

BBS census begins today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics is going to begin its sixth population and housing census, the first one to be conducted digitally, from today.

The programme was previously postponed thrice for coronavirus pandemic and issues related to the logistic purchase.

It will be conducted from Tuesday midnight and onwards, announced BBS at a press briefing at the National Economic Council yesterday.

"The census will begin by counting the floating people," said Dildar Hossain, project director of the census.

The authorities will collect data from each household using a digital interviewing system and a geographic information system and then update it on a tablet computer.

Around 3.65 lakh enumerators would collect data countrywide, according to the official.

"The first preliminary report will be delivered within the next three months."

If someone remains excluded from the census, he or she will be able to enroll by communicating with the local officials, he said.

Shamsul Alam, state minister for planning, said an accurately conducted census was very important for adopting any plan.

"We have taken enough measures to ensure data protection with encryption. Only BBS will have to access the data," said BBS Director General Mohammad Tajul Islam.

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The first population census was conducted in Bangladesh in 1974. Subsequently, the population and housing censuses were held again in 1981, 1991, 2001, and 2011.



An aerial view shows destroyed houses after strike in the town of Pryvillya at the eastern Ukrainian region of Donbas yesterday, amid Russian invasion of Ukraine. The cities of Severodonetsk and Lyschansk, which are separated by a river, have been targeted for weeks as the last areas still under Ukrainian control in the eastern Luhansk region.

PHOTO: AFP

BATTLE FOR SEVERODONETSK

Russia steps up efforts to cut off Ukrainian troops

Kyiv insists they are holding on; Zelensky pleads for arms

AGENCIES

Russian forces yesterday stepped up efforts to cut off Ukrainian troops in the key industrial city of Severodonetsk in the east of the country despite Ukrainians insisting they were holding on.

Moscow has laid siege for weeks to the cities of Severodonetsk and Lyschansk, which are separated by a river, as the last areas in the eastern Donbas region of Lugansk still under Ukrainian control.

The head of Severodonetsk's administration said "massive shelling" had destroyed a third bridge linking the twin cities, but insisted his city was "not isolated".

"There are communication channels even if they are quite complicated," Oleksandr Stryuk told Ukrainian television. Ukraine's "continue to defend the city" but that the situation on the ground "changes every hour," he added.

On Monday, Sergiy Gaiday, governor of Lugansk, told Radio Free Europe that Russian forces had "destroyed all the bridges and getting into the city is no longer possible. Evacuation is also not possible".

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has urged Western allies to speed arms deliveries to shore up Ukraine's ability to reclaim territory. "The human cost of this battle is very high for us. It is simply terrifying," he said.

His presidential advisor, Mikhaylo

controlling 70 to 80 percent of the city in their attempt to "encircle it".

The Russian army said yesterday it would establish a humanitarian corridor today to evacuate hundreds of civilians from the Azot chemical plant in the city of Severodonetsk.

With Russia turning the screw on Severodonetsk, Ukrainian forces have two choices: "to surrender or die", said Eduard Basurin, a representative for pro-Russian separatists.

Lyschansk resident Maksym Katerin buried his mother and stepfather in his garden on Monday after a shell ripped through his yard, killing them instantly.

"I don't know who did this, but if I knew, I would tear off their arms," he said.

Beyond the Donbas, Ukrainian officials hope that Russia's focus on capturing the east will drain its forces from other areas, paving the way for counter attacks to recapture other territory, reports Reuters.

It recaptured the area around its second largest city Kharkiv in May and has reported small but steady gains in recent days in the south, the biggest swath Russia still retains of the territory it seized after its invasion in February.

Luxury trip at a time

It's actually Sakku vs Bahar Dhaka in for a setback

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and financially unjustified in cost benefit terms."

This is even more glaring at a time when the government, on the prime minister's instruction, has introduced cost-cutting measures.

The purpose of the planned trip could have been far better achieved at nearly no cost in UGC premises itself or an appropriately rented modest venue in Dhaka foregoing expensive travels, hotel costs and per diems, Iftekharuzzaman added.

Dil Afroza Begum, acting chairman of UGC, defended the publicly funded body's decision to host the two day event in the beach town.

"We are holding the programme in Cox's Bazar as we get a 50 percent discount. We want a tranquil place. We need to speak with the VCs confidentially and face-to-face. Whenever we hold programmes in Dhaka, there are so many people -- the contents of our discussion always leak," she told The Daily Star.

Begum went on to state that the Tk 15 lakh bill for the two day event, which will see a workshop by Education Minister Dipu Moni, would be 50 percent less than what it cost for the previous editions held in Bogura, Cumilla and Bandarban.

In 2017 and 2018, the events were held in Bogura and Cumilla and it cost Tk 30 lakh each time, according to UGC officials. The following year, it was held in Bandarban, costing

the UGC Tk 25 lakh.

The signing ceremonies mostly took place in Dhaka before, said Abdul Mannan, who was the chairman of UGC from 2015 to 2019.

"Whenever you arrange a seminar, workshop or any other programme in Cox's Bazar, you bring in an element of excursion," said Mannan, who is currently a professor at the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh.

Besides, no important task can be done if all members and top officials are away from the office.

The government has taken different kinds of austerity measures. It has cancelled foreign tours of all government officials. Yes, Cox's Bazar is not a foreign country but at the end of the day, you have to calculate the cost. All expense ultimately comes from the public exchequer," he added.

EU buys 110,000 vaccine doses against monkeypox

AFP, Brussels

The European Union said yesterday it has purchased almost 110,000 vaccine doses to help tackle the monkeypox outbreak and would share them out among the bloc's members.

The jabs, made by Danish firm Bavarian Nordic, are currently authorised for use in the EU against smallpox, but officials say they will also work against the monkeypox virus.

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Rifat as he wants total supremacy in the city," said Billal Hossain, an owner of a shop in the town.

"So, the battle is between Bahar and Sakku," he added.

Though voters are less interested in the polling, they said the unusual calm before the election could be a sign of possible violence on the polling day.

"All the contenders are desperate to win the polls and many outsiders are roaming the city areas. That could be the reason for the unusual calmness before the election," Mamun Yusuf, a voter in Pathuria Para area, told The Daily Star.

"People this time are not very interested in voting. We will see what happens in the morning. If we find the situation is good, only then we will go to cast votes," he said last night.

Today's election is significant also because all political parties and analysts are waiting to see how the EC led by Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibul Awal performs and if it can ensure fairness in its first major polls.

This commission only has the experience of holding union parishad elections.

Except for Rifat, both Sakku and Kaiser have already said the commission in its first big assignment has failed to

create a level playing field. The CEC, on the other hand, expressed helplessness about the issue involving Bahar, saying the Election Commission cannot do anything against a lawmaker if he "dishonours" its directives.

Another major feature of the polls is that the EC will use electronic voting machines (EVMs) in all 105 polling centres today -- after a fresh debate surfaced of late centring on the voting system, strongly opposed by the BNP.

A total of 229,920 voters, including 117,092 women, are eligible to exercise their franchise during the polling, which will start at 8:00am and continue till 4:00pm without any interval.

Five candidates, including Rashedul Islam from Islami Andolok Bangladesh and independent Kamrul Ahsan Babul, are vying for mayor while 106 for councillor posts and 36 for reserved posts.

Law enforcement agencies have taken tight security measures in the city, deploying some 3,608 police personnel for the polls.

As there was no campaign last night, the mayoral contenders were busy fixing the last-minute election strategy including polling agent appointments.

Both Rifat and Sakku stayed in their homes.

Talking to The Daily Star, both the contenders reiterated that free and fair polls will ensure their victory and they will accept the result whatever it may be.

Sakku said they got information from various sources that the ruling party contender is bringing outsiders to the city and planning to gather them in every polling centre. "If voters are scared of going to polling centres, how fair the voting could be?" he questioned.

Kaiser held a press conference and demanded the commission announce a general holiday in the area. "If offices remain open, the turnout will be low -- this will give an advantage to the ruling party candidate," he said.

Talking to this newspaper, Returning Officer Shahedunnabi Chowdhury said, "Election atmosphere is very good and they hope voting will take place amid festivity."

Regarding EVM, he said enough training was given to the election officials and there is an arrangement for extra EVMs if needed in any centre.

Faruk Ahmed, superintendent of police of Cumilla, said stern action would be taken if any law enforcer is found engaged in irregularities during the voting.

"We will not accept any chaos or irregularities centring on the voting," he warned.

Faruque further said, "Garment export will be affected badly. The trade cost has already gone up significantly because of the volatile global economic situation."

The WTO member countries, however, agreed to extend some support to the graduating LDCs, said Mustafizur who attended the conference.

Talking to this newspaper, Faruque Hassan, president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, said Bangladesh needs the continuation of LDC benefits because of the impacts of lingering Covid pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine war, persisting higher inflation and high commodity prices.

The country has become a manufacturing hub, particularly for garment items, on the back of trade benefits, he noted.

Now, Bangladesh enjoys duty benefits from 38 countries under the Generalised System of Preferences. Of the receipts, 74 percent is covered by the benefits granted to LDCs.

Hasina will take group photos with everyone involved in its construction. From common workers to ministers, no one will be left out of the photos," Alam said, adding that the group photos will be displayed in the museums and their names will be etched on a wall.

Bangladesh is scheduled to officially become a developing country in 2026 as the UN committee recommended that the country should get five years, instead of three, to prepare for the transition due to the pandemic's impact on its economy. The UN included Bangladesh in the LDC group in 1975. Twenty-six countries are waiting to be graduated from the LDC group to the category of developing nations. LDCs benefit from a number of dedicated international support measures in the areas of trade, official development assistance and others, including travel support to UN meetings and reduced budgetary contributions to international organisations.

Upon graduation, the countries no longer benefit from these support measures. But the vast majority of development partners, however, continue to support countries even after they have graduated, according to the LDC portal of the UN.

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13 sent to jail for attacking police

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

At least 13 BNP leaders and activists were sent to jail yesterday in a case filed against 342 people in connection with BNP's attack on police in Burguna's Amtali on Monday.

The case, filed on the same day the attack took place, mentioned the names of 32 people while the rest were made unknown accused.

The 13 arrested were produced before a court, which sent them to jail yesterday.

According to police, Amtali's BNP and its affiliates organised a demonstration in front of the party office at AK High School area in the afternoon as part of a central programme to protest the price hike of commodities.

After the meeting, they attempted to bring out a procession on the Patuakhali-Kuakata road but police obstructed them. The BNP men then clashed with the law enforcers, which left SI Dadan Mia, SI Shahidul Alam Hawlader, ASI Kamala Uddin Mia, ASI Sohrab and Sepoy Kabir Khan injured.

Amali police's SI Yunus Ali filed a case around at 8:30. The 32 named accused included Amtali BNP president Jalal Uddin Fakir, who has been arrested and sent to jail, and its secretary Zahirul Islam Mamun.

2 land in jail for 'hurting religious sentiments'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

A Gopalganj court yesterday sent two people to jail on charges of hurting religious sentiments.

The accused are Ajoy Baida, 34, son of Alam Baida of Bahir Simul village in Kotalipara upazila; and Subal Bala, 40, son of Soshi Chandra Bala of Baroi Bhita village in the same upazila.

Tushar Madhu, chairman of Kandi Union Parishad, said, "Ajoy, a grocery shop owner at Baroi Bhita bazar, made a post hurting religious sentiments on his Facebook profile on Monday evening.

"Seeing the post, an agitated mob gathered in front of his shop. Subal Bala spoke in favour of Ajoy and then the mob turned against him too.

We informed police and had the two detained."

Md Abdul Karim, sub inspector of Kotalipara Police Station said, "On information, we rushed to the shop and detained Ajoy and Subal. After that the situation was brought under control, police produced them before a court, which sent them to jail yesterday."

Schoolboy dies while taking selfie on train

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A 10th grader died yesterday after falling while taking selfies at the gate of a moving train at the Chaudanga railway station on Monday evening.

Rohan Hossain, 16, was the son of Raihan Uddin, a CNG driver, and Rehana, an expatriate in Kuwait. His family said the Naksikhan Express to go from Goalanda to his home in Uthali.

SI Sohel Ahmed, of Poradah's GRP, quoting witnesses, said Rohan was standing at the door taking selfies while the train was moving. When the it was crossing Belgachhi, they saw Rohan fall off.

He was taken to Chaudanga Sadar Hospital by locals and was referred to Dhaka. On the way there, his condition got critical and he had to be rushed to the nearby Jhenidah Sadar Hospital, where he was declared dead.

Mahabubur Rahman, OC of Chaudanga Sadar Police, said the body was sent back to the family after necessary procedures upon their request.