutta, editor of the Bhorer Kagaj, questioned whether the industrial owners of media houses are interested in seeing journalism flourish.

"They are there to protect their own interests. We need to analyse why the big houses enter the media industry in the first place," he said.

Sampadak Parishad President Mahfuz Anam, also the editor of The Daily Star, said: "I entreat the owners to please understand that this industry is different. You maintain the quality of the products you manufacture. The quality of a newspaper is its credibility."

"Your journalists are not factory workers. They are independent thinkers. Your editors are not just employees. Their job is to defend the public interest," he said.

Nurul Kabir, editor of the New Age, commented on how criticism of the government and its machinery is now considered seditious.

"Sedition is being anti-state. But now criticising the government is considered to be sedition. Submitting to them is akin to slavery," said Kabir.

The speakers said the judiciary should protect the interests of freedom of speech and objective journalism.

Mustafiz Shafi, acting editor of the Daily Samakal, said a law like the Digital Security Act-2018 cannot be accepted in this country.

Mentioning that the judiciary and the media are protected by the constitution, Mahfuz Anam drew the attention of the government and said, "Please revisit the laws that hinder freedom of expression."

He questioned how many cybercrimes were stopped with the Digital Security Act. He said a new law must be enacted that would protect independent journalism.

Both Shyamol Dutta and Manzoorul Islam stressed the need for modernising and activating the Press Council so that it can deal with issues related to journalists.

"It is never desirable for a journalist to go to a court to defend the expression of his/her views in the interest of the country. An active Press Council might be the solution. It has to be made in such a way that everyone has confidence in it," said Manzoorul.

The speakers denounced politicisation of journalists.

"If journalists start getting into party politics, then this will be a problem," said Manzoorul Islam. He called for doing some soul-searching.

He listed multiple ways in which partisan politics creeps into journalism resulting in biased views.

"Journalists sign up for political parties. There are many opposing journalist associations, which make it difficult to realise demands from a unified platform. We have not been able to reach a satisfactory decision regarding the wage board yet, for example," the former DU professor said.

Manzoorul said the achievements of Bangladeshi newspapers are immense. "When there are formidable limitations, any success is magnified. Even then, there are questions about how objective the newspapers of this country are in publishing the truth."

Joining the meeting virtually, Honorary Professor Sakawat Ali Khan of the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism of DU said there should not be any division among journalists.

"Together, we all have to ensure real democracy. Only then the newspapers will survive," Sakawat added.

MA Malek, editor of the Daily Azadi, said the main challenge of newspapers lies in retaining their audiences at a time when independent journalism is being threatened.

Zafar Sobhan, editor of the Dhaka Tribune, said two types of challenges are facing the newspaper industry. "Freedom of speech is very curtailed and such a time was not seen in the past," he said.

Senior journalist Reazuddin Ahmed pointed out that a journalist can have no friends but the current situation is such that everybody including the government is in opposition to free press.

Matiur Rahman, editor of the Prothom Alo, was also present at the programme, chaired by Mahfuz Anam and conducted by Dewan Hanif Mahmud, acting general secretary of the Sampadak Parishad.

Eight more Covid deaths recorded

UNB, Dhaka

Eight more people died from Covid-19 and 166 others got the virus in 24 hours preceding 8:00am yesterday.

The daily positivity rate declined to 1.25 percent from Friday's 1.71 percent.

The fresh cases were detected after testing 13,240 samples, said the Directorate General of Health Services.

With the fresh numbers, Covid fatalities reached 27,862 in the country while the caseload climbed to 1,569,328, according to DGHs.

The mortality rate rose to 1.78 percent from Friday's 1.77 percent.

Also, the recovery rate stood at 97.69 percent with the recovery of 181 more patients during the 24-hour period.

Among the eight deceased, six were men and two women.

G20 leaders

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But no consensus had yet emerged on a collective commitment on climate change, on the eve of the crucial COP26 conference starting in Glasgow today.

Hosts Italy want the G20 to collectively endorse the UN goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, one of the aspirations of the landmark 2015 Paris climate accords.

But G20 members, many at different stages of economic development, remain at odds over the other major goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050.

"We have a moment now when we can try and take some of the nebulous commitments in Paris, solidify them into hard, fast, commitments to cut emissions, to cut cars and coal and so on," said British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who will host the Glasgow talks.

17 files go missing

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Besides, the missing files include the documents of the Directorate of Nursing and Midwifery and the Directorate of Medical Education.

The files were stored in a room where the activities of the Purchase and Collection-2 Section are conducted under the supervision of Shahdat Hossain, additional secretary (development) of the medical education and family welfare division of the ministry, according to a general diary filed with the Shahbagh police station on Thursday.

The room is adjacent to Hossain's office at room No 29 of building No 3 at the secretariat.

Md Joseph Sardar and Ayesha Siddiq, the stenographers/computer operators of the Purchase and Collection-2 Section, work in the room from where the files went missing.

Before leaving office on Wednesday, the two had kept the files in their cabinet. Around noon on Thursday, they discovered the files were missing when they went to bring out the folders from the cabinet.

Additional secretaries of the Administration and the Development unit and the personal secretary of the medical education division visited the spot immediately, according to the GD.

A team of the Crime Scene Unit of the Criminal Investigation Division of Police led by Kamruzzaman, special superintendent of police, visited the spot on the same day, according to ministry officials. They spoke to the officers and employees concerned.

Even after 48 hours of making the GD, neither the officials of the ministry nor the police could trace the persons involved.

The investigation could not begin in earnest because of the weekend, said Moudud Howladar, the officer-in-charge of Shahbagh Police Station.

Police will visit the ministry today, he added.

Hossain could not be reached for comments despite repeated attempts at the time of filing the report.