

BANGLADESH
UPDATE



197
New cases in 24hrs



15,77,443
Total cases



28,001
Deaths



15,42,274
Recoveries

GLOBAL
UPDATE



5,266,834
Deaths



265,875,654
Total cases

Bangladesh to get 20pc more power from Tripura

STAR REPORT

Despite having sufficient production capacity to meet the domestic demand, the country will buy 20 percent more electricity from an Indian supplier as part of a renewed power import deal.

The country will purchase 192MW of power per day, up from 160MW earlier, from Tripura State Electricity Corporation Limited (TSECL) as per the supplementary agreement signed on December 2.

Power Secretary and Director of Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB) represented Bangladesh while TSECL Managing Director MS Kele and NTPC Vidyut Vyapar Nigam Ltd (NVVN) CEO Praveen Saxena represented India and signed the renewal agreement in Dhaka, reports our New Delhi correspondent.

According to the energy division, Bangladesh has an installed capacity of producing 21,435 MW per day power and a de-rated capacity (the amount it can generate) of 20,934 MW per day.

The demand during peak hours on December 3 was 8,300 MW, according

to BPDB data.

The highest single day demand for power this year was 13,018 MW on April 3.

The new agreement came into effect from March 17, 2021 and will be in force till March 16, 2026, according to the officials.

The tariff for this supply for the first contract year shall be 6.27 rupees/kWh and trading margin to NVVN will be of 0.01 rupees/kWh with a fixed increase of two percent per year, reports The Economic Times of India.

The modified terms and conditions of the agreement were finalised after four meetings between the stakeholders, according to officials involved with the deal.

Bangladesh had earlier signed an agreement with India to purchase 100 MW power from TSECT on January 11, 2010 that had subsequently increased to 160MW. The agreement had expired on March 16, 2021.

The country has been importing electricity from India since September 2013, including 1000 MW from West Bengal through the Bheramara border.

2 Alim tests deferred

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paper of Hadith and Usool Hadith. But the exam for that day was on Quran Majid.

High officials and the madrasa board were informed immediately, the UNO added.

Prof Kaiser said the madrasa board is investigating the matter.

Board officials said physics 2nd paper and Al Fiqah exams scheduled for next Thursday were postponed as a precautionary move.

Bashir Ahmed, secretary of the exam centre in question, told The

Daily Star that he had not opened any package.

A total of 1,13,144 students from 2,692 madrasas are taking part in the exams at 447 centres. All the students get the same set of questions.

The Alim exams did not take place last year due to closure amid the pandemic. The students were evaluated based on their performance in previous public exams.

This year's exams are being held only on three subjects and a shortened syllabus after a delay of nearly eight months.

Use resources for dev

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in this world," she said.

The premier said Bangladesh is always ready to work with all based on mutual respect and understanding to fully embrace the ideals of peace of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Hasina said Bangabandhu's philosophy of peace was a far-reaching one and an avenue of lasting peace. "He [Bangabandhu] has proved that freedom from all shackles of deprivation-inequality-exploitation eventually from dependency, and achieving prosperity by ending hunger and poverty may construct this path."

Bangabandhu had also called for upholding a policy of non-alignment and the establishment of friendly relations through ending warfare and arms races to maintain world peace, she said.

She said the father of the nation in his book, "Amar Dekha Nayachin", explained his participation in the Asia-Pacific Peace Conference held in Beijing in 1952 saying, "We're willing to join the peace conference of those who want peace in the world today. We agree to raise thousands of voices with all those fighting for peace, be it Russia, America, Britain, or China -- we want peace."

She said Bangabandhu was nominated for the Julio Curie Medal in a declaration in Helsinki, Finland, on October 10, 1972, for his outstanding contribution to world peace by establishing the rights of the oppressed people in the country.

Quoting from the speech Bangabandhu delivered while receiving the award in Dhaka on May 23, 1973, Hasina said, "Let me mention here that world peace has been one of the fundamental principles of my philosophy of life. I've always been with the oppressed, the exploited and the peace-loving

and freedom-loving people in any part of the world. We want peace to reign in every part of the globe. We want it to consolidate."

The PM said her government signed a peace treaty ending the bloody conflict with the hill tribes of the Chittagong Hill Tracts in 1997. Bangladesh (during the AL regime) first proposed a resolution on the declaration and programme of action of a "culture of peace" at the United Nations, which was adopted on September 13, 1999.

"We're proud to be the highest peacekeeper-sending country to the United Nations. We're also adopted a zero-tolerance policy against terrorism and violent extremism. We're working closely with the agencies or organisations concerned to maintain a regional and international peaceful environment," she said.

"We're pursuing peaceful diplomacy to repatriate the Rohingyas to their homeland," the PM said.

Chair of the conference's organising committee Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury presided over the concluding session, while former prime minister of Singapore Goh Chok Tong, former director general of Unesco Irina Bokova, Director for South and Central Asia at Hudson Institute Ambassador Husain Haqqani, Foreign Minister Abdul Momen and State Minister for Foreign Affairs Md Shahriar Alam also spoke on the occasion.

DHAKA PEACE DECLARATION

The conference ended with the adoption of a 16-point Dhaka Peace Declaration, emphasising the importance of democracy, good governance and the rule of law as critical factors for global peace and stability.

It underlined the need for social justice and inclusive development as central pillars of a stable, peaceful and equitable society.

Total solar eclipse plunges Antarctica into darkness

AFP, Santiago

A total solar eclipse plunged Antarctica from summer into darkness early Saturday in a rare astronomical spectacle witnessed by a handful of scientists and thrill-seekers -- and countless penguins.

"The visibility was excellent," said Raul Cordero of the University of Santiago de Chile (USACH), who was on site to witness "totality" at 0746 GMT, with the "ring of fire" phase lasting just over 40 seconds.

Solar eclipses occur when the Moon passes between the Sun and Earth, casting its shadow on Earth. For the eclipse to be total, the Sun, Moon and Earth must be directly aligned.

Totality was visible only in Antarctica, experienced by a small

number of scientists, experts and adventure tourists -- who paid some \$40,000 for the privilege.

Streamed live by Nasa from the Union Glacier camp in Antarctica, the eclipse began at 0700 GMT as the Moon began to move in front of the Sun, coming to an end at 0806 GMT.

The Union Glacier camp is situated about 1,000 kilometers (600 miles) north of the South Pole.

According to Nasa, a partial eclipse was also visible across parts of the southern hemisphere, including parts of Saint Helena, Namibia, Lesotho, South Africa, Chile, New Zealand and Australia.

The last total solar eclipse in Antarctica occurred on November 23, 2003 and the next one will not be until 2039.



Ignoring serious risks, people travel by standing on the coupling between the carriages and hanging from the door handles of a train in the capital's Tejgaon.

PHOTO:
ANISUR RAHMAN

Violence rages as troops kill 13

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Rifles a short while ago in Mon town," Noklem Konyak, president of the Konyak Students Union, told Reuters by telephone.

Konyak is the dominant tribe in Mon district.

Indian military and government officials were not immediately available to comment on the latest killing.

Reacting to the incident, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi tweeted, "This is heart-wrenching. GOI (Govt of India) must give a real reply. What exactly is the Home Ministry doing when neither civilians nor security personnel are safe in our own land?"

'CRUDE WEAPONS'

Saturday's incident took place in and around Oting village in Mon district, bordering Myanmar, during a counterinsurgency operation conducted by members of the Assam Rifles, the country's oldest paramilitary force, said a senior police official based in Nagaland.

Firing began when a truck carrying 30 or more coal mine labourers were passing the Assam Rifles camp.

"The troopers had intelligence inputs about some militant movement in the area and on seeing the truck they mistook the miners to be rebels and opened fire killing six labourers," the senior police official told Reuters, requesting anonymity.

"After the news of firing spread in the village, hundreds of tribal people surrounded the camp. They burnt Assam Rifles vehicles and clashed with the troopers using crude weapons," he said.

Members of the Assam Rifles retaliated, and in the second attack eight more civilians and a security force member were killed, the official said.

The Naga Mothers' Association (NMA), an influential rights' group in Nagaland, appealed to all Naga tribes to mourn the loss of civilian lives and demanded that the Indian army's cantonments should be shifted out of

civilian areas.

"Let the world know our grief and sorrow and may our voices of protest be heard against the continuing militarisation and killings under the Armed Forces Powers Act," said Abeiu Meru, the president of NMA.

The Act gives armed forces sweeping powers to search and arrest, and to open fire if they deem it necessary for the maintenance of public order in parts of the country they declared as "disturbed areas".

Some parts of Nagaland were given that designation by the federal government last year.

Police and local government officials have intensified vigilance and patrolling across the border state ahead of final rites for the dead scheduled today.

In recent years India has tried to persuade Myanmar to evict rebels from bases in the thick jungles of the unfenced region, which borders Nagaland, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh.

India recognises Bangladesh

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Conveying India's greetings and warm felicitations to Bangladesh's acting president, prime minister and people, Indira said the Bangladesh government had reiterated their anxiety to ensure expeditious return of its citizens to their homeland, and India would naturally help in every way in the process.

"Our thoughts at the moment," continued the Indian Prime Minister, "are with the father of the new state, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman".

The Indian Prime Minister further said, "The people of Bangladesh battling for their very existence, and the people of India fighting to defeat the aggression, now find themselves partisans in the same cause."

"As for the legitimacy of the Government of Bangladesh, the whole world is now aware that it reflects the will of the overwhelming majority of the people, which not many governments can claim to represent," she added.

The Indian government's decision to recognise Bangladesh was formally conveyed by Indian Foreign Secretary TN Kaul to KM Shehabuddin of the Bangladesh mission in New Delhi today. Kaul handed over to Shehabuddin a sealed letter from External Affairs Minister Swarn Singh to the Bangladesh Foreign Minister

Khondakar Mostaq Ahmad. Kaul also gave Shehabuddin some copies of the prime minister's statement in parliament announcing the recognition.

The Bangladesh government hailed India's formal recognition and expressed its "thanks and deep sense of gratitude for the help -- both material and moral -- extended to the People's Republic of Bangladesh in their valiant struggle for independence by the people and the Government of India under the able and courageous leadership of the prime minister."

The Bangladesh leaders further said, "On this great and auspicious occasion, we pledge the fullest support of our people and our forces in our common task of defeating our common enemy [Pakistan]."

"We look forward to an era of continued friendship, peace and cooperation between our two countries, which, we are sure will become a model of the Afro-Asian world. We shall uphold human rights and human dignity and endeavour with your cooperation to consolidate world peace and stability in this region of the world," they added.

The New York Times reported today that Pakistan privately urged the Soviet Union not to follow India's recognition of East Pakistan as the independent nation of Bangladesh. NIXON'S LETTER TO BREZHNEV

In a letter dated December 6, 1971, US President Richard Nixon urged the Soviet General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev to use his "great influence in New Delhi" to restrain India so that "territorial integrity of Pakistan was restored and military action was brought to an end."

"I regret to say that what is happening now in South Asia, where you are supporting the Indian government's open use of force against the independence and integrity of Pakistan, merely serves to aggravate an already grave situation. Beyond that, however, this course of developments runs counter to the recent encouraging trend in international relations to which the mutual endeavors of our two governments have been making such a major contribution," said Nixon.

"I must state frankly that," continued Nixon, "it would be illusory to think that if India can somehow achieve its objectives by military action the issue will be closed. An accomplished fact brought about in this way would long complicate the international situation and undermine the confidence that we and you have worked so hard to establish. It could not help but have an adverse effect on a whole range of other issues."

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Celebrating 50 years

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Pakistani defences to surrender on December 16, giving birth to a new nation.

In a letter to the Mujib Nagar Government Prime Minister Tajuddin Ahmed on December 6, the then Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi wrote: "The people of Bangladesh have gone through much suffering. Your young men are engaged in a self-sacrificing struggle for freedom and democracy. The people of India are also fighting in defence of the same values."

She said she had no doubt that the companionship in endeavour and sacrifice will strengthen the two countries' dedication to great causes and the friendship between the two peoples.

"However long the road and however exacting the sacrifice that our two peoples may be called upon to make in the future, I am certain that we shall emerge triumphant," Indira Gandhi wrote, informing India's decision to recognise Bangladesh.

Recognising the historic day, Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in March this year designated the day as Bangladesh-India "Maitri Diwas" or Friendship Day.

India's Ministry of External Affairs recently said that the Indian Council of World Affairs in New Delhi will organise a special event today.

Hasina will deliver a video message at the event, which will see participation of war veterans, diplomats, officials and academics from both countries.

"The holding of Maitri Diwas is a reflection of the deep and abiding friendship between the peoples of India and Bangladesh that has been forged in blood and shared sacrifices," the ministry said.

Apart from Bangladesh and India, the day will also be commemorated in 18 countries, including Belgium, Canada, Egypt, Indonesia, Russia, Qatar, Singapore, UK, Australia, France, Japan, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Switzerland, Thailand, UAE and USA.

Bangladesh's Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday said the joint celebration is the reflection of the will of the people and the leadership of both the countries to work together for the next fifty years and beyond, towards attaining a vision of shared prosperity and development.

Liberation War Museum Trustee Mofidul Hoque said India's formal

recognition paved the way for other countries to recognise Bangladesh.

Its support to millions of refugees, letting freedom fighters into India and training them were integral parts of its active support for Bangladesh.

"Indira Gandhi's even travelled to different countries to garner support for the independence of Bangladesh despite opposition from the US and China," he said.

"The relationship between India and Bangladesh is written in blood and therefore should continue though there may be differences on some issues... The unresolved issues, whether in trade, commerce or other aspects, need to be resolved through dialogue in amicable manner. We have to be mindful of any element that wants to hamper this friendship."

Mofidul further said major European countries fought wars for decades, but they are united today and can move from one country to another within the European Union without visas.

"Why should we [the two South Asian countries] not imagine something like that? We have the same roots in our civilization, history and culture."

Crushed by rising

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know how to strike a balance between spending and saving," he said of the fuel price hike.

Even a few months ago, he could buy enough food for a week for Tk 1,000 for his entire family. Now though, the same amount of money cannot even buy enough vegetables and soybean oil. The food cost alone has almost doubled compared to a year ago, although his income remains the same.

Like Tashdiq, people of low- and middle-income brackets are struggling to keep their noses above water at a time of slow economic growth and rising inflation, both of which are hurting them badly. The fuel price hike -- with its direct and many indirect consequences -- dealt them a crushing blow as it drove commodity prices up further.

According to the Economic Census 2013 by Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 25 percent of the country's population falls in the middle-income bracket, with their monthly earning standing between Tk 40,000 and Tk 80,000. Although income has risen by different margins in the last eight years, so has the inflation rate.

Late last year, the inflation rate was 5.56 percent, which rose to 5.7 percent in October this year, BBS data shows.

Talking to The Daily Star, people of different income groups including mid-level private service holders, small traders and daily wage earners shared their stories of hardship and desperation.

For them, a rise in inflation means cuts in consumption, delaying medical treatment and borrowing from different sources to cope with the situation.

Broadcast journalist Anupom (real name withheld) is not sure about his next move. As the revenue of his private TV channel plummeted amid the pandemic, his salary has become irregular. For the last two years, he has not received any festival bonus either.

"Sometimes we get our salary after two months. If you get your salary after two months in this time of inflation, you can understand how difficult your life can be," he said.

His wife, also a journalist at a newspaper, is trying hard to bear family expenses with her income, especially with two school-going children.

"For the last two years, we could not save much. Instead, we had to spend all our savings for my parents' treatment as they had to be hospitalised with Covid-19," said Anupom.

Those living on daily income are in utter desperation, so much so that many resorted to consumption rationing.

"Even a couple of years ago, I could afford eggs and vegetables with rice. Now, I eat only mashed potatoes and, sometimes, plain khichuri. I cannot afford fish and meat," said rickshaw-puller Rahim Sheikh, 45.

Once a solvent farmer in Gaibandha, Rahim came to Dhaka after his farm was completely damaged by a prolonged flood in 2017. At the moment, he plies his rickshaw from morning till midnight in Mohammadpur and Dhanmondi areas and makes about Tk 600 to Tk 700 a day. Of the sum, he pays Tk 150 to the rickshaw owner as rent.

Because of the hard labour involved, he cannot hit the road every day. This affects his monthly income, forcing him to cut consumption and withhold medical treatments.

"If essential prices increase like this, people like me will have to starve along with their wives and children," said Rahim.

Centre for Policy Dialogue Executive Director Dr Fahmida Khatun has blamed the government's decision to increase the fuel price for the chain reaction in the commodity market.

"Prices of all types of food and non-food commodities that need to be transported to and from different parts of the country have increased due to this increase, and this price hike has been completely arbitrary," she said.

According to her, the situation will influence market operators to increase the price of products and services that are not directly affected by the fuel price hike such as house rent and tuition fees in educational institutions.

"Such an uncontrolled price inflation will be catastrophic for the middle-income families," the noted economist said.

The pandemic has also deprived many of income. Restaurant worker Shujon Mia is one of them. He is still employed at the restaurant in Savar, but his pay has become irregular. And the recent hike in prices of daily essentials has hit him and his restaurant owner hard.

"Vegetables that could be bought at Tk 50 just months ago now cost Tk 80-100. Oil prices have already doubled and continue to rise. One cylinder of gas costs around Tk 1,700, including the carrying cost. How will we survive?" he asked, explaining how drop in sales in the restaurant affects the low-paid workers like him.

A large number of the customers there are transport workers. Following the hike in commodity prices, the restaurant revised the price list and many have stopped coming there.

"We have now been told that we would get three meals a day and a place to sleep in the restaurant. The owner stopped giving our daily allowance of Tk 200. Some of our old colleagues left the job. But I have no place to go," Shujon said.

Restaurant owner Abdul Hashem admitted this, saying, "I had no other alternative. Most of my young workers are homeless. So, they are happy to get food and shelter here."