

**BANGLADESH UPDATE**



243

New cases in 24hrs



15,77,070

Total cases



27,989

Deaths



15,41,886

Recoveries



5,262,814

Deaths



265,555,670

Total cases

## KHALEDA'S TREATMENT

# Allow her to go abroad or deal with consequences

BNP tells govt

UNB, Dhaka

BNP has threatened to launch a movement to oust the government if it does not immediately allow party Chairperson Khaleda Zia to go abroad for advanced treatment.

"We would like to clearly ask the government to free our leader Khaleda Zia and take steps for sending her abroad for treatment without further delay," BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said at a rally yesterday.

Otherwise, people will not forgive the government, he said. "A movement to ensure your [government's] fall will begin and a pro-people government will be established removing you from power."

Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal organised the programme in front of the Jatiya Press Club, demanding Khaleda's treatment abroad as she was diagnosed with liver cirrhosis.

Fakhrul said the government is not willing to grant permission to Khaleda to go to an advanced medical centre abroad as it thinks their obstacles to staying in power will be cleared if she dies.

"You people can be rest assured that it won't happen. They thought BNP would be vanished through the killing of Ziaur Rahman. That didn't happen. Khaleda Zia has rightly chosen her successor -- our acting chairman Tarique Rahman -- and the party is moving forward under his leadership," the BNP leader added.

He said Khaleda must be brought back to politics for restoring democracy, people's rights and establishing good

governance in the country.

Recalling the BNP chief's contributions to the country and her long struggle for democracy, Fakhrul said in Bangladesh there is no other living leader who made such huge sacrifices like Khaleda.

He alleged that many Chhatra Dal leaders have been subjected to enforced disappearance, killing and repression by the current government. He called upon students and Chhatra Dal to restore people's democratic rights, protect the country's independence and sovereignty. "Our leader Khaleda Zia's treatment abroad must be ensured through a movement."

He urged Chhatra Dal leaders and activists to get ready for making any sacrifice to make their current movement a success.

Khaleda, 76, has been undergoing treatment at the capital's Evercare Hospital for various health complications since November 13.

The former prime minister's medical board members on November 28 said she immediately needed to go abroad for better treatment as she was diagnosed with liver cirrhosis.

On behalf of her family, Khaleda's younger brother, Shamim Iskander, submitted an application to the home ministry on November 11 seeking permission to take her abroad for treatment.

However, Law Minister Anisul Huq said the government will consider the BNP chairperson's appeal if she submits a fresh petition after returning to jail.



Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, the student wing of BNP, holding a rally yesterday in front of Jatiya Press Club in the capital demanding that BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia be freed and allowed to go abroad for better treatment.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

## Bangladesh Army celebrates its golden jubilee

Bss, Dhaka

The Golden Jubilee of the Bangladesh Army was celebrated in a befitting manner across the country on Friday.

The year 2021 carries a special significance for the Bangladesh Army and the entire nation as the Golden Jubilee of the Bangladesh Army was celebrated with the golden jubilee of the country's independence and the birth centenary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, an ISPR press release said yesterday.

A colourful programme was organized at Dhaka Army Stadium on Friday to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Bangladesh Army and highlight the achievements of the Bangladesh Army, it added.

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Bangladesh Army, the president, the prime minister, the speaker of Jatiya Sangsad, several ministers, and chiefs of army staff greeted the members of the Bangladesh Army.

To mark the day, a programme was held at the Army Stadium here where about 11,000 distinguished guests attended.

## Road deaths just wouldn't stop

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Angry locals vandalised at least 12 buses in the area after the tragedy. Several of the buses didn't have proper documents to be on the road.

Yesterday's arrestee Swapan is a chauffeur by profession, said Rafiqul Islam, officer-in-charge of Rampura Police Station.

"We have found his involvement while investigating the vandalism cases," he said, adding that whether or not he has political affiliations will be disclosed later.

In Hatirjheel, police detained a teenager to interrogate him over vandalising the buses, said Sub-inspector Shahjahan of Hatirjheel Police Station.

On November 30, police arrested Shahid Bepari, 22, a street vendor, in the same case.

**14 DIE ON ROADS EVERY DAY**  
The Road Safety Foundation came up with the numbers by keeping track of news reports. On an average, 14 people get killed on the roads every day last month.

The actual number of victims could be much higher because many incidents go unreported and the media reports often do not account for individuals who die of injuries after the crashes.

Of the 413 who died last month, 184 died in 158 crashes involving motorcycles. At least 96 were pedestrians and 53 were drivers and their helpers.

Around 41 percent of the crashes happened on national highways, 34.56 percent on regional highways, and the rest on other roads.

The foundation attributed the deaths and injuries to risky vehicles, speeding, reckless and unskilled drivers, slow-moving vehicles on highways, reckless motorcycle riders and inadequate traffic management.

The organisation also made 10 recommendations for reducing crashes that include initiatives for creating skilled drivers and fixing work hours for drivers.

**WHAT QUADER SAYS**  
At an awareness-raising programme of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) on Manik Mia Avenue, Quader said the government was working to ensure road safety.

But the country is witnessing the second major movement for road safety, and according to a government report, the number of road crashes is increasing.

When asked why they were failing to ensure road safety, Quader, also the general secretary of ruling Awami

League, did not give a direct reply.

"I want to compare [Bangladesh] with other countries. According to an NDTV report, 17 people get killed every hour in India [due to road crashes]," he said.

He added that fatalities in crashes have increased because of small vehicles and motorcycles.

"I think the number of accidents have decreased, but the rate of casualties in road accidents has increased due to the operation of easy bikes and other small vehicles along with heavy vehicles," he said.

However, a police report says 2,635 people were killed in 2,629 road crashes in 2018 while 3,502 were killed in 3,701 crashes in just the first eight months of this year.

About the student demonstrations, he alleged that the movement was fanned by instigation of a political party.

A leader of Dhaka city unit of a political party is leading the movement in disguise of a student, he said, adding that there is footage of the movement and action would be taken as per the law.

**MOVEMENT CONTINUES**  
Meanwhile, students who were protesting at the capital's Rampura to realise an 11-point demand, yesterday

showed red cards to irregularities and corruption on the roads.

"We are showing red cards in protest of corruption and irregularities in the same way referees show red cards to errant players in football matches," said Khilgaon Model College student Shohagi Samia.

She announced that students will form a human chain today on the footpath near Rampura Bridge.

About Quader's comments, the protesters said the government wanted to malign the legitimate movement.

Another group of students said they would hold a symbolic funeral procession in Shahbagh and form human chains in other parts of the country to realise their nine-point demand for safe roads.

The protesters will wage a stronger movement if their demands are not met by December 10, State University student Inzamul Haque Ramim said in Rampura Bridge yesterday.

The students have been demonstrating for road safety following the death of Notre Dame Collegestudent Nayeem Hasan on November 24. Death of another student, Mainuddin Islam, five days later at Rampura intensified the protests.

## Govt still sitting on experts'

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of facemasks, and preparing hospitals to tackle a fresh surge in transmission.

Expect for the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh imposing travel restrictions on seven countries from yesterday, none of the other recommendations has so far been implemented.

The seven countries are South Africa, Botswana, Eswatini, Ghana, Lesotho, Namibia and Zimbabwe.

For passengers coming from other countries, the CAAB circular said they must get their Covid negative test certificates 48 hours before a trip. It also said the tests must be done using RT-PCR machines.

Experts said the measures taken are not enough, adding that the government should implement fresh health safety guidelines and conduct rigorous screening at all ports, as the Omicron variant has already been reported in more than 40 countries, including neighbouring India, and many of them are already grappling with a spike in infection rate.

Bangladesh, however, is yet to report any case of Omicron.

According to studies, the new variant is more transmissible than any other coronavirus variants. But there is no conclusive data yet on whether it is deadly or not.

"It doesn't matter whether the Omicron is deadly or not. We should not delay following the protocol to curb the spread of the virus. We have seen how many losses [of life] the Delta variant caused," Dr Abu Jamil Faisal, member of the Epidemiology and Public Health Committee of the Directorate General of Health

Services, told The Daily Star yesterday. Prof Nazrul Islam, member of the NTAC, said, "If those recommendations are not implemented, the situation can get dangerous for all of us."

Prof Tahmina Shirin, director of the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research, said, "If the same travel ban were imposed to all other countries where Omicron has been detected, it would be better. But there might be other reasons for not doing so."

She added, "Health officials at all levels have been asked to implement the health safety guidelines. But it requires cooperation. The health department cannot do anything alone."

On Thursday, Health Minister Zahid Maleque told journalists at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport that the government could not trace the 240 passengers who came from South Africa recently.

Experts said this was a reflection of lax coordination between the ministries.

The government lifted all coronavirus restrictions from August 19 and all public transports were allowed to operate while maintaining health safety guidelines.

Social gatherings were allowed and tourist destinations were also reopened on the condition that they operate at half their capacities, according to a Cabinet Division circular issued on August 12.

Besides, the circular said everyone must continue wearing masks and following other health rules.

However, experts say all health rules are being grossly violated.

## Student on way

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Ironically, Lemon felt strongly about the ongoing student movement on road safety, according to his classmates.

With critical injuries, he was rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital, where on-duty doctors declared him dead around 1:45 am, said Kaikobad, inspector (investigation) of Airport Police Station.

Police seized the 10-wheel lorry that was carrying containers for a Chattogram-based company. Its driver and helper, however, managed to flee, said the inspector, adding that Lemon's father filed a case with the police station in this connection.

The deceased's aunt Wahida Mahbuba Chowdhury told The Daily Star that Lemon lived at a house in Uttara, but on Friday, he was staying at her aunt's house in Jigatola.

"Lemon rushed to Uttara to receive his mother. But on the way, he met his tragic death," she said.

His mother Muslema Begum is a patient of brain tumour, diabetes and kidney. She had an appointment with a doctor of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) on December 14.

But on Friday, she fell sick suddenly and got on a bus from Joypurhat in the evening to take treatment in Dhaka.

After Lemon's death, Wahida contacted the bus conductor who dropped off Lemon's mother at a Sirajganj restaurant at midnight, saying his son was injured in an accident. Her relatives from Bogura

later took her back to Joypurhat.

"Yesterday, she was told that her son is no more. She fainted on hearing the news," Wahida said.

Lemon is second among his three siblings. Lemon's father Mofazzal Hossain, a retired army sergeant, now works at a private farm at Chattogram, from where he rushed to receive the body from the DMC morgue around 2 pm yesterday.

Lemon would be buried at his village in Pachbibi of Joypurhat.

Talking to the correspondent, his friend Hafizur Rahman said Lemon was an active campaigner in the road safety movement in 2018 at his university.

"On Tuesday, we, five friends including Lemon, sat together at Dhanmondi Lake and discussed our internship. We also talked about the ongoing student protest and was supposed to decide on Monday as our classes will resume that day. But now we have to join in the protest for our friend's death," he said.

Protesting Lemon's death, a group of students of Green University blocked the road in front of the campus at Begum Rokeya Sarani around 5:00 pm and also held a human chain.

"We want justice for Limon," chanted the agitating students demanding immediate arrest of the responsible lorry driver and helper.

At the time of filing of this report, no arrests were made, Kaikobad said, adding that no CCTV footage could be found in the area.

## From cholera to Covid

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In 1979, Donald Mackay, then deputy director of the Ross Institute at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, wrote in the Tropical Doctor journal, "It [the cholera research laboratory] was set up under the guidance and leadership of a very great epidemiologist, the late Dr Fred Soper, a man without any background of work in Asia and with no obvious interest in cholera."

But Soper retired soon after, and it wasn't until Robert A Phillips took over that icddr,b found the silver bullet to combat cholera -- the oral saline solution of salt and sugar, known more commonly as Orsoline.

Phillips recognised that dehydration was the main problem of cholera. The New York Times reported in 1976 that he had realised it by "studying the biochemical composition of the stools of hundreds of victims of cholera, rather than concentrating on studies of the blood, as others had done."

"Principally, as far as the non-scientific world was concerned, the production of these years was the perfection of the intravenous therapy for cholera [the Dacca 5 : 4 : 1 solution] and the emergence of the new concept of oral therapy, which was to have so profound an effect, not only on cholera therapy but on the therapy of diarrhoeal diseases generally," wrote Mackay in the

Tropical Doctor.

Scientists of what is now icddr,b began to develop an oral therapy in 1962.

The New York Times announced the development of the treatment in an article titled "Simple Cholera Treatment, a Salt Drink Developed" on September 28, 1970.

"The researchers found that the body could absorb the necessary electrolytes -- sodium and chloride -- when a sugar dextrose was added to the salt solution," it said.

"Until the discovery that successful medical treatment involved replacing the quart even gallons of fluid that a cholera victim can lose, and fatality rates in untreated cholera were as high as 80 percent in some epidemics," reported the newspaper.

"Once doctors began using intravenous fluids, the mortality rate dropped precipitously. How low it fell -- in some places to 1 percent -- depended on the availability of ample supplies of intravenous solutions.

"The amounts required, however, make the costs prohibitive in many rural areas where cholera occurs today."

Fast forward to 2021 and the world is fighting another pandemic, this time, borne by air instead of water.

As many as 85 separate research studies on Covid-19 are currently ongoing or in the pipeline of icddr,b

The lines of inquiry range from monitoring the circulation of SARS-CoV-2 in bats in Bangladesh, to the presence of Covid-19 antibodies among slum-dwellers.

But if there is one study done by icddr,b that matches in importance to that of the cholera pandemic, it is a research on checking the long-term effects of Covid-19 on patients, according to Tahmeed Ahmed, executive director of icddr,b.

"We are researching on post-Covid complications during recovery. Such a systemic study has not been done before in the world. We are routinely following up with around 250 patients with different symptoms -- mild, moderate and critical. We ask them to report to the hospitals periodically. We screen them from head to toe. We do mental, psychiatric, neurological; check their hearts, lungs, livers, pancreases and kidneys. We even do electrocardiograms and echocardiograms," he explained.

Five months of follow-ups have been done, and it will continue till 18 months.

"We are coming across a lot of psychiatric problems. A lot of reports of insomnia and post-traumatic stress disorder are coming... We are studying a small group of healthy volunteers, who are non-Covid patients. We are seeing if they have the same symptoms. We have seen that Covid patients have more psychiatric

issues," said Tahmeed.

"There are a lot of cardiac problems like palpitation, breathing problems for which patients can't climb stairs. We have seen diabetes worsening in these patients and have found that the pancreas being affected. To detect that we are using a C-peptide test," he said, adding that if they study this properly, they should be able to come up with recommendations.

In addition, the organisation is looking at people's T-Cell response to the virus. "Our population is different. We don't have an ageing population. We have a lot of urban informal settlers, where infection can spread rapidly, but the immune response too can develop quickly. Bangladeshis took all forms of antibiotics and drugs over the counter, and antiviral medicines was readily available. Whether these had an impact or not, we are trying to find out," said Tahmeed.

From a handful of research testing out how to battle cholera, to an army of scientists battling Covid-19 across all entry points.

As Mackay had written in 1979, "It succeeds, and grows out of an organisation to which the whole world is permanently indebted, for it produced techniques that have brought the mortality of cholera tumbling down."

## Ensure equal opportunities

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aiming to promote a culture of peace and tolerance.

"A fair international system is also essential for all people of the world. We shouldn't forget that we live in a shared planet and we have shared responsibilities, too," he said.

Hamid said Bangladesh believes that peace around the world is the best guarantee for the country's national security following the constitutional obligations.

"We will continue our efforts to resolve conflicts through peaceful means and promote peace across the globe."

He urged all to leave aside the path of division, join hands and walk together on the path of peace.

The president said the world is facing numerous challenges and conflicts and the Covid-19 pandemic exposed the weakness of systems.

"Unless we are united and ensure mutual peace and harmony, we won't be able to secure a safe and habitable world for our children and future generations which is already grappling with adverse effects of climate change," Hamid said.

He also highlighted how global inequities and injustices are the real threats to international peace.

Former UN secretary-general Ban Ki-moon sent a pre-recorded video message

to the programme. He called upon all to prioritise peace, sustainability and inclusion for a brighter future for all.

He laid emphasis on joint efforts to fight the pandemic and called for equal sharing of vaccines.

"Let's dream of a better world"

Speaking at the event, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen hoped that there will be peace across the world following an end to violence, war and terror with the active support from the international community.

"These activities and violence, whether against Rohingyas or Palestinians, are manmade ones. Since these are manmade, I've a dream: One day with your active support, we can end violence, war and terror," he said.

Momen hoped that no child will be without family, no soldier will lift his weapons to take another man's life, disastrous bombs and hateful minds hopefully will be replaced by flowers of friendship and peace.

He said courageous leaders like Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman are needed to end violence and achieve peace.

Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, chair of the organising committee of the World Peace Conference, former Indian minister for civil aviation, railways, commerce and industry Suresh Prabhakar Prabhu, World Islamic Economic Forum Foundation

Chairman Syed Hamid Albar, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Md Shahrir Alam and Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen also spoke at the event.

The speakers talked about the Rohingya crisis, the Covid-19 pandemic, equal distribution of vaccines, shared concerns over new the Covid variant and laid emphasis on equality and social inclusion.

Prime minister Sheikh Hasina will virtually attend the closing ceremony of the two-day conference today.

On the occasion of 50 years of Bangladesh's independence and the birth centenary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Bangladesh celebrates five decades of its peace-centric diplomacy aimed at promoting sustainable development, fundamental rights, freedom, social justice and inclusion.

Bangladesh is hosting the World Peace Conference as part of its celebrations of the Mujib Year, the birth centenary of the Father of the Nation, and the Golden Jubilee of the country's independence.

The idea of holding the conference is to let the world feel that peace has to be cherished in multifarious ways, perceiving that the invaluable contributions of the global pioneers are universal, and that peace will be sustainable only through social justice, equity and inclusiveness.

## Carriers worry

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"Passengers will have to suffer if the airport authorities do not increase ground-handling capabilities and the other facilities beforehand," said a senior official of a foreign airline asking not to be named to speak candidly on the matter.

A sufficient number of check-in counters, boarding bridges, security check-in counters, baggage loading and unloading facilities and other related facilities are needed for the smooth operation of all flights within the 16-hour window, he said.

However, the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) thinks the runway closure will not cause much disruption.

The CAAB said they have already discussed the matter with the airline operators and the other stakeholders and have taken the necessary measures to prevent any disruption. The steps include increasing manpower for ground handling.

There would not be any flight delay or other disruption in flight operation due to the closure of the runway from December 10, said AHM Touhid-Ul-Ahsan, executive director of HISA.

If an emergency landing is required during the closure of the runway from December 10, the airlines will have to use Osmani International Airport in Sylhet. Every day, 27 airlines operate 85 to 90 flights, carrying around 10,000 passengers to different destinations from HISA.