

BANGLADESH
UPDATE



227
New cases in 24hrs



15,76,011
Total cases



27,980
Deaths



15,40,597
Recoveries

GLOBAL
UPDATE



5,220,511
Deaths



261,969,242
Total cases

Govt committed to free, fair polls

Momen tells diplomats

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen told the foreign diplomats stationed in Dhaka yesterday that the government is committed to free, fair and transparent elections in the country.

Referring to the recently held Union Parishad elections, he said the polls were inclusive, people had high enthusiasm and the government did not interfere.

“These [polls] are free, fair and transparent. The major opposition did not contest officially, but unofficially, they have many candidates running and some got elected too.”

Diplomats from different countries, including the US and European countries, and representatives from the UN and World Bank were present at the regular briefing at the state guesthouse Padma yesterday morning.

At a press meet in the afternoon, Momen said the meeting with the diplomats mainly featured Bangladesh’s participation in the COP26, the prime minister’s visit to France, Rohingya issue, elections and the treatment of BNP Chief Khaleda Zia.

He said the only “bad thing” about the UP polls is that there were some fatalities, which happened “out of enthusiasm”.

“We don’t want a single fatality in any election but we don’t know how to stop it,” he said, urging all political leaders not to incite people.

“They [leaders] incite their people in such a way that they resort to violence. They should stop violence

and only cast votes...”

Speaking to a private TV channel on Bangladesh’s exclusion from Biden’s Summit for Democracy, Momen yesterday said the invitation depends on the wish of the US.

“They did not invite all countries. This time, they did not invite us, but normally, they do.”

The minister said Bangladesh’s relationship with the US is very good, adding, “All countries have some weaknesses regarding elections, and the UP polls are currently taking place in Bangladesh.”

US Ambassador Earl Miller told the TV channel that they would be discussing the polls issue with the Bangladesh government in future.

Momen briefed the diplomats on Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina’s successful presentation on the country’s causes and on climate vulnerable countries, calling for compensating them under Loss and Damage.

Hasina also called for the developed countries to fund the promised \$100b to the developing countries every year for adaptation and mitigation.

Momen said he was happy that the UN agreed to be involved in the humanitarian activities in Bhashan Char, where some 19,000 Rohingyas have been relocated as part of the plan to relocate 100,000 from Cox’s Bazar.

He also thanked all the diplomats for supporting the recent UN resolution on Rohingyas that speaks of addressing the root causes of the crisis and their repatriation.

Tashnuva gets featured in Time’s 100 best photos of 2021

UNB, Dhaka

Tashnuva Anan Shishir, who made history by becoming Bangladesh’s first-ever transgender woman news presenter on a television channel, has been featured in the prestigious Time Magazine’s top 100 best photos of 2021.

“I am excited about this global recognition for myself and my community, especially as someone who came from the root level,” said Tashnuva.

She started anchoring the regular news bulletin on private television channel Boishakhi Television on March 8, marking the International Women’s Day.

The US-based Time magazine featured a photo of her clicked by AFP Dhaka photographer Munir Uz Zaman in the newsroom, accompanied by her co-workers wearing matching outfits to mark the day.

“Tashnuva Anan Shishir made history as Bangladesh’s first transgender news anchor by reading a three-minute news segment in Dhaka on March 8, International Women’s Day,” Time captioned the image on its website.

The image is now being virtually displayed in an unranked list covering the most important and iconic 100 moments of 2021.

Tashnuva said, “Individuals from my community need such recognition, as they truly work hard, and exposures like this will help me work for the development of our people in the



society and ensure they get what they deserve.”

Tashnuva is currently pursuing a Master’s degree in public health at the Brac James P Grant School of Public Health under Brac University, with two scholarships in two categories.

She is pursuing the degree along with Ho Chi Minh Islam, another iconic transgender woman in the country.

Tashnuva Anan Shishir challenged the identity of Kamal Hossain Shishir, her old self, and eventually came out as a trans-woman during her 20s, while starting her solo journey with social work, dance and theatre.

She has been an active member of the renowned theatre troupe BotTala, and recently took part in Anonno Mamun’s film “Koshai” as a detective. She will also appear in Syed Shahriar’s film “Goal”, where she will play the character of a football coach.

She has also worked as the case management officer in the Oivashi Karmi Unnayan Program from June 2020, as the project officer in Bandhu Social Welfare Society and in other voluntary projects for organisations, including Sangat - A Feminist Network, Roopban, Obayob and Bangladesh Youth Leadership Center.

She was the executive officer for the National Human Right’s Commission in Bangladesh, research assistant for Re-Think Bangladesh and ICDDR, B, as well as the cultural facilitator for Social Economic Enhancement Program.

No bleeding in 2 days

FROM PAGE 1

On Sunday, Khaleda’s physicians at a press conference said the probability of bleeding again in the next week was 50 percent while the probability of that happening in next six weeks was 70 percent.

“This [bleeding] will happen for sure. We are afraid if Madam bleeds again, we don’t have the supportive technology to control or stop it. In that case, the risk of her death will increase a lot,” Professor Fakhruddin Mohammad Siddiqui, a member of the medical board treating Khaleda, told journalists.

The 76-year-old former prime minister has been diagnosed with liver cirrhosis. According to the medical board, the BNP chief should be taken abroad immediately to an advanced centre for treatment.

Khaleda has long been suffering from arthritis, diabetes, dental and eye problems. She was admitted to the hospital on November 13, nearly a week after being discharged from the same healthcare facility.

She was moved to the CCU on November 14.

The BNP chief landed in jail on February 8, 2018 in a corruption case. Amid the pandemic, she was released temporarily on certain conditions on March 25 last year. The term of her release has been extended four times so far.

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen yesterday said Khaleda is allowed to bring in any doctor from abroad and she is free to take treatment anywhere in the country.

“If Khaleda Zia wants to go abroad for treatment, she has to do it following the legal process,” he told journalists at the state guesthouse Padma in the capital after briefing foreign diplomats.

Momen said the medical documents have already been sent abroad and foreign doctors can visit Bangladesh for treating her.

Asked who sent those documents, he said, “I heard about it from the law ministry. Probably, it has been sent from the family of Khaleda Zia.”

Enquired if the government sent it, the minister said, “No, why would the government send it? I don’t think they [family] would even share those documents with the government.”

Khaleda’s doctors at Sunday’s briefing told journalists that there was no scope for treating the BNP chief at home, rather she needs to be treated in either of the three countries -- the USA, the UK and Germany.

As she suffered bleeding three times, she needs treatment with TIPS (transjugular intrahepatic portosystemic shunt) which is available only in some specific advanced centres in those three countries, they added.



A handful of policemen try to control the protesters on DIT Road in the capital early today after a rashly driven bus took the life of a student in Rampura late last night.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Another student killed

FROM PAGE 1

protestors were injured in police action and that some bus passengers were injured by flying glass from shattered windows.

Ershad Hossain, duty officer of the Fire Service and Civil Defence, said nine buses were set on fire. Four fire engines were trying to douse the flames.

DIT Road was closed to traffic as of filing of this report at 12:30am today.

More than 100 policemen were on the spot.

Deputy Commissioner of Motijheel division of DMP Abdul Ahad at the spot said they seized the bus in question and arrested its driver.

Relatives and locals took the body of Mainuddin to their home at Purbia Rampura Mollah Bari where several hundred people demonstrated and chanted slogans demanding punishment of the bus drivers involved.

Police, later, took the body for autopsy.

Mainuddin sat for this year’s SSC exams from Ikramunnesa High School in the area. He just finished his examination two days ago. Yesterday, was his birthday.

His father Abdur Rahman Bhandari is a tea seller in Molla Bari area of East Rampura. Mainuddin was his youngest among three children.

Abdur said while having lunch yesterday, his son told him that his SSC exams went well and that he wants to study at a good college.

“I told my son that I would definitely get him into a good college, even if I have to beg...,” said the father.

The victim’s elder brother Badsha Islam said his brother went to meet a friend in West Rampura and was coming home when he was run over.

Mainuddin was killed when students have been demonstrating for safer roads since Notre Dame College student Nayeem Hasan was killed after a Dhaka South City Corporation bus driven by a cleaner rammed and killed him on November 24.

Savar tannery estate must shut down

FROM PAGE 1

shut down without any delay and it is the final decision. The environment minister also agreed”

He said the environment ministry would now write to the industries ministry and the Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC), asking them to shut down the estate.

Talking to this correspondent, Environment Minister Shahab Uddin said he agreed to the recommendations of the parliamentary committee.

“The ministry will send a letter to the industries ministry and the BSCIC in line with the decision [taken yesterday],” said Shahab, also a member of the JS body.

Contacted, Jakia Sultana, secretary, industries ministry, said they would take necessary measures after receiving the letter from the environment ministry.

On August 23, the parliamentary body recommended shutting down the estate due to widespread pollution of the local environment.

According to statistics placed before the standing committee, the estate has the capacity to treat around 25,000

cubic metres of liquid waste every day, but the tanners generate around 40,000 cubic metres of liquid waste per day.

That means 15,000 cubic metres of liquid waste are dumped into the Dhaleshwari without any treatment, causing severe pollution.

In 2003, the government took the initiative to build the BSCIC Tannery Industrial Estate on 200 acres in Hemayetpur after moving all tanneries from the capital’s Hazaribagh in order to prevent environmental pollution and to protect the Buriganga.

Saber Hossain yesterday said the most alarming matter is that the estate does not have any facility to treat solid waste, including heavy metals and chromium.

The waste is being dumped into the Dhaleshwari without any treatment, causing pollution and severe harm to the environment, he said.

In the last three years, the estate has dumped around 1.60 lakh cubic metres of waste into the river, Saber Hossain said, quoting statistics from the Department of Environment (DoE).

There are around 160 tanneries in the leather industrial park, sources at

yesterday’s meeting said.

Tanneries and backward and forward linkage industries related to leather goods were accommodated in the new industrial park after it was moved from Hazaribagh in 2003.

On September 9, the DoE served a show-cause notice on BSCIC. It asked BSCIC to respond by September 20 as to why the site should not be shut down as per the parliamentary standing committee’s recommendation.

About the notice, Saber Hossain said the industries ministry has formed a task force in this regard. “Let the task force work on the compliance issue,” he said, adding that the tannery industry would have to shut down until it becomes compliant.

Following recommendation from the standing committee, the meeting yesterday also decided to declare tourist destination St Martin’s Island a “no smoking zone”.

Besides, the parliamentary body asked the ministry to ensure food for elephants where they are living now in Ukhiya and other parts of Cox’s Bazar so that they don’t have to come to localities in search of food.

Decision on travel curb comes today

FROM PAGE 1

Closer to home, India has put Bangladesh along with the UK, Europe and 10 countries in the “at-risk” category, meaning passengers arriving from the countries will have to undergo an RT-PCR test on arrival in India and quarantine.

If the test result comes back negative, the passenger will follow home quarantine for seven days and subject themselves to re-test on the eighth day of arrival in India. The passengers will self-monitor their health for the next seven days.

If the test result comes back positive, their samples would be sent for genomic testing -- to confirm for Omicron variant -- at India’s consortium laboratory network and they would be kept at separate isolation facility and treated as per laid down standard protocol, including contact-tracing.

Earlier on Sunday, the National Technical Advisory Committee (NTAC)

on Covid-19 recommended limiting mass gatherings and travel bans on countries where the Omicron variant had spread.

Later in the evening, the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) had issued a 15-point precautionary directive to prevent any risk of virus transmission.

The ministers and other high officials will discuss the recommendations from the NTAC and the directives from the health directorate at the meeting today.

In the notice, the DGHS urged everyone concerned to implement precautionary measures in response to the spread of the new Omicron variant in different countries.

The directives include: strengthening the health check-ups and screening at the ports for the passengers coming from Omicron-affected countries including South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho and the others that are being added to the list.

WHO flags global risk

FROM PAGE 1

escape protection against immunity induced by vaccines and previous infections, it said, adding that more data was expected in coming weeks.

US President Joe Biden said the new variant was a cause for concern but not panic and that it would sooner or later arrive in the United States, urging people to get vaccinated. He said it would be weeks before the world knew how effective current vaccines would be against it.

“Obviously, we’re on high alert,” Dr Anthony Fauci, the top US infectious disease official and Biden’s chief medical adviser, told ABC News. “It’s inevitable that, sooner or later, it’s going to spread widely.”

An infectious disease expert from South Africa, where scientists first identified Omicron, said it was too early to say whether symptoms were more severe than previous variants, but it did appear to be more transmissible.

Professor Salim Abdool Karim also

said existing vaccines were probably effective at stopping Omicron from causing severe illness. Scientists have said it could take weeks to understand the severity of Omicron.

South African cases were likely to exceed 10,000 a day this week, rocketing up from barely 300 a day two weeks ago, Karim added.

But South African President Cyril Ramaphosa denounced “unjustified and unscientific” travel bans that damage tourism-reliant economies.

After a virtual meeting yesterday, health ministers from the Group of Seven bloc of wealthy nations praised South Africa for its “exemplary work” in detecting the variant and alerting others.

Fears the new variant might be resistant to vaccines helped wipe roughly \$2 trillion off global stock markets on Friday but markets settled down again yesterday, even after Japan said it would close its borders to foreigners.

Other countries also imposed travel

and other restrictions, worried that Omicron could spread fast even among people with immunity.

Travellers stranded at Johannesburg international airport said they felt helpless as flights from South Africa were cancelled.

Portugal found 13 cases of the variant at a Lisbon football club. Spain, Sweden, Scotland and Austria also reported their first cases.

Japan described its ban on arrivals by foreigners as precautionary.

In Israel, a ban on arrivals by foreigners took effect overnight.

India’s federal health ministry said all arrivals from Europe, South Africa, Brazil, Bangladesh, Botswana, China, Mauritius, New Zealand, Zimbabwe, Singapore, Hong Kong and Israel will be tested at the airport using the RT-PCR method.

Australia said yesterday it would delay the reopening of its international border by two weeks after reporting its first cases of the Omicron variant.

AL men bag 53pc

FROM PAGE 1

yesterday, hours after firing by Border Guard Bangladesh during polls violence on Sunday night.

The dead, Adittya Roy, 18, was a resident of Ghidhob village in Thakurgaon’s Pirganj upazila.

Rezaul Islam, upazila nirbahi officer of Pirganj, said BGB opened fire to disperse a group of people who attacked election officials at the Ghidhob Government Primary School polling centre in the upazila’s Khangaon union.

The incident left two people dead on the spot.

In Sirajganj, an HSC examinee died of his wounds at Bogura Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital early yesterday, hours after being injured in electoral violence during the third phase.

The dead was identified as Delwar Hosain Sagor, 17, of Masuakandi village in Ullapara upazila.

Sagor was injured in a clash between supporters of two UP polls candidates near Masiakandi Government Primary School polling centre in the upazila’s Hatikumrul union, said Abdul Kader Jilani, OC of Solonga Police Station.

A case was filed in this regard, he added.

In Cox’s Bazar, a supporter of a newly elected UP chairman was killed allegedly by followers of a defeated candidate in Chakaria upazila the same night.

The dead -- Gias Uddin Mintu, 45, -- was from Demushia Para area of the upazila.

Locals said the victim was a supporter of Noor-e-Hossain Arif, the Awami League chairman nominee, who won the Badarkhali Union Parishad polls.

His supporters brought out a victory procession at Gauchia Mosque Hafezkhana area around 10:45pm. All of a sudden, supporters of rebel AL candidate Md Hefaz Shikder attacked the procession, leaving Mintu badly injured. He died on the way to a local hospital.

This newspaper could not reach Hefaz over the phone for comments.

In Nilphamari, a BGB member was killed in post-polls violence at Garagram of the district’s Kishoreganj upazila on Sunday night.

The dead was identified as Rubel Mondol, 37, a nayek of the BGB 56 Battalion.

Supporters of a chairman candidate, who lost the election, resorted to violence at Poschim Doliram Majhapara Government Primary School polling centre around 9:00pm after the announcement of the polls results, said Lalit Chandra Roy, presiding officer at the centre.

He came under attack when he became isolated from fellow force members at the centre. He was beaten to death, said police sources.

In Narsingdi, a man was shot by rivals at Uttar Bakhmagar village of the district’s Raipura upazila the same day.

The victim -- Farid Miah -- was a resident of the village.

Locals said supporters of two UP member candidates clashed at Uttar Bakhmagar Government Primary School in the evening, leaving three people, including Farid, injured by bullets.

Farid was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where he died around 10:00pm.

In Munshiganj, at least four people were injured as supporters of two defeated candidates clashed in Chhota Mollakandi village of the district’s Sadar upazila early yesterday.

In Lalmonirhat, a candidate and his supporters vandalised some Hindu houses on Sunday night after losing the election in Harati union.

(Our district correspondents contributed to this report.)

Zahangir sued

FROM PAGE 1

AL on November 19 expelled him from the party for breaching the organisation’s discipline.

The local government and rural development ministry also suspended him from the mayor post on November 25 following several allegations that include illegal land grabbing, not compensating people after taking over land for development and working against the public interest.

Yesterday, Judge Mohammad Ash Sams Joglul Hossain took cognisance of the DSA case and recorded the complainant’s statements.

The judge also directed the Criminal Investigation Department to submit a report before the tribunal by January 6 next year after investigation.

An audio of the accused went viral on social media in September this year where he made derogatory, hateful and false comments on Bangabandhu and the Liberation War martyrs, which hurt the country’s people, the case statement says.

Section 21 of the DSA deals with punishment for making any kind of propaganda or campaign against the Liberation War, cognition of the Liberation War, the father of the nation, national anthem or national flag.

“If any person, by means of digital medium, makes or instigates any propaganda or campaign against the Liberation War, cognition of the Liberation War, father of the nation, national anthem or national flag, the person’s act shall be considered an offence,” section 21 of the law reads.

If any person commits an offence under the sub-section, he/she shall be punished with imprisonment for a term not exceeding 10 years, or with a fine not exceeding Tk one crore or both.