

BANGLADESH
UPDATE



205
New cases in 24hrs



15,71,434
Total cases



27,904
Deaths



15,35,390
Recoveries

GLOBAL
UPDATE



50,75,036
Deaths



251,252,276
Total cases

AL infighting ruins

FROM PAGE 1
General Abdullah Al Mamun on Friday threatened voters saying that he would use an AK-47 rifle if they don't vote for the party chairman candidate in Humaipur union parishad polls.

He issued the warning while speaking at a campaign rally for AL nominee Rafiqul Islam at Humaipur Islamia Arabia Madrasa. The 7:10-minute video clip of Mamun's speech went viral in social media.

"We will not only use AK-47, but also would do whatever is needed," the AL leader said.

"The administration is ours, so are the police and the government. Do I need to say anything more?"

Mamun later claimed that he made the remarks on AK-47 to remove fear from the party men's mind. He said he did not mean to use AK-47 rifles during the polls.

The same day, Madaripur's Kalkini upazila Jubo League Joint Secretary General Md Afzal Hossain Molla said he would carry two arms and anyone could appear before him if they dared to.

"Those who do not cast vote for 'boat' [electoral symbol of Awami League] have no right to live here," he said while addressing a campaign rally at Surjamoni Bazar in support of AL chairman candidate Mojibur Rahman in Laxmipur Union Parishad election.

Afzal is a nephew of the AL candidate.

Asked about his comments, Afzal told the media that he threatened those who verbally abuse the ruling party.

"Activities and comments by ruling party men during UP polls campaign are ominous sign for democracy."

HAFIZUDDIN KHAN
EX-ADVISER TO CARETAKER GOVT

On November 1, Shariatpur Sadar upazila Chairman Abul Hashem Tapadar warned that no opportunity will be given to seek votes against "boat" in the Domsar Union Parishad elections. Video footage of his speech at a rally spread on social media.

He issued the warning at a polls rally of AL candidate Mizan Mohammad Khan.

Abul Hashem later claimed that he did not make such comments and it was a propaganda against him. "Nowadays many things can be edited and circulated."

Chairman of Haldiapalang UP in Cox's Bazar's Ukhia upazila, Shah Alam, also the AL nominee for tomorrow's election, on November 1 said that there will be a list of people who will not vote for "boat" and they would not be allowed a place in the local graveyard for burial after their death.

On October 30, Masudur Rahman, youth and sports affairs secretary of Natore AL, said those who will not vote for the AL in the UP election would not be allowed to go to polling centres.

Masud was addressing a campaign rally of Omor Ali Prodhan, AL chairman nominee in Tebaria Union Parishad polls in Natore Sadar upazila.

Alamgir Hossain, returning officer of the Chitalia union parishad election in Shariatpur Sadar upazila, late last month said, "A decision has been made after discussing with the MP sir that there will be no election

in the Chitalia union; everyone will be selected. Iqbal Hossain MP has said this."

The lawmaker, however, later said he did not give any such decision.

Enquired about the comments by candidates and AL leaders, Election Commissioner Rafiqul Islam said, "If anyone made such comments during electioneering, returning officers and executive magistrates concerned will take action. We take action after conducting investigations."

Asked if such remarks were hampering the polls atmosphere and causing fear among voters, he said, "I can't make any comments instantly without analysing the events thoroughly. If the returning officers and executive magistrates consider that, they can inform the commission regarding the matter."

VIOLENCE

Violence continued ahead of tomorrow's second phase of the union parishad polls. In most cases, supporters of AL nominees and party "rebel" candidates are getting involved in violence. Sources in the ruling party said around 690 "rebel" candidates are contesting elections tomorrow.

The absence of other major political parties in the polls, internal feud, poor chain of command within the party and nepotism in picking candidates at the grassroots are among the reasons for so many rebel candidates taking part in the polls, top AL leaders told The Daily Star.

"Many grassroots leaders, who have become rich, now hardly pay heed to party instructions. Again, opposition parties are backing the 'rebels' financially. That's why there are so many 'rebel' candidates," AL presidium member Kazi Zafarullah told The Daily Star.

He said they have asked all grassroots leaders not to get involved in any clash. He warned that the party would control the "rebel" candidates strictly.

"Previously, we had accepted 'rebels' into our party. This time around, we will not accept them," he said.

Statistics of Ain o Salish Kendra show at least 44 people were killed in clashes centering local government polls between January and October this year. Of them, 40 were killed in clashes over UP polls.

This month, at least nine people have been killed in pre-polls violence in Naryanganj, Cox's Bazar, Narsingdi and Dhaka's Dhamari upazila, according to media reports.

Data compiled by Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik (Shujan) showed that a total of 147 people were killed in violence over the last UP elections in 2016.

Election Commissioner Brig Gen (retd) Shahadat Hossain Chowdhury said, "Independent candidates are becoming victims of electoral violence."

Speaking at meeting organised by EC with police and admin officials on November 4, he asked all election officials to create a level playing field for all candidates.

In the meeting, police and civil administration officials warned the commission of more polls violence in seven districts of Dhaka and Khulna divisions.

Deputy Inspector General of police (Dhaka Range) Habibur Rahman told the meeting that there were possibilities of violence in 90 unions of Dhaka division. As many as 170 unions will go to polls in the division tomorrow.

Joy is there, sufferings too

FROM PAGE 1
The Daily Star that there are 24 booths at the centre but not all are open and that is why the authorities are struggling to manage the crowd.

Farid Ahmed, a guardian waiting for over half an hour for his child to get vaccinated, said he tried several times to register, but couldn't as the school authorities didn't send them the necessary information. He was able to register only after personally contacting a health ministry official.

Meanwhile, a Vigarunnisa student was barred by a BNNC member from entering the centre as she did not have her birth certificate, even though she had her vaccine card.

Guardians claimed that another major problem in registration was regarding the birth certificate number. Allegedly, those who had a 16-digit number instead of 17 were not allowed to register on the Surokkha app.

Marium Begum, a guardian, told The Daily Star that she tried several times to register her daughter -- a student of Ideal School, Banaree Branch -- for the vaccine but couldn't as she had a 16-digit birth certificate number.

The Kakoli School centre, which has 24 vaccine booths, had no major hassles inside. However, due to a large number of guardians accompanying the students, entry into the centre was difficult.

Some of the students at the centre said the management inside the centre was smooth but they had to stand in line for a long time.

The government started inoculating schoolchildren aged 12 to 17 in Dhaka city on November 1 with the Covid-19 vaccine developed by Pfizer-BioNTech in eight centres.

The eight schools with centres are Ideal School and College in Motijheel, Hurdco International School at Bashundhara, Southpoint School and College at Malibagh, Chittagong Grammar School at Banani, Dhaka Commerce College in Mirpur, Kakoli High School and College in Dhanmondi, South Breeze School in Uttara and Scholastica School in Mirpur.

Contacted, Khandaker Azizur Rahman, senior system analyst of EMIS Cell of the DSHE, said they already spoke about the birth certificate issue with the Surokkha app team.

"We told them to allow the 16-digit certificates. They are working on it."

Keeping all the hurdles aside, many students and guardians were happy about the vaccination programme and some said they were relieved for it.

Aszadul Alam, a guardian, in front of Ideal School, told The Daily Star that he and his wife both worked in a bank and they had to go outside every day.

"We were anxious about our child. We both got jabs and Fahad's [his child] school was reopened. He was the most vulnerable at our house. Now it's safe for all of us," he said.

A group of girls, in a festive mood, came to Vigarunnisa Noon School and College.

One of them said, "Hurry up! The jabs will be stocked out soon."

In response, the guard assured, "No worries! The queue is not too long at the moment."

After getting the jabs, some students were resting in corners, verandas or nearer classrooms whereas some were feeling otherwise. In fact, one of them was heard saying, "I am too young to take a rest."



Indian President Ram Nath Kovind hands over Padma Shri to Liberation War veteran Lt Col (retd) Quazi Sajjad Ali Zahir at the Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi yesterday. Zahir was conferred with the prestigious Indian civilian award in recognition of his contribution to public affairs.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Ex-chief justice Sinha gets 11yrs

FROM PAGE 1

Former Farmers Bank managing director AKM Shamim was sentenced to four years in prison and fined Tk 50,000, in default of which he would have to serve an additional six months.

The court sentenced the bank's former senior executive vice president Gazi Salauddin, first vice presidents Swapan Kumar Roy and Shafiuddin Askary Ahmed, vice president Lutful Haque and former chairman of the bank's audit committee Mahbubul Haque Chisty alias Babul Chisty to three years in prison.

Two other accused Ranjit Chandra Saha and his wife Santri Roy Simi were sentenced to three years in prison and fined Tk 10,000 each. Defaulting would mean an additional three months in jail.

Salauddin, Swapan, Shafiuddin and Lutful were each fined Tk 25,000 and Mahbubul was fined Tk 10,000. Defaulting would mean an additional three months in jail.

The verdict said Mahbubul influenced the bank officials concerned to sanction the loan.

Businessmen Md Shahjahan and Niranjana Chandra Saha were acquitted.

"In good faith, both Shahjahan and Niranjana signed some documents which were used in making loans in their names, but they were not the beneficiaries of the loans."

They were the victims of fraud by Ranjit, the court said.

Among the convicts, Shamim, Salauddin, Swapan, Lutful, and Mahbubul are in jail while SK Sinha, Shafiuddin, Ranjit and Santri have been absconding.

The sentence of absconding convicts will take effect on or from the date of their arrest or surrender.

ACC lawyer Mir Ahmed Ali Salam said this was the first time in Bangladesh a former chief justice got convicted.

Lawyer Shahinur Islam who represented one of the accused said his clients would challenge the verdict in higher court.

A total of 21 prosecution witnesses gave their deposition before the court, Salam said.

In October 2018, the ACC said it found evidence of fraud involving transactions of Tk 4 crore borrowed with forged documents by two businessmen Shahjahan and Niranjana

from the Farmers Bank. The money was deposited later to Justice Sinha's account.

On July 10, 2019, ACC Director Syed Iqbal Hossain filed the graft case with its Integrated District Office-1 of Dhaka.

On December 8 that year, ACC Director Benjir Ahammad pressed charges against Sinha and the 10 other accused. The court framed charges against them on August 13 last year.

Justice Sinha resigned as chief justice on November 11, 2017, from abroad.

Talking to reporters at his office, Law Minister Anisul Huq said, "I am not very happy. Because, he [SK Sinha] had been involved with the judiciary. He was the chief justice of the country. It [conviction] cannot be pleasant for me."

"It has been proved through the verdict that nobody is above the law. Those who hold constitutional or important public offices must be accountable for their activities. They must be careful and maintain transparency and accountability. I think that an example has been set through this verdict."



Simeen Rahman, MD and CEO of Eskayef Pharmaceuticals, at the launch of Monuvir, the world's first generic Molnupiravir, the breakthrough oral anti-Covid medicine. Md Nazmul Islam, director of Communicable Diseases Control at DGHS; Mohammad Robed Amin, line director of Non-Communicable Disease Control at DGHS; and Billal Alam, president of the Bangladesh Society of Medicine, were present at the event.

Eskayef's Covid pill hits market

FROM PAGE 1

course would cost Tk 2,000.

The treatment, which is based on a molecule first studied at Emory University as a treatment for influenza, targets an enzyme that the coronavirus uses to make copies of itself, introducing errors into its genetic code.

In so doing, molnupiravir prevents the virus from replicating, so keeping the viral load low in the body and reducing the severity of the disease.

Merck said that approach should make the treatment equally effective against new variants of the virus as it evolves in the future.

Eskayef got the formulation for the molnupiravir from Medicines Patent Pool, a United Nations-backed non-profit that works to make medical treatment and technologies globally accessible.

Following concerns that poor countries could be shut out of access to the medicine, much as they have been for vaccines, in October, Merck, Ridgeback Biotherapeutics and Emory University -- which, coincidentally, is the alma mater of Eskayef chief Simeen Rahman's two sons -- granted a royalty-free licence for the pill to Medicines Patent Pool.

The Medicines Patent Pool has deep experience in working with a network of global drugmakers that can meet high-quality standards, including those required for the World Health Organisation prequalification.

The deal allows the drug to be made

and sold cheaply in 105 developing nations, with no fee required from the sublicensing company.

Generic drug makers in developing countries are expected to market the drug for as little as \$20 per treatment (a five-day course), compared to the \$712 per course that the US government has agreed to pay for its initial purchase.

So far, Eskayef has received requests from Cambodia, Somalia and Nigeria for the antiviral pill manufactured at its state-of-the-art plant approved by the UK's Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (UK MHRA).

Eskayef, which exports medicines to 65 countries, has applied to the Directorate General of Drug Administration (DGDA) for permission to export Monuvir, Islam told The Daily Star yesterday.

"I thank and congratulate the company for marketing the world-standard anti-Covid drug very fast," said Md Nazmul Islam, director of Communicable Diseases Control at Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), at the launch ceremony of Monuvir.

On November 4, the UK became the first country to authorise the use of molnupiravir.

He went on to urge the 31-year-old drugmaker to ensure that the price of the drug stays within the affordability of the common people.

"Our initiative is not only for business but also to leave a positive impact on humanity and mankind," said Simeen Rahman, the managing

director and chief executive officer of Eskayef.

With the launch of Monuvir, the people of Bangladesh and across the world are now getting an oral medication to fight against the deadly Covid-19, she said, adding that Eskayef would be bringing out all possible medicines to snuff out the pandemic.

Last year, Eskayef was among the first drug makers in the world to roll out antiviral remdesivir, a drug that had generated intense interest as a treatment for Covid-19, and had exported it to 43 countries.

The drug will be a game-changer as there is no established anti-Covid drug, said Mohammad Robed Amin, line director of Non-Communicable Disease Control at DGHS, while expressing his surprise at the pace of its roll out by Eskayef, a concern of Transcom.

"Introduction of this drug by Eskayef is remarkable because we do not know whether there will be another wave of Covid-19. In this circumstance, if people can take medicine at home -- it is great," he added.

Meanwhile, the DGDA yesterday issued production and marketing authorisation for the pills to three other pharmaceutical companies: Beximco, Square and Renata.

Beximco also announced the launch of the drug under the brand name "Emorivir".

Six other companies were waiting to get the nod, according to Md. Salah Uddin, director of DGDA.

Freedom Fighter

Sajjad receives

Padma Shri

award

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Liberation War veteran Lt Col (retd) Quazi Sajjad Ali Zahir yesterday received Padma Shri, one of India's most prestigious civilian awards, in recognition of his contribution to public affairs.

Indian President Ram Nath Kovind handed over a medal and a citation to Zahir as part of Padma Shri for 2021 at a ceremony at the Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi.

The citation described 71-year-old Zahir as "Bangladesh Liberation War veteran, and founder of 'Shudhoi Muktiuddho' providing recognition to indigenous war veterans."

Zahir took part in the Liberation War in Sylhet region in 1971.

Career diplomat Syed Muazzem Ali (posthumously) was honoured with Padma Bhushan and scholar Enamul Haque, founder director general of Bangladesh National Museum, with Padma Shri by President Kovind at the Rashtrapati Bhavan on Monday.

Boy killed

FROM PAGE 1

Locals alleged that the 30-year-old wall collapsed due to sheer negligence of the Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) authorities.

Jamal Uddin Khan, president of Azimpur Government Officers' Quarter (south zone) Welfare Association, said, "DSCC contractors dug soil near the wall for constructing a drain, eventually loosening the earth under the wall."

"After construction of the drain, they did not even properly refill the dug portions."

Contacted, Mafizur Rahman, executive engineer (zone 3) of DSCC, denied the allegations. "We constructed the drain around six months ago. If there was any fault in our work, the wall had collapsed then."

He said they informed Public Work's Department (PWD) about the poor condition of the 500-metre wall around six months ago, but PWD left it unattended even after receiving the letter.

MM Morshed, officer-in-charge of Lalbagh Police Station, said the body was sent to the morgue for autopsy.

"We are investigating the incident and trying to find out if there is any negligence on anyone's part," he said.

Asked, the victim's mother Moni Begum said, "We are poor and live hand to mouth."

"How will we bear expenses for legal battle? Where will I go to seek justice for my son?" she asked in tears.

Joint drive

FROM PAGE 1

Many bus operators in the capital and Chattogram city have been overcharging since the government increased bus and minibus fares up to 28 percent on Monday.

Nur Mohammad said they had called the meeting because they wanted to involve transport leaders in the actions regarding overcharging, adding that BRTA mobile courts have been conducting drives from Monday, which continued till yesterday, to stop the malpractice.

Around 10 mobile courts yesterday conducted drives against 257 buses in Dhaka and Chattogram and realised Tk 2.83 lakh from them, BRTA sources said.

Of the 257, fines were imposed on 73 buses -- 12 CNG-run and 61-diesel-run buses -- for overcharging, they said.

From Thursday, nine executive magistrates of the BRTA and two of the DMP will operate mobile courts in different parts of the capital, while police personnel and representatives of transport associations will accompany them, BRTA chairman said.

Besides, the BRTA has sent a letter to all divisional commissioners and deputy commissioners to conduct mobile courts in their areas. A letter was also sent to the inspector general of police and all metropolitan commissioners to take necessary legal actions to stop overcharging.

BRTA chairman also said that they asked owners of CNG-run buses to use sticker on buses so that passengers can understand easily.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Road Transport Owners' Association yesterday directed their members to stop charging more than the government-set rate.

In a letter, Khandaker Enayet Ullah, secretary general of the association, said they have been receiving complaints from different districts that "extra fares" are being taken from passengers.

"This is against the law and is a punishable offence," he said.

He asked transport leaders to be present on the roads to monitor the situation. He also warned of legal action against those overcharging passengers. The letter also stated that CNG-run buses have to stick to the previous rate.

The Dhaka Road Transport Owners' Association also sent a similar letter to its members. Transport leaders have called for a press conference over the issue today.