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FLOOD IN SYLHET, NETRAKONA

# Death toll now 22

Man dies after being injured while collecting relief

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The ongoing flood in the northwest has so far claimed at least 22 lives in Sylhet and Netrakona, with the death toll expected to go up as information from remote areas is coming to the authorities belatedly.

"Due to the power cut-off and mobile network issues, we were not getting any news of fatalities before. Now, the information is reaching us, so the death toll might be higher," said Himangshu Lal Roy, director of Sylhet Divisional Health Office.

The deaths are due to drowning, landslides, electrocution and snake bites.

So far, the authorities were informed of 20 deaths and heard the news of two more dead bodies found in Jaintiapur, Roy said.

Of the 20 deaths related to the flood situation, 12 are from Sylhet, five from Sunamganj and three from Moulvibazar.

Yesterday, the dead bodies of Nazmum Nesa and her son Abdur Rahman were recovered by Police from Sylhet's Jaintiapur upazila. They went missing after being washed away by the strong current on floodwater on Friday.

Over in Sylhet, Biplob Mia, a resident of Ujan Tahirpur village, who was injured on Monday while trying to collect relief dropped from an Air Force helicopter died yesterday at Jalalabad Ragib-Rabeya Medical College and

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5



Politicians of the ruling Awami League illegally pasting PVC-made banners and placards across the streets in the capital's Shyamoli ahead of the party's council at a ward. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

## 874 new Covid cases, positivity rate over 11pc

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The number of coronavirus cases is going up with the rising trend of the infection rate.

A total of 7,487 cases were recorded in the last three months till yesterday, according to the Directorate General of Health Services.

Of those, 3,669 cases were recorded in the last seven days only.

At least 874 new Covid-19 cases were recorded in 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, read a DGHS press release.

One person died from Covid-19 during the period, raising the total death toll to 29,133.

The Covid-19 death rate is 1.49 percent now.

The current positivity rate is 11.03 percent while the total positivity rate stands at 13.75 percent.

Meanwhile, with the new infections, the total number of cases rose to 1,958,074, added the release.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

## EARNING TRUST OVER EVM EC initiative suffers setback BNP, 4 other parties opt out

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The Election Commission's initiative to earn political parties' trust over Electronic Voting Machines sustained a blow as five parties, including the BNP, skipped its views-exchange meeting yesterday.

The EC invited 13 political parties to join the second round of the meeting at its office in the capital.

Apart from the BNP, four other political parties that did not attend the event are: Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD-Rab), Bangladesh Kalyan Party, Islami Andolan Bangladesh, and Bangladesh Muslim League.

JSD is a component of the Jatiya Oikya Front that also includes the BNP. Kalyan Party is also a part of BNP-led 20-party combine.

Contacted, BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi said there was no question of joining the views-exchange meeting. "It is an illegal Election Commission and they are doing nothing but carrying out the instructions of the government."

JSD leaders said they did not participate in the meeting because attending such events would be "meaningless and unnecessary."

In a statement, the party said people believe that the EVM is a reliable machine for "digital manipulation" to keep the government in power.

"It would not be appropriate to use EVMs in the elections of Bangladesh, and people will not accept this decision," it added.

Election Commissioner Brig Gen (retd) Ahsan Habib Khan told The Daily Star that they invited all political parties so that they can clear their confusion, if any, by

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

## Tourist boats now turned into vessels for relief

e-Tourism Association of Bangladesh stands beside the flood victims with its 50 boats

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The houseboats that set sail on the wetlands every monsoon for dreamy holidays in the country's haors are now housing people, whose homes have been flooded, and delivering aid to those marooned.

Throughout the year Anirban Boat plies the rivers of Khulna. When Sunamganj was flooded in May, the boat set sail from the south, taking five days to travel cross-country and reach the inundated north.

"We started our rescue operations last Wednesday and for the first three days we were rescuing people from flooded homes and taking them to shelters," said Joydeb Kumar Bhadra, an additional deputy inspector general of police.

In normal times, the boat's business funds a library which

was founded by Bhadra in Khulna's Paikgachha.

Currently the boat is being used for free by those attached with relief work.

An organisation called e-Tourism Association of Bangladesh has a fleet of around 50 boats.

The day the floods hit was a full moon night and the boats were all tucked away in remote corners of the haors carrying tourists.

As floods inundated far-flung homes, these boats became the first responders rescuing the locals.

"Our boats were already at the furthest points, so naturally it was easier for us to carry out rescue operations. Our boats have housed as many as 2,500 people," said Imranul Alam, a coordinator of the association. "Each boat is housing between 70 to 100 people." Alam

was speaking on his way to Sunamganj on a boat.

"I was in the Sundarbans with a tour boat when disaster struck. So, we set sail for the haors, picking up relief materials on the way. We have already spent four nights on the water. We are currently in Bhairab," said Alam.

All the boats are housing and feeding people on a voluntary basis, strictly depending on donations. Each of the tourism agencies that are a part of e-Tourism Association of Bangladesh run travel groups on Facebook to promote travelling and arrange tours. These groups are now being mobilised for donations.

"We have raised around Tk 20 lakh from members, and a further Tk 20 lakh from external sources," said Imranul.

Popular social media influencer Barrister Syed Sayedul Haque Suman announced on his Facebook page that he has raised Tk 97 lakh in just 48 hours. "This was the figure in the morning, and I am sure that the donated amount has crossed Tk 1 crore

SEE PAGE 6 COL 7



## PADMA BRIDGE PM opens two police stations

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday directed police to grow as the last resort of the people who seek protection for their lives and dignity.

"In our country, the police will also have to acquire public confidence so the people think the force as their last resort in protecting their lives and dignity. The people can get their shelter," she said.

She made the comments while joining a function of Bangladesh Police through a videoconference from the Gono Bhaban.

During the function, the premier opened five projects of Bangladesh Police, including two newly constructed police stations — Padma Setu Uttar Thana and Padma Setu Dakkhin Thana — on the two sides of the much-desired Padma Bridge.

Hasina also asked police to stay vigilant against different social diseases and crimes to maintain a peaceful environment in the country.

Noting that the police drive against militancy and terrorism has been a success, she said the drives should continue.

She said police were playing a significant role to check drug abuse, cybercrimes, money laundering, spreading rumours, human trafficking and other offences, which are very harmful to the people and the country.

Referring to recent communal incidents, the PM said police played an excellent role in thwarting a bid to destroy communal harmony, intercepted the perpetrators promptly and showed their excellent efficiency.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 7

## Remand for Halder extended by 14 days

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

A special court in Kolkata yesterday extended the judicial custody of Prashanta Kumar Halder by 14 more days in connection with a case of money laundering in India.

More time is required for questioning Halder and confronting him with evidence to get to the bottom of the wide network of properties amassed in India after sneaking in from Bangladesh in 2019, said India's Enforcement

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5



People remove debris of a building destroyed by a missile strike, as Russia's attack on Ukraine continues, in the town of Liuboty, in Kharkiv region, on Monday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## 12-yr-old found dead in school hostel

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

A 12-year-old boy was found dead at a hostel in Suparibagan area of Tangail town on Monday evening.

The dead, Shihab Hossain, son of expat Ilias Hossain of Sakhipur upazila, was a student of Sristy School.

His family alleged he was murdered and blamed the school authorities for it.

They, however, claimed Shihab was found hanging from the shower of the hostel's seventh floor washroom.

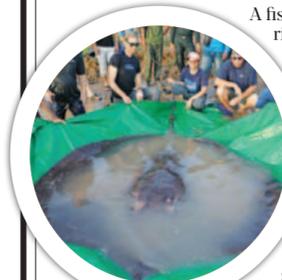
The authorities rushed him to Tangail General Hospital, where he was declared dead.

Speaking to reporters at

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

## 'World's biggest' freshwater fish captured

AFP, Phnom Penh



A fisherman on the Mekong river in Cambodia has hooked the biggest freshwater fish ever recorded, scientists said — a 300-kilogram stingray.

The giant freshwater stingray, which measured four metres (13 feet) from snout to tail, was caught last week and released back into the wild after being fitted with a tag to track its behaviour.

The monstrous bottom-dweller beat the previous record for biggest recorded freshwater fish, held by a 293-kilo (646-pound) Mekong giant catfish caught in Thailand in 2005, the US-funded Wonders of the Mekong research project said.