

BANGLADESH UPDATE

223
New cases in 24hrs15,72,501
Total cases27,922
Deaths15,36,515
RecoveriesGLOBAL UPDATE
5,114,418
Deaths253,948,038
Total cases

Dhaka for free, open, secure Indo-Pacific region

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh does not want dominance of any single country or group in Indo-Pacific. It wants a free, open and secure region for promotion of sustainable blue economy, said Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen.

"There is widespread interest in Indo-Pacific, but our position is that we don't want dominance of any single country or group," he told reporters on the eve of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) meeting in Dhaka today.

At a press briefing at the foreign ministry yesterday, he said Bangladesh expects the IORA to chalk out its own vision of Indo-Pacific region, a vision for a free, open, peaceful, secure and inclusive Indo-Pacific based on international laws and shared prosperity for all.

There are a number of initiatives in Indo-Pacific, including Quad, a dialogue between the US, Australia, India and Japan.

Recently, Australia, UK and US also signed a defence deal, which experts say is aimed at countering China.

Bangladesh will host the 21st IORA Council of Ministers' meeting on November 17 as it takes up chairmanship of IORA. It will be preceded by the 23rd Council of Senior Officials meeting on November 15 and 16.

More than 80 representatives, including 12 ministers, of 23 countries and nine dialogue partners will attend the event. UK Minister Lord Tariq Ahmad and US Deputy Assistant Secretary Kelly Keiderling will be there. The IORA ministers will also meet

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Momen said the Indian Ocean region is warming up at a higher rate, which will contribute to more frequent and severe coastal flooding and erosion.

Considering these issues, Bangladesh will propose a platform for climate change within the framework of IORA, he said.

During Bangladesh's IORA chairmanship, Dhaka will try to align IORA initiatives and projects with the outcomes of COP.

Bangladesh will focus on the issues of maritime safety and security, trade and investment facilitation, fisheries management, disaster risk management, tourism and cultural exchanges, academic, science and technology cooperation, blue economy, women's economic empowerment.

Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen said Bangladesh will also demonstrate that it has been able to bring Covid situation under control.

Rear Admiral (retd) Md Khurshed Alam, secretary of Maritime Affairs Unit said Bangladesh will propose "IORA-Dhaka Development Initiative" to enhance capacity building through offering practical training, on-the-job learning and physical demonstration.

In response to a question, Momen said border killings are sad for Bangladesh and shameful for India.

He said Bangladesh and India have at several stages agreed that there will be no killings at the India-Bangladesh border but still it continues.

Indian side maintains that BSF shoots only for saving lives as a last resort.



A rickshaw van puller wears a plastic sheet like a cape while the man on the flatbed is hiding under another plastic sheet to stay dry during yesterday's rain near Science Lab intersection. The last couple of days have been wet in the capital.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

NBR server breached, again

FROM PAGE 1

Kazi Muhammad Ziaul Haque, senior system analyst (IT) of NBR, said no one could use IDs and passwords without the involvement of the ID holders.

"Even the IT department of NBR is not able to know this password. However, anyone can access the NBR server from any part of the country if he can get an ID and its password," he said.

NBR and customs officials said they were still gathering information as to what exactly happened and how.

"We are trying to find it out. We cannot comment until we have more details," said Mizanur Rahman, deputy commissioner of Chattogram Customs House.

Documents obtained by The Daily Star show the nine consignments were released by submitting fake Import Permission (IP) papers from Bangladesh Export Processing Zone Authority (BEPZA) in order to get duty-free facility.

Import items of cent percent export-oriented companies are duty-free. To claim the benefit, importers must submit the IP issued by BEPZA.

With their own IDs and passwords provided by the customs authorities, importers and C&F agents can only upload import documents on the NBR server from any location in Bangladesh.

They cannot change anything after the upload is complete, nor do they have access to any other files.

According to customs sources, the authorities had originally flagged 11 consignments of nine importers. Of the 11, nine were fraudulently released, and customs authorities managed to seize the two others at the last moment.

"As per the declaration, the nine consignments carried yarn, woven fabric and polyester fabric. Now, we cannot really tell what was there as we could not examine them. But I do not think anyone would use fake Import Permissions if their declaration was proper," said a customs official on condition of anonymity.

One official with direct knowledge of the investigation said they cannot even find some hard documents related to the nine consignments.

The consignments arrived from

China, Hong Kong and the United Arab Emirates between June and October this year.

Eight of them were released by using the ID of Revenue Officer Amir Hossain, and the other by using Revenue Officer Zainab Begum's ID.

Contacted, Amir Hossain said, "Under the rule, the authorities were supposed to deactivate the user ID of the officials after transfer. I don't know why they didn't do it. I have nothing to do with this fraud."

Zainab said she was not aware of the misuse of her ID. "I have no idea about the forgery, and I don't know how my user ID was used."

Her ID was used on August 23, the day her suspension took effect, sources said.

Six of the nine importers are based in Dhaka EPZ and three in Ishwardi EPZ, according to their declaration papers.

The Daily Star called and sent messages to Abdullah Hil Rakib, managing director of Grameen Kitwear Ltd, Khandaker Moniruddin, managing director of Shanta Denims Ltd, and Mohammed Abdul Matin, chairman of Helicon Ltd. None of the three importers, based in Dhaka EPZ, responded yet.

An official of Tigerco Ltd, also a BEPZA-based importer, declined to comment.

The Daily Star could not reach the five other importers for comments.

All the nine importers hired C&F agent Prottoy International for unloading their shipments.

Its proprietor Md Hafizur Rahman said his business was based in Dhaka and that he worked through his local agents Mohammad Masud and Emon, who use his licence on a rental basis.

"They could be involved with the unloading," he said.

Customs law does not allow use of licence on a rental basis.

Contacted, Masud and Emon tried to distance themselves from each other and said they were not involved in the unloading.

Customs Commissioner Fakhrul Alam said he ordered an investigation and vowed to take action against the culprits.

SSC students follow rules

FROM PAGE 1

School, centre were seen navigating through crowds as guardians were gathered in front of the exam centres, ignoring the instructions of keeping a distance of at least three feet from each other.

Education Minister Dipu Moni, while visiting the Motijheel Government Boys' High School, said that Covid-19 health guideline were maintained inside the centres. "In many places, however, guardians were crowding outside the exam centre."

Speaking to reporters, she urged everyone to maintain health guidelines as the exams were taking place amid an ongoing pandemic.

She also said stern actions would be taken against those involved in spreading rumours regarding question leaks.

The minister added that the government is trying to vaccinate HSC candidates before the exams, which are scheduled to start on December 2. The exams are usually held in April.

She added that next year's SSC and HSC exams may take place in May and June.

HINTS AT CANCELLING JSC EXAMS

"Once a new curriculum is implemented, there is supposed to be no [JSC] exams. An alternative method will be used to assess students [after fifth grade]," the minister said about future JSC exams, as a new curriculum was not yet recommended.

The new curriculum, which is set to be implemented in phases from January 2023, does not propose public exams before class 10. The curriculum will be fully implemented by 2025.

JSC exams were introduced in 2010

and many educationists, since then, have criticised the exams, calling them unnecessary and a source of stress for students.

"There was nothing in the existing curriculum about PECE and JSC exams. However, the government decided to hold them," said a member of the National Curriculum and Textbook Board.

FIRST DAY OF EXAMS

On the first day of the exams, SSC candidates under nine general education boards and those under the technical board sat for the physics exam, while Dakhil candidates under madrasas took either Quran Mazid and Tazbid or physics.

A total of 18,820 candidates were absent on the first day of the exams, while 31 students and two invigilators were expelled for resorting to unfair means, said the education ministry's exam control room.

It added that 9 lakh students were supposed to sit for the exams.

Around 9,894 students under madrasa board, 5,378 under the technical education board and 3,548 students under nine general education boards were absent on the first day.

Nineteen invigilators under the madrasa board, 10 under technical education board and two under the Barishal education board were expelled.

This year, examinees will have to sit only for exams in three optional subjects with shortened syllabuses and for fewer marks due to the Covid-19 situation.

They will not have to sit for tests in compulsory subjects like Bangla, English and mathematics.

The results of the three optional

subjects and the Grade Point Average of the students' previous public examinations, including JSC tests, will be taken into consideration for the final results.

Each exam will be an and half hour long, and there will be no breaks between MCQs and written tests. Covid-19 health guidelines will be strictly followed during the exams, authorities said.

Compromised

FROM PAGE 1

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres welcomed the deal, but stressed it was "not enough".

"The approved texts are a compromise," said Guterres. "They reflect the interests, the conditions, the contradictions and the state of political will in the world today."

"We are still knocking on the door of climate catastrophe," he added.

Swedish environmental activist Greta Thunberg said the talks had achieved nothing but "blah, blah, blah", echoing earlier comments. But she vowed to fight on.

"But the real work continues outside these halls. And we will never give up, ever."

Laurence Tubiana, the architect of the Paris deal, told AFP that "COP has failed to provide immediate assistance for people suffering now."

But a statement from the European Commission said the deal had "kept the Paris targets alive".

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, whose government hosted the talks, insisted the deal was a "big step forward" even if much more work needed to be done.

And then Williamson departed for 85, becoming Hazlewood's third victim as the Aussies clawed back towards the end of the innings.

Petition seeks cancellation of two sections of Evidence Act

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three rights organisations yesterday filed a writ petition with the High Court challenging the legality of two sections of the Evidence Act that allow questioning the "character" of rape victims.

Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST), Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK) and Naripokkho submitted the petition as a public interest litigation -- seeking cancellation of sections 155(4) and 146(3) of the Evidence Act, 1872.

In the petition, they said the sections, which permit the questioning of women and girls regarding their character, are discriminatory, arbitrary, a violation of fundamental rights to equality, freedom from discrimination on the grounds of sex and detrimental to their reputation.

Section 155(4) of the act says, "When a man is prosecuted for rape or an attempt to ravish, it may be shown that the prosecutrix was of generally immoral character."

Explanation -- A witness declaring another witness to be unworthy of credit may not, upon his examination-in-chief, give reasons for his belief, but he may be asked his reasons in cross-examination, and the answers which he gives cannot be contradicted, though, if they are false, he may afterwards be charged with giving false evidence."

According to section 146(3), "When a witness is cross-examined, he [she] may, in addition to the questions hereinbefore referred to, be asked any questions which tend -- to shake his [her] credit, by injuring his [her] character, although the answer to such questions might tend directly or indirectly to criminate him [her] or might expose or tend directly or indirectly to expose him [her] to a penalty or forfeiture."

Petitioners' lawyer Sara Hossain told reporters that the two sections allow questioning and cross-examination of the rape victims' character and history, which are contradictory to their fundamental rights.

While movements are continuing for scrapping of the sections, no step has been taken yet and therefore, the writ petition was filed with the HC for necessary directives, she added.

The court is yet to schedule a date for a hearing.

Marsh, Warner

FROM PAGE 1

batted despite losing skipper Aaron Finch early on, even a target of 200 might not have been enough, thanks to the 92-run second-wicket stand between Marsh and Warner.

Finch's early departure for five off the bowling of Trent Boult gave the Kiwis the early momentum but since then Marsh and man-of-the-series Warner took charge and there was no looking back for the Aussies.

Australia kept the basics right and added 43 for one in the Powerplay and were always in control with boundaries being scored in almost every over of the chase.

Marsh and Warner complemented each other, with the latter reaching his fifty off 34 balls with a gorgeous six over deep midwicket against Jimmy Neesham.

When Boult bowled Warner for 53 off 38 balls, Australia still needed 66 off 44 balls with eight wickets in hand.

But Marsh remained compact and reached his fifty off just 31 balls -- the fastest fifty in a World T20 final -- with a six against Ish Sodhi.

Glenn Maxwell also played his part and scored an unbeaten 18-ball 28 to complete the successful chase.

Earlier, Finch showed no hesitation in opting to field first as teams here have on most occasions successfully chased down targets in the World Cup.

New Zealand made a slow start scoring 32 for one in the Powerplay, losing hero of the semifinal, Daryl Mitchell, early on against Josh Hazlewood. Between the fourth and eighth overs, the Kiwis could not hit a boundary.

However, Williamson took charge and stepped on the gas although he was dropped on 21 by Hazlewood off the bowling of Mitchell Starc.

The Kiwi skipper took a liking to Starc, hitting eight boundaries as Starc finished with figures of 60 for none in four overs.

Williamson reached his 14th T20 fifty off 32 balls as New Zealand reached 114 for two in 15 overs. The Kiwi skipper then smashed Starc for 22 runs in the 16th over and set his side for a challenging total.

In the next four overs, New Zealand added 36 to the total losing two wickets in the 18th over bowled by Hazlewood. Glenn Philips was dismissed for 18 as the third-wicket stand with Williamson ended on 68 off 37 deliveries.

And then Williamson departed for 85, becoming Hazlewood's third victim as the Aussies clawed back towards the end of the innings.