

BANGLADESH UPDATE

178

New cases in 24hrs

15,73,889

Total cases

27,946

Deaths

15,38,006

Recoveries

GLOBAL UPDATE

5,160,023

Deaths

257,303,724

Total cases

UNION PARISHAD POLLS

527 ballots found after candidate lost by 300 votes

Our Correspondent, Tangail

At least 527 ballot papers that have been sealed in favour of defeated female member candidate were found on the roof of a school yesterday, nine days after elections to Dubail Union Parishad in Delduar upazila.

The candidate had lost by 300 votes.

While playing, schoolchildren saw the ballot papers scattered over the roof of Seheratol Government Primary School, which was the centre of the defeated candidate, and informed teachers about the matter.

All the ballot papers had been cast for palm tree, the symbol of female member candidate Beauty Akter.

On information, Beauty went there and took the ballots.

On November 11, Dubail union went to the second phase of union parishad polls. With megaphone symbol, Rashida Begum won the reserved female member post of ward-1, -2 and -3 getting 1,800 votes.

Beauty said, "Resorting to ballot rigging, I was shown defeated in the polls by 300 votes. I'll take legal steps to this end."

Asked about the matter, AHM Kamrul Islam, district election officer in Tangail, told The Daily Star that he was aware of the incident and police



would investigate it.

The defeated candidate can lodge a complaint with the Election Tribunal in this regard, he said.

Beauty told this correspondent that the seal of the Election Commission remains on the opposite side of the ballot papers. "My men have already gone to the election office and they were told to take the ballot papers to the election office for examinations. They also went to the local police station and police told them that the election office will see the matter."

Contacted, Abdul Baten, election officer in Delduar upazila, said he just heard of the matter, but no one came to him with any complaint in this regard.

Sazzad Hossain, officer-in-charge of Delduar Police Station, told this correspondent that police were not informed of the matter officially so far. "However, we are checking the matter."

Pile pressure on Myanmar

FROM PAGE 1
Bangladesh and Myanmar on Rohingya repatriation, a tripartite deal among Myanmar, UNDP and UNHCR for creating a conducive environment in Rakhine.

The resolution also spoke of preparing a work plan on implementing the agreements by the UN Secretary's Special Envoy on Myanmar. It also lauded Bangladesh's efforts of relocating some of the Rohingyas to Bhasan Char from Cox's Bazar and welcomed the MoU signed between the Bangladesh government and UN Refugee Agency -- a recognition against much criticism by rights bodies in the previous years.

The resolution was co-sponsored by 107 countries, the highest since 2017.

"Earlier, Japan had generally abstained from voting, but this time it co-sponsored the resolution. This means a lot because Japan has strong ties with Myanmar," said Prof Imtiaz Ahmed of the International Relations Department of Dhaka University.

He expects India, which also has huge investments in Myanmar, to co-sponsor such a resolution on Rohingya.

"The resolution of the UN General Assembly's Third Committee is not binding. However, it gives us a moral and political boost. We should now engage strongly with China, Russia, Japan and India so that this momentum can lead to consensus at the UN Security Council," Prof Imtiaz said.

A foreign ministry official said though the UN resolution is not binding, it creates norms and creates global public opinion that is invaluable. "We can also ask Myanmar strongly to

ensure Rohingya repatriation," the official said.

This resolution also reflects that the support of the powerful countries like China, Russia and Japan towards Myanmar is on the decline, the official added.

Bangladesh Enterprise Institute President M Humayun Kabir said the UN Security Council is the only world body that can obligate Myanmar to address the root causes of the Rohingya crisis, not anything else.

"If we can amplify our diplomatic efforts and convince the global powers, we can see consensus in the UN Security Council," he told this correspondent.

"For that to happen, we need to read the reality very objectively and act creatively in diplomacy," the former ambassador said.

Former Foreign Secretary Shahidul Haque said the adoption of the resolution by consensus is a good achievement, but the major instruments of holding Myanmar accountable are the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and International Criminal Court (ICC) and UN Security council.

Verdicts in favour of the Rohingyas at the ICJ or ICC can lead to the UN Security Council actions, he said.

"We can see some kind of slowness in the investigation at the ICC and ICJ. I think we should not lose sight of that if we really want to see solutions. We need to continue and augment our diplomatic efforts to this end," said Haque, also senior fellow at the South Asian Institute of Policy and Governance of North South University.

You can fly in expert doctors

FROM PAGE 1
Khaleda, 76, was readmitted to Evercare Hospital on November 13, six days after returning home from the hospital.

Physicians said the BNP chief was suffering from rheumatoid arthritis, diabetes, ophthalmological, and dental complications.

She also developed critical cardiac and kidney problems while her blood sugar level was uncontrolled, they added.

LAW MINISTER

Speaking at a virtual meeting of Brahmanbaria's Akhaura upazila Awami League leaders ahead of the November 28 union parishad polls, the law minister yesterday said, "The honourable prime minister has set an example by providing all possible facilities to the BNP chairperson within the bounds of the law."

"It cannot be forgotten that she [Khaleda] has been convicted by the court. All necessary facilities allowed by the law to a convict have been given to her."

Anisul earlier had said law did not permit the government to send Khaleda abroad for treatment as she was convicted and sentenced to 17 years in prison in two corruption cases by the lower court and the High Court.

HUNGER STRIKE

Khulna BNP alleged that police obstructed their mass hunger strike in front of the party office on KD Ghosh Road in the city.

BNP Organising Secretary Nazrul Islam Monju, also the Khulna city BNP president, said they could not sit in front of the party office due to obstruction by police.

"Police attacked the programme, snatched our banners and chased us. Two BNP activists were arrested. We could not observe the programme due to violence by police. We condemn this violence," he added.

Hasan Al Mamun, officer-in-charge of Khulna Sadar Police Station, said

no one would be allowed to take part in any programme occupying roads and obstructing traffic. "The BNP was asked to hold the programme inside its office."

In Patuakhali, the BNP's hunger strike came under attack allegedly by Chhatra League men in front of the temporary office of the party in Banani area of the town around 10:00am.

Kazi Mahbub Hossain, convener of Patuakhali Sadar upazila BNP, alleged that Chhatra League leaders and activists, led by Arif Tanveer, carried out the attack on the peaceful programme.

Denying his involvement in the attack, district BCL leader Arif said none from the student front were involved in the incident. He claimed that the incident was outcome of the BNP's internal feud.

Patuakhali Police Station OC Md Moniruzzaman said he was not aware of the attack.

In Barguna, police charged truncheons on BNP men during the mass hunger strike in front of the party office on Sadar Road in the town.

District BNP President Nazrul Islam Mollah claimed that at least 12 party leaders and activists were injured in the incident.

Police Inspector (investigation) Shahidul Islam said the BNP men were observing the hunger strike blocking the road in front of its office.

As police asked them to leave the road, they attacked the law enforcers, he added.

Police used batons on the BNP men to disperse them and bring the situation under control. Six people were detained from the area, Shahidul said.

On behalf of the family, Khaleda's younger brother Shamim Iskander submitted an application to the home ministry on November 11 urging the government to allow her to go abroad for better treatment.

Our correspondents in Khulna and Patuakhali contributed to this report.



A college student tears down a sticker stating diesel-run from the windshield of a bus in the capital's Farmgate yesterday. Students have been demonstrating for lower bus fares over the last few days. Commuting costs increased significantly after the government raised the price of diesel. It has been reported that transport companies in many instances are falsely claiming that their vehicles use diesel just to be able to charge additional fares.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Foreign trip spree amid pandemic

FROM PAGE 1
frequent foreign tours of government officials as many such trips at public expense reportedly yield nothing. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina also spoke against such frequent trips abroad.

The pandemic changed the situation to a great deal, saving the country around Tk 2,500 crore since March last year.

Railways officials are resuming the practice of foreign trips as coronavirus restrictions are being lifted across the world.

RAIL MINISTER'S VISIT

The spouses of the railways minister and secretary will be accompanying them at their own expenses in the trip to the UK, Germany, Spain and France between November 23 and December 5, according to a rail ministry circular issued on October 31.

The order did not mention the purpose of their visit in those countries, but the railways minister said the team will see developed railway systems there. Besides, they will hold talks with different government agencies and businesses that showed interest in investing in BR.

Ministry Secretary Salim Reza, Additional Secretary Bhubon Chandra Biswas, Deputy Secretary Nazmul Haque, BR additional director generals Quamrul Ahsan and Manjur Ul Alam Choudhury, the minister's Personal Secretary Mohammad Atiqur Rahman and Assistant Personal Secretary Rashed Prodhan are accompanying the minister.

After he became the minister in January 2019, Suján visited India, China, Indonesia and the USA.

India and China are financing several BR projects. Besides, several

Indian and Chinese companies are involved in many BR projects. Chinese contractors are involved in Padma Bridge Rail Link and Chattogram-Cox's Bazar Rail Link projects.

US-based Progress Rail is the supplier of 40 new Broad Gauge locomotives and Indonesian PT Industri Kereta Api supplied 200 metre-gauge coaches.

But none of these four European countries, the delegation is visiting, have investment in any of the 37 current BR projects.

Companies based in any of these countries are not suppliers of equipment being procured under seven projects, official sources said.

As per the October 31 order, expenses of the rail minister's visit will be borne from the budget head concerned of the cabinet division.

BR will bear the expenses for the two additional director generals and the railway ministry will bear the expenses of others.

Suján said European countries have advanced railway networks. Different governments and companies of those countries expressed interest in investing in BR, he told The Daily Star on Saturday.

"We will talk to them about the areas in which we can take their assistance. We will also visit different factories of the companies," Suján said.

He did not give a direct answer when asked whether the said purposes can be deemed emergency.

"We want to develop our railways. It's a continuous process. One and a half years have gone by due to Covid-19. They [foreign agencies and companies] have expressed their interest in investing here. If we don't

go now, when will we go there?"

The ministry called a press conference today over the minister's visit to Europe.

Officials said the rail minister will also visit Russia next month.

MORE VISITS

The railways ministry on Thursday issued three orders over foreign trips.

Three BR officials and an administrative officer of the railways ministry will visit India between December 1 and 7 for the Construction of Akhaura-Agartala Dual Gauge Railway Link project.

Taxmaco Rail and Engineering Ltd of India will pay the expenses of the visit to DG PSC Sleeper Manufacturing Factory in India.

Between January 24 and 30 next year, another 10-member delegation will visit the US for a "study tour" of a project titled Rolling Stock Operations Improvement Project of BR.

Along with the five ministry officials, two officials from the Planning Commission, two from the finance ministry and one from the planning ministry will visit the US.

Progress Rail Locomotives Inc, US, supplier of 40 new BG locomotives, will bear the expenses.

Twelve other BR officials will visit the US under the same project from February 7 to April 6 to participate in a training programme. The same company will bear the expenses of this tour.

BR Director General Dharendra Nath Mazumder could not be reached for comments over the phone yesterday.

Since March 2020, when the first cases of coronavirus were detected in Bangladesh, rail officials made two foreign trips, according to records

US sees Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 1

She left Dhaka on Thursday after a three-day visit, during which she joined the Indian Ocean Rim Association ministerial meeting, held talks with Bangladeshi government officials, including the Prime Minister's Private Industry and Investment Adviser Salman F Rahman, and also with civil society and interfaith leaders.

She said the Biden administration has decided, bureaucratically inside the State Department, to separate India from five other South Asian countries to deepen US relationships with them, and there will be devoted officials for that purpose.

"We want your [Bangladesh's] experience and expertise to oversee the [US] relationship with Bangladesh and other South Asian countries because we don't want our relationship with these five countries to get lost in the one with India."

The US wants to be secure but in the 21st century no country can be secure without finding and building security or expanding security in other countries, she said, adding that the US is trying to provide capacity and equipment to Bangladesh as it has a large number of peacekeepers around the world.

About America's Indo-Pacific Strategy and the recent security pact -- AUKUS -- among the US, UK and Australia, she said that pact was made with concern to maritime security.

She added that the US wants to ensure that countries like Bangladesh have the sovereign capacity to patrol its maritime territory, detain illegal vessels, and has information on maritime domain because some of those vessels could carry contraband, people, arms and drugs.

On the economic front, she said Bangladesh is a country with a large population and an emerging market. The US has been importing a lot from here and it also wants to export and invest here.

"The US companies can export or invest here. Dredging companies are interested to invest here...not only in RMG but beyond that."

Keiderling also spoke of promoting democracy, human rights, equality and labour rights during her meeting with the Bangladesh officials.

She said the Americans have struggled for freedom, democracy and human rights, which are fundamental values.

"The bottom line is we just don't want to do business and make money. The American diplomacy desires to protect and promote democracy."

Zero Covid death

FROM PAGE 1

In recent days, the transmission has been rising in many countries despite having it under control for a good while, he said.

For instance, Austria announced a full national lockdown starting Monday following record case numbers, while neighbouring Germany has seen several days of record infections this week. The Netherlands introduced a partial lockdown last weekend, while Belgium enforced tight restrictions on Saturday.

The Directorate General of Health Services reported the first casualty from Covid-19 on March 18 last year.

Meanwhile, in the 24 hours to 8 am yesterday, the DGHS reported 178 new cases with a positivity rate of 1.18 percent.

During the period, 190 Covid-19 patients have recovered from their illness.

Tigers meander

FROM PAGE 1

Mohammad Rizwan and Fakhar added 85 runs for the second wicket to guide the visitors to a second consecutive win in the series. Meanwhile, Bangladesh suffered a seventh defeat on the trot in the shortest format, including five losses in the recently-concluded T20 World Cup.

However, Bangladesh remained consistent when it came to dropping catches as Saif Hasan and Taskin Ahmed fumbled rather simple catches that would have sent back Fakhar and Rizwan respectively to rub salt in the Tigers' wounds.

Rizwan was dismissed for a 45-ball 39 off the bowling of leg-spinner Aminul Islam but left-handed Fakhar remained unbeaten a 51-ball 57 which featured three sixes and two fours.

Earlier, Bangladesh continued their poor run with the bat and another top-order failure cost them after openers Saif Hasan (0) and Naim Sheikh (2) departed inside the first two overs.

Najmul Hossain Shanto's 40 was the top score and, barring Afif Hossain's 20, none of the other batters were able to make an impact. Despite batting out the allotted 20 overs, Bangladesh could manage a paltry 108, the third-lowest score by the Tigers after batting the full 20 overs.

The hosts managed just two boundaries in the last 10 overs and scored 44 runs for the loss of four wickets in that time. For Pakistan, left-arm seamer Shaheen Shah Afridi made a comeback to the team and picked up two wickets alongside leg spinner Shadab Khan.