

BANGLADESH UPDATE

256
New cases in 24hrs

15,70,238
Total cases

27,880
Deaths

15,34,073
Recoveries

GLOBAL UPDATE

5,041,010
Deaths

249,046,626
Total cases

US Embassy funds restoration of Sultan's artworks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The US-funded cultural preservation project for SM Sultan's artworks was inaugurated at Bengal Shilpalay in the capital's Dhanmondi on Tuesday.



In his speech, Manzoorul recalled his interaction with the artist and mentioned that Sultan had broken the barriers of high art and low art from his very first exhibition.

Manzoorul further elaborated Sultan's take on the subaltern world view and his lifelong effort to produce counter narratives and bring the rural at the centre of attention.

Mohammad Nurul Huda reminisced about Sultan as a young officer at the Bangla Academy and shared his attachment with the artist's work "Chordokhol", which inspired Huda to make it the cover of his book.

"Sultan is important to us not only for his valuable impact in the history of Bangladeshi modern art, but for his world view, his rootedness and extraordinary conviction for the village life," said Luva Nahid.

The project inauguration also marked the beginning of an exhibition displaying the artworks by SM Sultan, photographs of the legendary artist, as well as books, magazines and films on him.

The exhibition will remain open for visitors till December 4.



A woman puts a noose around her neck during a symbolic protest in front of Shrom Bhaban in the capital yesterday. Workers of a factory in Gazipur staged the demonstration demanding payment of nine months' salaries and overtime in arrears.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

United States Ambassador to Bangladesh Earl Robert Miller and Bangla Academy Director General Mohammad Nurul Huda opened the project.

At the event, Miller presented a ceremonial plaque to Bengal Foundation's Director General Luva Nahid Chowdhury for the formal inauguration.

Syed Manzoorul Islam, former Dhaka University professor and writer, was the guest of honour and spoke about the life and works of SM Sultan.

The three-year initiative, funded by the US government's prestigious Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP), supports the study, analysis, and restoration of the largest collection of paintings by one of Bangladesh's most celebrated artists.

The project also includes training young Bangladeshi conservation professionals on sustainable conservation techniques, methodologies and restoration models.

Need to change 'traditional lens'

FROM PAGE 1

and dignity. She said UK's role to this end remains critical.

She was addressing a programme titled "Bangladesh at 50: The Resilient Delta" at the State Rooms, Speaker's House, Westminster in London, on Wednesday.

Rushanara Ali, MP, and member of the House of Lords, Lord Jitish Ghadha, received the PM on her arrival at the Westminster.

Hasina said engagements of the two countries should now be truly strategic, and draw on their cooperation in peacekeeping, counter-terrorism, maritime and aviation security.

She said the vibrant British-Bangladeshi diaspora must remain at the centre of partnership of the two countries.

"We take pride in our diaspora. I am pleased to see their growing representation at the Westminster -- all five of them women at the moment! I am confident that there will be more of them in this great parliament of diversity," she said.

Turing to the Rohingya crisis, Hasina said that the UK's role in finding a solution to the crisis remains critical.

Since August 2017, Bangladesh has given stability to the region by containing the crisis, she added.

"But the security challenges in

Cox's Bazar are getting more and more acute. These challenges can soon spread to the region and beyond," she said, adding that the international community has a responsibility to make sure that the Rohingyas can soon go back to Myanmar in safety and dignity.

Describing Bangladesh as a land of opportunities and promise at its 50 years of independence, Hasina said, "It draws strength from its resilient past. It stands ready to seize opportunities in the present. It looks to the future with a mission and a vision."

The PM also briefly spelled out Bangladesh's extraordinary achievements and developments in various sectors, including economy, infrastructural development, power and energy and digitisation.

She said that Bangladesh's economy has been growing at an average rate of over 6 percent, with 8.15 percent in 2018-19 fiscal year.

The premier continued that Bangladesh's GDP grew by 243 percent from 2008 to USD 310 billion in 2021 and the Bangladesh economy is now the world's 41st largest in nominal GDP.

The per capita income has increased three-fold from 2008 to USD 2,227 this year whereas the foreign currency reserve jumped seven-fold to USD 48 billion in 2021, she continued.

1 man, 3 cases

FROM PAGE 1

and set December 1 -- the date previously scheduled for submission of the probe report on the case -- to pass an order on the withdrawal petition, court sources said.

The magistrate also directed the PBI to halt investigation.

"I will not make any comments about the case," Imrul Hasan told The Daily Star yesterday.

With this case, the 32-year-old registered himself at the courts as the complainant of three similar cases in last 20 months.

In his first two cases -- filed under the Digital Security Act against Baul singer Rita Dewan and Ziaur Rahman, professor of DU's criminology department -- he made the same allegations against the accused.

CASE AGAINST MEGHDOL
His case against Meghdol members was filed under sections 295A and 109 of the Penal Code with the court of Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Mainul Islam on October 28.

The accused are Shibu Kumar Shill (vocal), Mezbaur Rahman Sumon (vocal), Rasheed Sharif Shoaib (guitar-vocal), MG Kibria (bass guitar), Amzad Hossain (drums), Tanvir Dawud Rony (keyboard) and Saurav Sarkar (flute).

After accepting the case, the magistrate on October 31 directed the Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) to probe and submit a report by December 1.

Following the case, different artistes and media personalities expressed solidarity with the band, posting comments with the hashtag "Meghdoler pashe darao (stand by Meghdol)".

TWO DSA CASES
After a video of Baul singer Rita Dewan performing a "Pala Gaan" on December 10, 2019, in Tangail's Kalihati upazila went viral, Imrul filed

a DSA case against her on February 2 last year, even after another video of Rita apologising was released soon after the performance.

Imrul said he saw the video on YouTube on February 1 and alleged that her song had hurt religious sentiments.

Two others -- Shahjahan and Iqbal Hossain, owners of YouTube channels Kokil TV and Channel Rupali HD -- were also made accused in the case.

Shahjahan and Iqbal had uploaded Rita's songs to their YouTube channels, the case documents said.

On October 25 this year, the Cyber Tribunal of Dhaka framed charges against Rita, Shahjahan and Iqbal Hossain and set January 27 to begin the trial.

Imrul filed another case with the tribunal on October 25 last year after he saw a video of a talk show on private TV channel DBC News where Ziaur Rahman, professor of DU's criminology department, spoke about religion.

And yet again, he made allegations against Ziaur of hurting people's religious sentiment.

The tribunal directed the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime Unit of police to investigate the case and submit a report before it.

However, the CTC is yet to submit any probe report before the tribunal till yesterday.

Journos won't

FROM PAGE 1

The minister claimed that the act was not formulated to curb the freedom of expression and the freedom of the press.

The DSA was passed in the parliament on September 19, 2018. The journalist community has since been protesting it and demanding that several sections be amended to safeguard the freedom of the press.

Living now even harsher for poor

FROM PAGE 1

And transporting the rice and other produce from the farms to the markets will become costlier: the trucks and covered vans used to haul goods run on diesel.

About 72 percent of the 40 lakh tonnes of diesel consumed annually is by the transport sector.

Other than the fares for trucks, the tickets for buses, the mode of transport for the poor and the middle-classes, will rise.

In short, the government's decision will have a far-reaching impact on the lives of those who cannot afford to -- and it is all to arrest daily losses of about Tk 20 crore of a state-run corporation that logged in profits of Tk 43,136 crore between fiscals 2014-15 and 2020-21.

Rubbing salt into the wounds of the poor and the middle-classes are the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission's move yesterday to increase the price of LPG for the fifth time since April to keep up with the prices in the international market.

A 12 kg cylinder, the most common form for marketing the fuel, is now selling for Tk 1,313, up by Tk 54.

The three-pronged price hike of fuel will unreservedly fan the flames of inflation.

In September, which is the latest available data, inflation rose for the third consecutive month to 5.59 percent.

"This is not desirable at this time," said Khondaker Golam Moazzem, research director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue.

The prices of gas and electricity have already been increased in phases, while the prices of essential commodities are at an elevated level, said SM Nazer Hossain, vice-president of the Consumers Association of Bangladesh, adding that inflation is on the rise.

Against the backdrop, the hike in the prices of kerosene and diesel will break the lower-income people.

Subsequently, he urged the

government to retract its decision.

The prices of petroleum were low in the international market for a long time, but the government did not cut the domestic prices then to benefit the commoners, Hossain said.

Moazzem suggested the government provide a subsidy to the BPC, which last logged in a loss -- of Tk 2,321 crore -- back in fiscal 2013-14, instead of raising the prices.

Jahangir Alam, an agricultural economist, called for cash subsidy to farmers for irrigation to keep their production costs within a reasonable level.

"We have instances of farmers getting cash subsidy," he said, citing the Tk 800 farmers got in 2009-10.

And the government should declare subsidy before the beginning of the Boro season.

Farmers start taking preparations to grow Boro in November-December, so they will not feel discouraged to cultivate the crop if the government declares a subsidy for the diesel used, said Abdul Latif Mondal, a former food secretary.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Truck Covered Tank Lorry Prime Movers Owners and Workers Coordination Council have called a countrywide indefinite strike from 6:00 am today.

The transport owners incurred huge losses due to the pandemic, said Rustam Ali Khan, convener of the organisation.

Just as they were recovering the losses, the government raised the toll for the two biggest bridges.

"And now, the fuel price has been hiked without any discussion with the transport owners. We will continue the strike until the government changes its decision," he added.

A leader of the Bangladesh Bus Truck Owners Association, another major organisation of transport owners, also said the operations of all transport would remain suspended from today.

Although a strike was not called from the centre, the branches in districts

decided not to operate transport from today protesting the fuel price hike, said Jatiya Party lawmaker Mashur Rahman Ranga, also the president of the Bangladesh Road Transport Owners Association.

The association also wrote to the secretary of Road Transport and Highway Division and chairman of the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) to re-fix the bus fare following the fuel price hike.

While the government did not hike the bus fare in the last eight years, the cost of all parts of vehicles, as well as the taxes, have increased manifold, said Khondaker Enayet Ullah, the secretary-general of the association, in his written application.

Then the pandemic-induced lockdown hit the transport business hard, so it would not be possible to operate buses unless the fare is increased, Enayet added.

Contacted, BRTA Chairman Nur Mohammad Mazumder said a meeting would be held over the issues with the association on Sunday.

However, many buses and launches have already raised the fare.

Al Kachir, who works at a private firm, said a bus service on the Dhaka-Narayanganj route increased the fare to Tk 50 from Tk 36.

Our Khulna correspondent also reported fare hikes.

The launch owners in different areas have already increased fares although their central association did not make any decision in this regard, said Badiuzzaman Badal, senior vice-chairman of the Bangladesh Inland Waterways (passenger carrier) Association.

A meeting would be held today over the issue and the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority called a meeting on Monday over re-fixing launch fares, Badal added.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Noujan Shramik Federation urged the government to reconsider the decision.

4 more die, more violence feared

FROM PAGE 1

Police and locals said the two AL leaders has a long-standing feud over establishing supremacy in the union. On October 26, two people were shot dead in another clash between the two groups.

The deceased were Amir Hossain, 45, Ashrafal Haque, 22, Khairul Islam, 30, and Khushi Begum, 50 of Nekhanpur village of Sadar upazila, said Saugatal Alam, officer-in-charge of Narsingdi Sadar Police Station.

At least seven people have been killed in Magura, Rangamati, Faridpur and Dhamrai of Dhaka in violence ahead of the second phase of the UP polls on November 11 and the third phase on November 28.

Six people were killed during first phase of the UP polls in June and September.

On Tuesday, Chief Election Commissioner Nurul Huda said the EC was embarrassed at the election violence. He also expressed his concern over the matter.

YESTERDAY'S MEETING
The EC held the virtual meeting with all divisional commissioners, chiefs of police of all divisions and heads of metropolitan police except in Dhaka to discuss law and order ahead of the polls.

Deputy Inspector General of police

(Dhaka Range) Habibur Rahman told the meeting that there were possibilities of violence in 90 unions of Dhaka Division.

In the division, 170 unions will go to polls on November 11.

Habibur said officials from the police, intelligence agencies and local administration were working relentlessly but "we cannot rule out the possibilities".

Khulna Range DIG Kh Mahid Uddin said, "There are some people who always try to create anarchy centring elections in different places in Narail, Magura, and Shaikupa [of Jhenaidah]."

He said the range would find itself in a tight spot over manpower crisis while deploying law enforcers on the election day.

"We will need 11,080 personnel for election duty. We have a manpower of 14,000 people, but we have to continue our regular duty also ... the chances of getting support from the headquarters are slim as the elections are taking places in 62 districts."

The DIG of Barisal range also talked about the manpower problem.

Rajshahi Divisional Commissioner Humayun Kabir, Khulna Divisional Commissioner Ismail Hossain, and Mymensingh Divisional

Commissioner Shafiqur Reza Biswas said there was a crisis of executive magistrates in their divisions.

While giving an example, Ismail Hossain said there were 14 magistrates for Kushtia and that they would not be able to deploy one magistrate in each union parishad.

CEC Nurul Huda then asked officials of the EC Secretariat to discuss the manpower issue with the authorities concerned and have it solved.

He also asked election officials to take "brave steps" to check any untoward incidents over the polls.

"If any returning officials feel that elections need to be stop at any place, we will stop it," he said.

"Except some tension in Dhaka and Khulna division, the situation in all other division appears to be calm. We almost have quelled the situation in Khulna. But we will need to identify the pockets in Dhaka division where there is still some tension. We must remain alert," the CEC said.

Election Commissioner Brig Gen (ret'd) Shahadat Hossain Chowdhury asked all election officials to create a level-play field for all candidates. "Independent candidates are becoming victim of election violence," he said.

Coal era ending

FROM PAGE 1

capacity of renewable energy," said Sri Mulyani Indrawati, finance minister of Indonesia, which is the world's biggest coal exporter and relies on coal for 65% of its energy.

Initiatives to provide financial help are appearing, however.

The Climate Investment Funds (CIF), backed by some of the world's biggest economies, said India, Indonesia and the Philippines would benefit from a multibillion dollar pilot programme to speed their transition from coal to clean energy.

In 2020, carbon dioxide emissions actually fell by 5.4% as economies ground to a halt because of the coronavirus pandemic. But the new report, produced by the Global Carbon Project, forecasts they will rebound by 4.9% this year.

The world's energy watchdog, says that to achieve the UN goal of 'net zero' emissions by 2050, no new fossil fuel plants should be approved after 2021 - a goal that the coal pledge is sure to miss.

The main aim of COP26 is to get promises of enough cuts in greenhouse gas emissions to put the world on a clear path towards capping the rise in global temperature - already up 1.1C since pre-industrial times.

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The United Nations says a rise above 1.5C would tip the Earth into potentially irreversible climate effects that would dwarf the intensifying storms, heatwaves, droughts and floods that it is already experiencing.

The UN Environment Programme on Thursday said poorer countries needed five to 10 times more money to adapt to the consequences of climate change - for instance by building dykes against flooding or restoring coral reefs to absorb ocean waves - than they are currently receiving.

At least 20 countries plan to commit at the summit to stop public financing for fossil fuel projects abroad by the end of next year, according to two people familiar with the talks.

Tigers go down

FROM PAGE 12

with the figures of five for 19 from four overs.

Australia chased the target in just 6.2 overs, losing two wickets, as they won their third game in four matches in the Super 12 stage. Skipper Aaron Finch smashed 40 off just 20 balls with four sixes and two fours.

The Bangladeshi players may well breathe a huge sigh of relief considering that the nightmarish tournament has finally come to an end, albeit with the caveat that they have endured yet another clean sweep in the main round of the ICC T20 World Cup.

The defeat also ruled Bangladesh out of the race to qualify directly to the Super 12 of the 2022 ICC T20 World Cup.

Not more than three months ago, the same Bangladesh team had beaten Australia 4-1 in a T20I series on home soil after manufacturing slow and low Mirpur surfaces.

That winning momentum nor the confidence gained helped Bangladesh yesterday as Mahmudullah and his troops faced the harsh realities of their inability to tackle top-class bowling.

Bangladesh's fortunes did not change since a shocking six-run defeat to Scotland in their opening game in the first round of the World Cup but the Tigers have only themselves to blame. Despite managing to reach the Super 12 after beating Oman and Papua New Guinea in the qualifying round, it has been a disappointing show in all three departments of the game from the Tigers.

With an aim of reaching the semifinal of the mega event, the entire Bangladesh team seemed to have lost their focus, gauged by controversial statements from captain Mahmudullah and senior players like Shakib Al Hasan and Mushfiqur Rahim.

But rather than looking to improve their performance on the field, Bangladesh continued to repeat mistakes in all three departments. Despite being agonisingly close to winning against Sri Lanka and West Indies, the Tigers lost due to some dropped catches and poor decision-making.

Apart from those two games, Bangladesh's lack of ability in the shortest format was brutally exposed as they were totally outplayed by England, South Africa and Australia.

It will be important for Bangladesh to take lessons from this disastrous World Cup outing and bring drastic changes to their mentality and planning. Or else, the Tigers' fortunes may not change on the world stage in the coming days either.

Covid-19 creates

FROM PAGE 1

While the majority of the people agree that the latest lockdown was needed, almost half of the respondents said it put their livelihoods in crisis, he added.

The survey found that the average income among the surveyed poor was 23 percent below the pre-Covid-level.

Zillur said a large percentage of people have been trapped in poverty throughout the pandemic.

A large number of people who returned to their villages from the cities have not been able to come back.

"These reverse migrants are certainly in distress. Effective policy response will depend on overcoming critical knowledge gaps about their needs," he said.

Urban slum unemployment rate doubled to 15 percent in August. Majority of the respondents said they did not find enough work in the last one month and about 69 percent said that they did not have enough or expected level of work.

About 49 percent of the respondents said the lockdown was the reason for not getting enough work.

The percentage of households skipping at least one meal on the day before the survey increased significantly between March and August, especially in the urban slums, from 2 percent to 8 percent, and in the Chattogram Hill Tracts, from 2 percent to 16 percent.

It found that the majority of the households did not have any meat, milk, fruits throughout the pandemic. The number of borrowers with outstanding loans also increased among the extremely poor, reaching 34 percent in August.

Most of them took loans from shopkeepers and NGOs.

About 71 percent borrowed for daily consumption.

Four cost drivers contributing to the expenditure burdens on the poor and less well-off sections are: healthcare costs, education costs, transportation costs and utility costs.

Imran Matin, executive director at BIGD also spoke at the event.

US journalist detained in Myanmar hit with third charge

AFP, Yangon

An American journalist detained for months by Myanmar's junta has been denied bail and hit with a third criminal charge, his lawyer told AFP on Thursday.

Danny Fenster, managing editor of Frontier Myanmar, was held in May as he attempted to leave the country.

He is currently on trial for allegedly encouraging dissent against the military and unlawful association, and faces six years in jail if convicted on both counts.