

BANGLADESH
UPDATE



151
New cases in 24hrs



15,72,278
Total cases



27,918
Deaths



15,36,303
Recoveries

GLOBAL
UPDATE



5,108,932
Deaths



253,548,324
Total cases

Woman from the Philippines now UP member

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Mymensingh

A Filipino woman who settled in a remote village in Phulbaria years ago was elected as a union parishad member in Thursday's polls.



Jean Catamin Patriarca converted to Islam when she married a Bangladeshi man and took the name Jasmine Akter Julhash.

Jasmine won the woman's seat at Radhakana Union Parishad with 4,496 votes. Her nearest rival Shimu Akter got 1,837. Her electoral symbol was a loudspeaker. Fourth among six sisters and two brothers, Jasmine did her graduation from Mindanao State University in the Philippines on fisheries technology and accepted a job at a shipyard in Singapore.

Now her husband, Julhash Uddin went to Singapore in 1999 and got a job at the same shipyard. They met each other at the shipyard and eventually developed a relationship. They got married in 2011. One month after the marriage, Jasmine and Julhash

came to Fulbaria. Julhash returned to Singapore later and finally came back three years ago.

Jasmine said she loves the rural life in Bangladesh and likes her neighbours and in-laws.

"The neighbours and relatives convinced me that they want me as their representative. At last, I gave in," she said in Bangla.

She hopes that she would be able to help the local farmers with her education on fisheries, she told The Daily Star.

"I want to fight corruption. I will pay particular attention to the needs of children and the elderly."

Moazzem Hossain, elder brother of Julhash, said Jasmine has a good soul.

Jasmine's close aide Salma Akter said the constituents endorsed her because of her education and willingness to help others.

Chairman-elect Golam Kibria Tarafdar Shimul of the UP said the highly educated woman would enrich the UP that he will lead.

Jasmine and Julhash have a nine-year-old daughter and a seven-year-old son.



Locals placing fishing nets on the drying-up Kushikhal canal in Tultikor area of Sylhet. Villagers catch the small, naturally-grown fish from this canal and sell these at kitchen markets. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO:
SHEIKH NASIR

Orange from red; green overlooked

FROM PAGE 1

But a 2010 World Bank study found the presence of lead, chromium, cadmium, mercury, asbestos, heavy metal in the soil of Sitakunda coastal belt where ships are broken.

The study estimated that 79,000 tons of asbestos, 240,000 tons of PCB, 19,78,000 tons of organic liquid waste, 775 tons of inorganic waste and 2,10,000 tons of ozone-depleting substance would be deposited in the soil, water of the Sitakunda coastal belt from 2010 to 2030.

Now, with the downgrading of status by the DoE on October 10, the industry has gotten more latitude to pollute the environment.

When an industry is categorised red, it has the highest obligation to comply with environmental guidelines.

It requires the industry to prepare an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) outlining the impact of the industry on soil, water, air and human health.

The EIA is the toughest part of environmental compliance as it sheds light on the potential pollution scenario and an outline of mitigation measures against the pollution scenario.

Industries categorised as orange -- which include factories that make sports equipment, agro-equipment, combs, bread and biscuit -- does not require any EIA, as per the Environment Regulation-1997, meaning the shipbreaking yard owners no longer have to take stock of the impact their business is having on the environment.

The shipbreaking industry in India and Pakistan are still categorised red.

Contacted Mofidul Alam, director of the DoE's Chattogram (region), told The Daily Star that the change in status would help them provide speedy service to the shipyard owners.

"The owners would now enjoy hassle-free services. But we have to be careful in issuing permission in line with the environmental conservation law," he said without elaborating further.

As per the Environment Conservation Rules-1997, the DoE headquarters reserves the right to issue clearance for an industry categorised as red. The permission and clearance for setting up industry in orange class could be availed from the DoE regional office.

The change has surprised experts who raised questions about the department's

intention to enforce environmental laws in shipbreaking yards.

"In no way the DoE can change the status of the industry -- no country in the world that break ships have done this," said Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of the Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association.

Abdullah Al Mamun, vice-president of the Bangladesh Shipbreakers and Recyclers Association, said they have long been seeking the change and finally got it.

Rafiqul Islam Chowdhury, the previous DoE director-general who died in April, had turned down the proposal given the intensity of the industry's pollution.

"Now we will be able to get hassle-free service from the DoE. Earlier, it would take a long time to get permission as well as a plethora of papers," Mamun said.

The shipbreaking yard owners are now focusing more on compliance in a bid to reduce casualty and pollution.

Md Ashraf Uddin, director-general of DoE, could not be reached over the phone for his comment as he was in Glasgow to attend COP-26.

17 days gone, no trace of 17 files missing

FROM PAGE 1

"The CCTV camera remained dysfunctional from long before the incident took place. We could not make any headway. We have prepared our report with some recommendations to prevent such incident in future,"

Ahsanul Kabir, a member of the three-member probe committee, told The Daily Star on Thursday.

He also said that the probe report was supposed to be submitted on Thursday.

However, The Daily Star could not confirm whether the report was submitted as neither the probe body chief nor the secretary of the medical education division could be reached over the phone.

Azad Rahman, additional superintendent police of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), told The Daily Star recently, "We could not unearth anything till now. We haven't yet closed the investigation."

CID officials who interrogated the staffers of the health ministry said they believed that someone had stolen the files. But they could not proceed with the further investigation as the ministry has yet to file any case.

"Your valuables have been stolen from your house and if you don't want to file a case...what can we do? During our investigation, none of the staffers opened up. We could not detain or arrest any of them to investigate further. It's now up to the health ministry," a CID official, wishing not to be named, told The Daily Star.

Asked if any senior official would be interrogated, he said that it's still uncertain as there are some government protocols to follow.

During the "shadow investigation", CID interrogated at least nine staffers of the health ministry and a Rajshahi-based contractor, but still could not find anything conclusive over the missing files.

Regarding not filing the case, Shah

Alam said, "I think there is no need to file any case from the ministry. Police can turn the general diary into a case."

Former cabinet secretary Ali Imam Majumder told The Daily Star that people have every right to know what happened in the file missing incident and why such things happened in such a secured place.

"The health ministry is primarily responsible for the incident. It is unfortunate that no case has been filed in this regard to date. The health ministry cannot avoid its responsibility. Secondly, as a crime took place, police itself can file a case but they also did not file any."

He said the "blame game" will not bring any result.

TIB Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman said the file missing incident "could not be anything but an inside job".

"Now the failure to take any action after so many days, including the non-disclosure of the findings of the investigations, only reaffirms that the lifting of documents has taken place through collusion and in all likelihood with direct involvement of a section of the officials or staff of the ministry who stand to gain by hiding the files," he said.

Iftekharuzzaman also said that the issue is more important because the files reportedly relate to procurement and those who designed this may have been involved in some corruption and violation of the relevant rules.

"The failure to take action also raises an ominous concern that a section of the higher authorities may have vested interest to protect the perpetrators," he added.

Health Minister Zahid Maleque said stern action would be taken based on the ministry's probe report.

"No one involved in the file missing incident will be spared," he said.

Asked why the case was not filed, the

minister said, "One general diary was filed and it can be turned into a case any time. But we are waiting for the probe report. You will see quick action soon."

The health ministry filed a general diary (GD) with the Shahbagh Police Station about the missing files on October 28.

The dockets included purchase documents related to Shaheed Taj Uddin Ahmad Medical College Hospital in Gazipur and Rajshahi Medical College Hospital, the National Institute of Population Research and Training's data on breast and cervical cancer screening programmes and purchases, vehicle purchase of different training schools, according to the GD.

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

Md Joseph Sardar and Ayesha Siddiqua, computer operators of the purchase and collection-2 section at the medical education division, noticed 17 files have gone missing from their file cabinet.

The files were kept in room-29 of building-3 at the secretariat, adjacent to the room of Shahadat Hossain, additional secretary (development) of the medical education and family welfare division of the ministry.

In the afternoon, the ministry filed the general diary with the Shahbagh police station.

The health ministry formed a probe body, led by Md Shah Alam, additional secretary (administration) of the health education division, on October 30. The committee was asked to submit their report within five working days.

A team of CID visited the spot and picked up six staffers of the health ministry for interrogation on October 31. Later, CID also interrogated four other people including a contractor of Rajshahi.

Suspended BB official accused

FROM PAGE 1

Shahadat Hossain, additional deputy commissioner of the DB (Tejgaon division), told The Daily Star that officers would conduct raids to arrest the suspects.

He added that Almas's involvement in the racket is still being investigated. Talking to Channel 24 recently, Almas claimed that he had nothing to do with the leaking of question papers.

Meanwhile, Muktaruzzaman Royel, a technician of Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology (AUST), and Shamsul Haque Shyamol, an officer of Janata Bank, made confessional statements at a Dhaka court yesterday. They were both arrested on charges of leaking the questions of the five bank's recruitment tests.

According to investigators, three AUST employees, Delowar Hossain, an office attendant; Parvez Miah, a lab assistant; and Royal leaked the

questions.

In his statement, Shyamol told the court that Delowar, Parvez, and Royal are his acquaintances. From them, he learnt that the AUST got the task to set the questions for the recruitment test of five state-owned banks.

Alam Milon, a senior officer at Rupali Bank in Savar, brought four job seekers to Shyamol who took them to Royal's house in Badda on the day of the exam.

Delowar, Parvez, and Royal provided the questions and answers to the four job seekers in the morning. In the afternoon, they sat for the exam, he said.

As per the deal, Alam gave Shyamol Tk 1 lakh. The latter gave Tk 50,000 to Royal on November 4.

Royal told the court that he gave Tk 25,000 to Parvez.

According to DB, the accused leaked question papers of at least four

recruitment tests. Delowar is one the kingpins of the racket. He leaked the questions and handed those to Parvez and Royal.

The AUST authorities suspended the three on Wednesday.

Investigators said they also found the involvement of two other bankers, Emdadul Haque Khokon and Mostafizur Rahman Milon.

Officers are also looking for suspects named Jahangir Jahid, Rabiul Islam, and Sohel Rana, a sacked senior officer of a state-run bank.

DB found that individuals named Raisul Swapan, Mainul, Atik, Zakir, Helal, Titu, Azad and Shitol contacted the job-seekers for the racket.

On Thursday, Bangladesh Bank cancelled the preliminary test for hiring 1,511 cash officers in five state-owned banks. The individuals arrested over the leaking of questions include five bankers.

Six burnt after explosion in

Jatrabari

STAR REPORT

Six people were burned in a fire following an explosion at a shop in the capital's Jatrabari area yesterday evening.

The injured were admitted to Sheikh Hasina National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery.

Five of them are in a critical state, Ayub Hossain, resident surgeon of the institute, said.

A cylinder exploded, causing the fire and leaving the six injured, employees of nearby shops and fire officials said.

The injured are Abul Kalam Azad, 58, Shamsuddin Robin, 28, Ripon, 45, Shafiqul Islam, 40, Bishwanath, 50, and Kabir, 40.

An explosion occurred around 5:15pm at a shop on the ground floor of Awal Amirul Motor Parts market at Janapad intersection area, said Zahirul Islam, senior station officer of Postogola Fire Station.

On information, three firefighting units rushed there but did not see any fire, he said.

Quoting locals, the fire official said the explosion might have taken place from accumulated gas in cylinders when the workers were repairing and painting those there.

Of the injured, Azad sustained 80 percent burns, Ripon 60 percent, Shafiqul 78 percent, Bishwanath 34 percent and Kabir 85 percent.

Besides, Robin's face and hands were burnt.

Walkovers

FROM PAGE 1

Almost all of these candidates are from the ruling AL, said party sources, adding that this came to light on Thursday, which was the last day for withdrawal of candidature.

In the second phase of the polls to the lowest tier of local government, at least 81 won uncontested in chairman elections in 848 unions. In the first phase, on June 21, the number was 28 against 204 unions, EC data shows.

The AL, in the meantime, keeps struggling with its rebel candidates.

Ignoring stern warnings from the AL high-ups, 1,069 leaders or activists of different tiers of the party are contesting the November 28 polls as independents.

The number of such candidates was 690 in the second phase when AL recommended expulsion of all who would work for dissidents.

But the warning have apparently not worked much.

'MPS BEHIND IT'

Talking to The Daily Star, several AL insiders, wishing not to be named, said in many places candidates favoured by local MPs got AL nominations. Those MPs then put pressure on rival candidates to withdraw.

Many rival candidates ultimately gave in, paving the way for the unopposed election of many, they said.

In one case, they said, AL MP from Shariatpur-1 (Sadar Upazila and Jajira), Iqbal Hossain, on October 28 allegedly told the returning officer of Chitolia Union Parishad polls that there would be no election in that UP and that "everyone would be selected".

Many candidates in Chitolia UP alleged their signatures were forged on nomination papers to have them removed from the election race.

After they approached Returning Officer Alamgir Hossain, the RO reportedly told them it was done at the MP's instruction. An audio clip of an alleged conversation between a candidate and the RO in this regard has gone viral.

The MP denies all the allegations.

AL LEADERS' RELATIVES ELECTED UNOPOSED

Raozan of Chattogram is one of upazilas where voting would not be required in most union parishads on November 28.

Chairman and member candidates in 14 unions are set to be selected without a single vote being cast.

The winning candidates are said to be the followers of local AL MP ABM Fazle Karim Chowdhury.

AL candidates in five unions of Matlab north and Matlab south upazilas of Chandpur are also going to be elected to chairman posts without voting.

According to local sources, Shamsul Haq Chowdhury, who is set to be elected unopposed from Mohanpur union as chairman, is the younger brother of former minister Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya.

Nurul Amin, to be elected unopposed from Pashwim Fotehpur Union, is the younger brother of Nurul Amin, a ruling AL MP from Chandpur-2.

MANY INDEPENDENTS FROM BNP

Although the BNP is not formally taking part in the UP elections, many of the party's grassroots leaders are running as independents.

Around 379 leaders and activists of the party are participating in this phase of UP polls, said party sources.

Totally unlawful

FROM PAGE 1

Bilkis Begum, coordinator of the One-Stop-Crisis Centre (OCC) of the Dhaka Medical College Hospital, said they collect medical evidence up to five days after an alleged rape incident.

The law minister yesterday declined to comment on the acquittal of the five accused in the Banani Raintree Hotel rape case.

The five acquitted are: Apan Jewellers owner's son Shafat Ahmed, his friend Nayeem Ashraf Halim, driver Billal Hossain, bodyguard Rahmat Ali, and Sadman Sakif.

The case was filed with Banani Police Station on May 6, 2017, while the incident was stated to have happened on March 28 of that same year.

Turkey rebuffs Macron call for Libya troop withdrawal

AFP, Istanbul

Turkey yesterday rebuffed French President Emmanuel Macron's call on foreign powers to remove their forces from Libya as part of efforts turn on a page on a decade of strife.

The North African country has been mired in civil war since the overthrow of dictator Moamer Kadhafi in a 2011 uprising.

The bloodshed has drawn in competing Libyan factions and Islamist groups as well as foreign powers.

Turkey sent troops as well as pro-Ankara militia units from Syria to shore up the UN-recognised government in

Tripoli while Russia and other countries supported the eastern-based strongman Khalifa Haftar.

Macron told an international conference on Libya in Paris on Friday that "Russia and Turkey must withdraw their mercenaries without delay".

But Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's top foreign policy adviser told AFP on Saturday that putting the emphasis on a quick troop withdrawal was "wrong".

"If you single out the pulling out of foreign forces... from Libya, as the most important, as the top issue, we believe that is wrong," Ibrahim Kalin said in an exclusive interview.

Hasina wins WITSA award

FROM PAGE 1

Information Technology and Services Alliance (WITSA) in a statement said previous winners of the award include late South African leader Nelson Mandela, co-fathers of the internet Vint Cerf and Bob Kahn and co-fathers of Wi-Fi John O'Sullivan and Terence Percival.

The WITSA introduced the award in 2010 to broaden its awards to include individuals who have made and are continuing to make a significant contribution to mankind, said WITSA.

ICT State Minister Zunaid Ahmed Palak accepted the award on behalf of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina from WITSA Secretary General Dr Jim Poisant.

Planning Minister MA Mannan was present at the event.

In 2015, the International Telecommunication Union awarded Hasina for her outstanding contributions to spreading information technology, said the WITSA statement.

At yesterday's event, the WITSA announced 14 private and public sector organisations from four continents as the winners of the 2021 WITSA Global ICT Excellence Awards and WITSA

Chairman's Award.

Bangladesh's National Tele-Health Contact Center -Shastho Batayon 16263 got the Innovative E-Health Solutions Award, Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association's got the Sustainable Growth/ Circular Economy Award and Daffodil International University got the E-Education & Learning Award.

Organisations and initiatives from Malaysia, Singapore, Myanmar, Hong Kong, Nepal, Taiwan, Greece and Russia also got awards.

Meanwhile, UNB reports from France that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said fugitive convict Tarique Rahman keeps hatching conspiracies against Bangladesh from a foreign land.

"As a fugitive, Tarique Zia lives outside Bangladesh but doesn't stop conspiring... His conspiracies are going on. But we've been taking the country forward..." she told a reception held by the Bangladeshi community living in France.

The Prime Minister urged the expatriate Bangladeshis to invest in Bangladesh's 100 special economic zones because the government offers special facilities for them.

SSC exams begin

FROM PAGE 1

consideration in the final results.

The exam duration for each paper will be one and a half hours and there will be no break between MCQ and written tests. Covid-19 health guidelines will be strictly followed during the exams, the authorities said.

Education Minister Dipu Moni at a press conference on October 27 said the results will be published within 30 days after the exams end on November 23.

Meanwhile, all coaching centres will remain closed from November 8 to 25, she added.

She also said a total of 22,27,113 students are expected to take part in this SSC exams. This year, the number of examinees has gone up by 1,79,334 from last year.

Of the candidates, 11.98 lakh are girls and 10.28 lakh boys.

Students from 29,035 schools, madrasas and technical institutions will sit for the exams at 3,679 centres across the country.

Around 18,00,998 students will participate in SSC exams under nine general education boards.

Of them, 9.20 lakh are girls and 8.80 lakh boys, according to education ministry data.

About the increase in the number SSC candidates amid the Covid-19 situation, Prof Nehal Ahmed, Dhaka Education Board chairman

and chief of Inter-education Board Coordination Sub-committee, said as the schools did not need to hold any exams for this year's candidates, the number has gone up.

Dipu said if anyone is infected with Covid-19 and hospitalised and they want to take part in the exams, the education board concerned can make the decision in this regard.

MARKS DISTRIBUTION

Science students will need to get marks out of 32 in each paper, while those from humanities and business groups out of 45, said officials of education boards.

"We have uploaded the marks distribution of the SSC exams on the websites of boards and all educational institutions have already been notified of it," said Nehal.

Students will get one hour and 15 minutes to answer written questions and 15 minutes to answer multiple choice questions (MCQ).

According to directives, science students will need to write answers of two out of eight questions and the total marks will be out of 20. They will need to answer 12 out of 25 MCQs and total marks will be given out of 12.

Humanities and business students will need to write down answers to three out of 11 questions and marks will be out of 30, while they will need to answer 15 out of 30 MCQ questions and marks will be out of 15.