

BANGLADESH
UPDATE



213
New cases in 24hrs



15,72,948
Total cases



27,928
Deaths



15,36,967
Recoveries

GLOBAL
UPDATE



5,127,486
Deaths



254,944,601
Total cases

OIL TANKER BLAST

All 5 injured die of their wounds

STAR REPORT

Five victims of the recent oil tanker blast on the Sugandha river in Jhalakathi died at a hospital in the capital yesterday.

They breathed their last at different times on the day while undergoing treatment at Sheikh Hasina National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery, said Aiyub Hossain, resident surgeon of the institute.

The deceased are Mehedi Hasan, 26, Mosharrar Hossain Roni, 28, Ripon Sikder, 40, Shaheen Talukder, 35, and Ashique Islam, 40.

They were burnt from 54-70 percent on their bodies, according to their medical documents.

With them, the death toll rose to six as one crew member died on the spot when the tanker, Sagar Nandini-3,

which was carrying petrol and diesel for Padma Oil Company, caught fire after the blast.

Currently, two more injured are undergoing treatment at the burn institute.

On November 12, a blast took place on the Sagar Nandini-3 on the Sugandha river in Jhalakathi, killing one person on the spot and injuring seven others.

Diesel was supposed to be unloaded from the oil tanker that day when a problem developed in the fuel releasing pipe. While the pipe was being fixed, there was an explosion.

The bottom of the vessel was damaged allowing water to pour in.

Fire Service and Civil Defence officials later doused the fire, pumped out the water and prevented the ship from sinking.

TAX COLLECTION FROM E-COMMERCE

HC warns govt offices for not responding

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday issued a warning to three government offices concerned over not responding to its directives that sought reports on collection of tax from e-commerce platforms and steps taken against alleged money laundering by them.

On September 28, the commerce ministry, National Board of Revenue (NBR) and Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU) were asked to submit separate reports to the HC in this regard in 30 days.

Yesterday, the HC said the notice was served on the respondents (commerce ministry, NBR and BFIU) for submitting their reports to this court, but they did not respond.

“Mr DAG [Deputy Attorney General Bepul Bagmar], take these issues seriously and inform the attorney general about it. We will not tolerate this type of activity in future,” said the HC bench of Justice M Enayetur Rahim and Justice Md Mostafizur Rahman.

The bench was holding hearing

on three writ petitions seeking its directives for protecting the interest of the customers of e-commerce platforms, including Evaly and E-orange, and controlling and monitoring their activities.

The court also set November 23 for further hearing on the matters and asked the respondents to submit their reports to it by that date.

Talking to The Daily Star, DAG Bepul said NBR informed him that they were yet to receive the HC order.

He said the commerce ministry and the BFIU were yet to communicate with him about the HC directive, he added.

Following the writ petitions, the HC bench on September 28 ordered the NBR to submit a report to it in 30 days on how it collects tax from e-commerce businesses and whether it has any policy about collection of tax from them.

The court ordered the BFIU to submit a report on steps taken against alleged money laundering by those businesses.

PBI sees no evidence

FROM PAGE 1

Kishore filed the case under the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act, seeking redress. Judge KM Emrul Kayesh then directed the Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) to investigate the complaint.

When he filed the case, Kishore told the judge how he was brutally tortured before he was shown on record as arrested in a case filed under the Digital Security Act.

After languishing in jail for almost 10 months, the cartoonist walked out on bail on March 4 this year. He then told journalists how he was tortured and wrote multiple times on Facebook about his ordeal in custody.

After hearing about the probe findings, Kishore told The Daily Star yesterday that the officer who investigated the case called him to PIB's Banasree office once and visited the “scene” on another occasion.

“But they only asked personal questions about me even though the investigation was supposed to be about my case,” he said. “I told them to collect CCTV footage.”

On his Facebook page, Kishore wrote yesterday evening that the men who took him came in six or seven vehicles and that he still remembers the registration number of one.

He also uploaded his sketches of two of the torturers.

The probe report written by the PIB officer said the victim could not provide any information about the 16-17 men in plainclothes, who supposedly picked him up.

The investigator did not find any “seizable evidence”, it said, adding that the complainant could not produce any evidence before the investigator.

During the investigation, people around the scene were asked about CCTV footage, but could not provide any information, the report adds.

The investigating officers and the recording officer of the DSA case filed against Kishore said that they did not get any CCIV footage, the probe report said.

Statements of 19 individuals, including that of the victim's brother Ahsan Kabir, were recorded. None of them could say who picked him up, it said.

The report said Kishore was informed about the findings of the report. But the cartoonist yesterday told this newspaper that he had not been informed.

“The PBI informed us in the first week of November that the probe report was submitted to the court. But they did not tell us about its findings,” Ahsan Kabir said yesterday.

Contacted, SP Mohammad

Mizanur Rahman, who investigated the case, said, “The complainant is not available over the phone. It is not possible to inform him about the findings in the probe report. But his brother was informed about it.”

A medical board at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) on March 20 informed the court that it did not find any sign of torture on Kishore's body.

“Physical examination reveals no abnormality; no signs of trauma in any part of the musculo-skeletal system of Kishore is found,” read the medical report by Prof Sheikh Nurul Fattah Rumi of ENT, Prof Mohammad Hafiz Sardar of medicine and Prof Fakhru Amin Khan of the orthopedic departments.

Some investigations are needed for further evaluation and confirmation, the medical report added.

CASE STATEMENT

In his complaint, Kishore said contrary to what was said in the First Information Report (FIR) filed by Rab-3, he was picked up on May 2 last year by 16-17 men in plainclothes.

The FIR records Kishore being arrested at 2:30am on May 5.

Kishore's state stated that he was kept at an unknown place between May 2 and 4 last year and tortured.

Around 5:45pm on May 2, Kishore woke up to loud knocking on the door of his Kakrail flat. “When I opened the door, an unknown person yelled at me saying, ‘Why are you not opening the door? Change out of that lungi and wear a clean shirt.”

“They searched my room but could not show me any arrest warrant. They illegally took all my digital devices, including the mobile phone, computer CPU and portable hard disc drive,” reads Kishore's statement.

He also mentioned that he was handcuffed and a hood was put on his head in a way that prevented him from seeing as the unidentified men forcibly took him to an unknown and secluded place.

At that place, Kishore was shown his own cartoons on a projector screen and asked what they meant.

“At one stage of the interrogation, one of the men got up and slapped me on my ear so hard that I lost my consciousness for a while,” the statement quotes Kishore as saying, adding that he felt blood coming out of his ear soon afterwards.

He was repeatedly hit by steel-plated sticks before he lost consciousness, it added. The torture went on like this until May 4 after which he found himself in a Rab office.

“I am still recovering from the torture, my ear is still seeping, I cannot walk...”



Winter vegetables on sale at Nama Bazar in Savar yesterday. Farmers from Savar, Dhamrai and Singair upazilas bring their produce to this wholesale market. Traders said the supply of vegetables is increasing every day.

PHOTO:
PALASH KHAN

Nature sacrificed for power

FROM PAGE 1

35,984 crore. The rest will be covered by the Bangladesh government.

Funding arrangement for the seven other plants has not been finalised yet, although acquisition of 5,500-acre land for all the eight is complete, sources said.

Once in production, the eight plants will release 1,600kg of mercury and 6,000 tonnes of fly ash every year, according to an estimate by CREA.

As much as 40 percent of these emissions would likely be deposited on land and freshwater ecosystems, and another 35 percent on forestland across Chattogram, said its study report released in December 2019.

Fly ash contains toxic and radioactive heavy materials that are highly injurious to human health, land and the ecosystems. Mercury is also a toxic heavy metal that cycles through the atmosphere, water, and soil in different forms.

FAULTY EIA

According to the analysis by CREA, the EIA for the Matarbari plant does not provide data on mercury pollution.

Done without following internationally recognised methodology to monitor air quality, the EIA also does not contain the air quality data on Cox's Bazar area, its analysis found.

“The EIA consultant monitored air quality for a total of two days during the rainy and dry seasons. This amount of data is essentially useless for the purpose of evaluating whether ambient air quality standards are being met in the area,” said Lauri Myllyvirta, lead analyst at CREA.

His study found that the EIA did not monitor Particulate Matter (PM) 2.5, which is considered dangerous for human health. He referred to the State of Global Air report (2019), which used satellite data and found 63 micrograms of PM 2.5 per cubic metre on average in and around Cox's Bazar. The permissible level of PM 2.5 in the air is 15 micrograms per cubic metre.

Sharif Jamil, general secretary of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon, recently said the Matarbari plant was being sold to the public as the “most modern” plant in the world. But it is ironic that its EIA did not take into account the amount of mercury and PM 2.5 to be emitted from the plant.

The EIA in question was conducted by TEPSOCO (Tokyo Electric Power Service Co Ltd) under the supervision of Japan International Cooperation Agency (Jica) Study Team.

In an email on Thursday, Jica acknowledged funding the Matarbari project, and said it was based on the agreement between the two governments.

Asked about the faulty EIA, Jica said, “The EIA was prepared in accordance with regulations of Bangladesh, Jica's environmental guidelines, and international standards, and the assessment was then approved by the Department of Environment.”

The agency added some 60 percent of the work is already complete.

According to the CPGC website, the construction of Phase-1 plant began in

January 2018 and it will go into power generation in 2024. It will produce 1,200 megawatt electricity.

A signatory to the Paris climate agreement, Japan itself is phasing out coal-fired power plants although it still has some.

“Japan promised not to finance any coal-based power plants in the world while they are financing coal-fired power plants in our country. They need to stop this double standard, being an important development partner of our country,” Sharif told The Daily Star.

CPGP Project Director Abul Kalam Azad admitted the EIA modelling has faults.

He said they were conducting an EIA for Matarbari Phase 2, where they will follow the proper procedure of mercury and PM 2.5 pollution modelling and will take measures accordingly to mitigate the pollution to be caused by the Phase 1 plant.

“We held two stakeholder meetings -- one in Dhaka and another in Matarbari. We got some recommendations. The Phase-2 impact assessment will be followed for Phase 1 as well. We will submit the Phase-2 impact assessment soon, after accommodating the recommendations,” he added.

As per the conditions set out by the DoE, any EIA lacking key information on pollution modelling will be revoked.

For the Phase-1, however, the DoE approved the EIA in 2013 just before the land acquisition began.

Masud Iqbal Md Shamim, director (environmental clearances) of DoE, said they approved the EIA as it was in line with their guidelines.

He claimed that the findings by CREA had no basis and that everything was “fine” with the EIA.

He declined to comment on Coal Power Generation Company's position to correct the pollution modelling in the Phase-2 EIA.

Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers' Association (BELA), said the DoE should have revoked the EIA as it lacks basic information on pollution modelling.

“The Environmental Impact Assessment did not have the year-round air quality data and seasonal assessment of the air pollution in Cox's Bazar. It is a big question as to how the Department of Environment approved the impact assessment. They should have revoked it immediately or asked the authorities to correct it,” she said.

DoE's own guidelines say the EIA has to be done to improve the environmental design of the proposal, ensure that resources are used appropriately and efficiently, identify appropriate measures for mitigating the potential impacts of the proposal, and facilitate informed decision-making, including setting the environmental terms and conditions for implementing the project.

It also aims to protect human health and safety, avoid irreversible changes and serious damage to the environment, safeguard valuable resources, natural areas and ecosystem components.

Nasrul Hamid, state minister for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources,

said the government was not concerned about the criticisms over coal-based power plants.

He referred to the Pyra coal-based plant in Patuakhali district, and asked, “How many people have died since it started production? We don't care about who said what. We conducted an impact assessment. The Japanese are looking after it,” he added.

But earlier this month, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina herself said Bangladesh has cancelled 10 coal-based power plants to supplement its efforts against the adverse impacts of climate change.

The plants involved 12 billion dollars of foreign investment, she mentioned, while addressing the 26th Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP26). **POLLUTION SCENARIO PROJECTED BY CREA**

The eight plants will produce 8,720 megawatts of power.

In addition to 1,600kg mercury and 6,000 tonnes of fly ash, the eight plants will release 227,788kg Sulphur Dioxide (SO₂), 127,767kg Nitrogen Oxide (NO_x), 9,283kg PM 10 and 4,175kg PM 2.5 per year in the process, the CREA study estimates.

Mercury deposition rates as low as 125mg per hectare in a year can lead to accumulation of unsafe levels of mercury in fish, the study report said.

This mercury deposition will spread across an area of 3,300 square miles, bringing Bandarban in the south and outskirts of Chattogram in the north under pollution, the study estimates.

The projected emission of fly ash and Sulphur Dioxide will increase the risk of stroke, heart disease, lung cancer, and respiratory infections in children.

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, ischemic heart disease, lower respiratory infections, lung cancer and stroke will likely contribute to the death of many people over the 30 years of operation of the plants.

FOREST, WILDLIFE SANCTUARIES AT RISK

Five wildlife sanctuaries and six forests, across Chattogram region, have been projected to be immensely affected due to the potential emission from these plants.

The wildlife sanctuaries include Hazarikhil Wildlife Sanctuary, Chunati Wildlife Sanctuary, Fasiakhali Sanctuary, Dudpuhkuria-Dhopachari Sanctuary and Sangu Wildlife Sanctuary.

The forests are Himchhari, Inani, Medhakochchoopia and Bangabandhu Safari Park in Cox's Bazar while the rest include Baroidala and Kaptai national parks in Chattogram.

The study assessed that a total of 32.6kg mercury and 184kg fly ash will be deposited per year into 11 forests and wildlife sanctuaries, endangering the greeneries and its wildlife that is already bearing the brunt of development projects, loggings, grabbing and deforestation.

Besides, the estimated 690kg mercury to be produced by the cluster of eight plants would be directly deposited into the water, taking a toll on the fish population and the livelihoods of fishermen.

SSF Bill passed in House

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Special Security Force Bill, 2021 was passed in parliament yesterday incorporating the issue of providing security to the family members of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and very important persons.

Liberation War Affairs Minister AKM Mozammel Haque, who is in charge of the Prime Minister's Office in parliamentary affairs, placed the bill which was passed by voice vote.

The proposed law was brought up as the existing law “the Special Security Force Ordinance, 1986” was void following a verdict of a court.

The new law was drafted including only one thing -- providing security to the family members of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and very important persons.

Bangabandhu's family members mean his two daughters, grandchildren, and in some cases, spouses or issues of the grandchildren.

The very important persons, defined by the government through gazettes, and heads of the foreign states or governments would be given security under the new law.

In providing security to the Bangabandhu's family members, the Special Security Force Bill, 2021, will be given priority over the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's Family Members Security Act, 2009.

Armenia reports

deaths in

Azerbaijan

border clashes

AFP, Yerevan

Armenia yesterday reported deaths and the loss of military positions in border clashes with Azerbaijani troops, a year after the arch-foes fought a war over the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region.

The six-week conflict, which left more than 6,500 dead, ended last November in a Russian-brokered deal that saw Armenia cede swathes of territory it had controlled for decades.

“There are fatalities and wounded among Armenian troops as a result of fighting that erupted following an attack by Azerbaijani forces,” Armenia's defence ministry said yesterday.

It said the number of casualties was being verified and that Yerevan had “lost control of two military positions.”

Earlier yesterday, the two sides accused each other of initiating fighting along their shared border.

DGHS asks

FROM PAGE 1

On November 8, the drug administration gave emergency production and usage approval to multiple drug-makers in the country.

The drug, however, must be used within five days of showing symptoms in a patient, Farid said.

Developed by American pharmaceutical companies Merck and Ridgeback Biotherapeutics, the pills are designed to be taken as soon as possible after a positive coronavirus test and within five days of the onset of symptoms -- a time when the virus is replicating rapidly and the immune system has not yet mounted a defence.

Patients will take four capsules twice a day for five days, so the full course would cost around Tk 2,000, according to the price of the drug in the local market.

Bangladesh, India

FROM PAGE 1

Pakistan will stage an ICC event for the first time since it co-hosted the 1996 ODI World Cup along with India and Sri Lanka.

The ICC added that a similar process would be in place next year to identify hosts for women's and Under-19s events for the next cycle.

Syndicate eyeing polls,Rohingya camps

FROM PAGE 1

However, Lt Col Foyezur Rahman, director (operation) of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB), said they didn't have any specific information about the change in arms smuggling route.

“Syndicates have been using the same routes [used previously] for smuggling arms. But the BGB remains alert to smuggling of arms at all border points,” he told The Daily Star.

Sources said most of these illegal arms were supplied to criminals and later used in violence over polls to local government bodies. At least 34 people have so far been killed in polls violence this year, according to media reports.

Meanwhile, the police headquarters launched a countrywide special drive on Monday night to recover illegal arms. It also opened an investigation into why the polls violence took place.

The drive will continue in 64 districts for seven days, but the period will be extended if needed, said

sources.

SELLERS, CARRIERS

On October 31, the CTTC arrested four people -- Md Hossain, an authorised arms trader in Chattogram; Lal Tan Pankhoa, headman of Saichal Pankhoa community in Rangamati; Ali Akbar and Adilur Rahman Sujan -- from the capital's Sayedabad in connection with smuggling arms.

The four are now behind bars.

Investigators said this was not the first time authorised arms dealers were found involved in illegal arms trade. Between 2018 and 2019, the Arms Enforcement team arrested around a dozen authorised arms dealers and recovered around 200 illegal arms.

In the smuggling syndicate, authorised arms dealer Hossain led a group. He had two other dealers along with him, the investigators added.

“We already have details about the two other authorised arms dealers. They are now under surveillance,” said ADC Ahamedul.

Investigators said this time they found some ethnic minority group members involved in arms smuggling.

“We have found a number of people from Pankhoa, Khasia and Kuki communities involved in the syndicate. Most of these people hold both Indian and Bangladeshi national identity cards and they can move easily in both the countries,” said a high official of the CTTC unit involved in the investigation.

“A carrier gets Tk 50,000 to Tk 1.5 lakh depending on the size of an arms consignment,” said the official.

BUY, SALE OF ARMS LICENCE

As a technique of selling legal arms illegally to criminals, the authorised dealers used to buy old or expired licences of legal arms.

For example, dealers used to buy licences of arms whose users either have died or their family wants to surrender the arms or the user wants to migrate abroad.

“After buying those licences, the

arms dealer inscribes the licence number on the barrel of the illegal arms Thus they can easily dodge security checks and carry illegal arms from one place to another for delivery,” said a high official of arms enforcement team.

SUPPLY TO ROHINGYA CAMPS

Apart from supplying smuggled arms to criminals, the syndicate also targets Rohingya camps, according to officials.

CTTC officials claimed to have learnt from the arrestees that several criminal groups have been buying illegal arms and bullets. These groups use the arms for extortion, narcotics trade and establishing supremacy locally.

“We have names of some residents of Rohingya camps. We are now trying to get more details,” said ADC Ahamedul.

He said the syndicate has about 10 to 15 members and they were trying to trace their whereabouts.