



An aerial view of the houses submerged in water from the overflowing Jamuna river at Khatiyamari char under Chaluabari union of Bogura's Sariakandi upazila. Twenty-five thousand people have been stranded by the floods in the union, and over the last week about 100 houses have been washed away, according to local administration. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: MOSTAFA SHABUJ

1,135 new Covid cases recorded

Doctor dies; coronavirus sub-variant found in Jashore

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The number of daily Covid-19 cases in the country crossed 1,000 mark after nearly four months, with 1,135 new cases reported in 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday.

On February 25, the country logged 1,409 cases and 11 deaths.

Besides, another Covid-related death was recorded during the 24-hour period.

The daily positivity rate rose to 13.30 percent yesterday, up from 11.03 percent on Tuesday, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

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Lysychansk under 'massive' bombardment

Ukrainian drone strikes oil refinery inside Russia

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"Massive" Russian bombardment of the strategic eastern city of Lysychansk and key city Severodonetsk has been "hell" for soldiers there, Kyiv said, while insisting that defenders would hold "as long as necessary".

Moscow's troops have been pummeling eastern Ukraine for weeks and are slowly advancing, despite fierce resistance from the outgunned Ukrainian military.

With President Vladimir Putin's forces tightening their grip on the strategically important city

of Severodonetsk in the Donbas, its twin city of Lysychansk is now coming under heavier bombardment.

"The Russian army is massively shelling Lysychansk," Sergiy Gaiday, governor of the Lugansk region, which includes both cities, wrote on Telegram.

"They are just destroying everything there... They destroyed buildings and unfortunately there are casualties."

He later wrote that "it's just hell out there" after four months of shelling in Severodonetsk, across

the Donets river -- while adding that "our boys are holding their positions and will continue to hold on as long as necessary".

Russian forces have been occupying villages in the area, and taking control of the two cities would give Moscow control of the whole of Lugansk, allowing them to press further into the Donbas, reports AFP.

On the Russian side, authorities in the Ukraine-bordering Rostov region said yesterday that a fire at an oil refinery might have been caused by a Ukrainian drone strike.

ADB okays \$41.4m grant for Rohingyas

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Asian Development Bank yesterday approved a \$41.4 million grant to help improve infrastructure and manage the basic needs of Rohingyas sheltered in Bangladesh.

With the grant, 200 water and sanitation facilities will be built and a piped water supply system will be established in Ukhiya of Cox's Bazar, the ADB said in a press release.

It will, among others, upgrade four health care facilities for severe acute respiratory infection, expand six primary health care and diagnostic centres in Teknaf and improve skills of healthcare workers in the district.

To strengthen disaster resilience and help protect displaced persons, six school-cum-cyclone shelters in local primary schools and one multipurpose cyclone shelter, which will also function as a Covid-19 isolation centre, will be constructed.

Besides, about 13 kilometres of rural access roads leading to the camp facilities will be upgraded.

SSC, equivalent exams likely after Eid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Already postponed multiple times due to floods and coronavirus, this year's SSC and its equivalent Dakhil exams may take place after the Eid-ul-Azha.

Because of the delay in holding the SSC exams, the HSC and its equivalent Alim exams may be delayed too, said top officials of the Secondary and Higher Education Division yesterday.

On June 17, the authorities postponed the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and its equivalent exams for an indefinite period as the floods in the country's northeast worsened.

The exams were scheduled to be held from June 19 to July 6.

Earlier, it was deferred by about four months because of the coronavirus pandemic. Usually, the SSC exams take place in February.

DSA case: BNP leader Alal gets anticipatory bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday granted six weeks' anticipatory bail to BNP Joint Secretary General Syed Moazzem Hossain Alal in a case filed under the Digital Security Act for making derogatory comments about Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

The HC also directed Alal to surrender before the trial court in six weeks.

The bench of Justice Jahangir Hossain Selim and Justice Shahed Nuruddin passed the order.

Saiful Islam, president of Khulna Sadar Thana Awami League, lodged the case against Alal on December 13 last year over making derogatory remarks on Hasina at a meeting in Khulna on October 1.

Footage of the BNP leader making the comments went viral on social media.

A week on, relief still elusive

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shelter on the embankment along the Jamuna.

"We do not know where to go and no assistance has reached us," said Jorina Begum of Konabari village of the district's Bhuapur upazila.

Rafiqul Islam, president of Moulvibazar's Kulaura upazila Awami League, said, "While visiting a shelter at Bhukshimoil union, I learned that around 40 families in the centre were going hungry for the last three days as they last received some dry food before that. I urge

the government to allocate more for the flood-affected people."

While thousands of people are in dire need of relief, the local administration, even with the army's help, is struggling to reach remote areas due to adverse conditions.

Karim Mahmud Limon, a social worker of Purba Jafong union in Sylhet's Gowainghat upazila, said, "There are many villages in the upazila where no government and private relief reached. Hundreds of local youths are working

round the clock with the help of solvent people, but we have barely reached 10 percent of the flood victims."

Kabir Ahmed, a member of Companiganj upazila in Sylhet, said, "The villages located farthest from the main roads are suffering the most. For around 4,000 people in three villages in my ward, I received only 70 sacks of food aid and one tonne of rice, which is woefully inadequate. Relief from private organisations is also not reaching us as this area is remote."

Major AWM Hasibul Hasanof Sylhet region of Bangladesh Army said, "Strong current, excessive rain and the risk of losing navigability hampered relief works in the early days of flooding in Sylhet and Sunamganj. Now, as the water level has reduced in some parts, we are reaching the farthest areas with relief." [Moudud Ahmed Sujon, Dwaha Chowdhury, Mintu Deshwara, Mirza Shakil, Humayun Kabir, S Dilip Roy and Mostafa Shabuj contributed to this report]

Padma Bridge a symbol of nat'l pride

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the design to keep the scope for river vessel movement under its 37 spans, incorporating steel structures instead of concrete ones and enhancing the depth of the piling works.

The rise in the cost for rehabilitation of the people who lost land to the project and compensation against acquired land are also among other reasons.

The PM said her government takes up every project following proper assessment of the returns. Though the World Bank cancelled its funding for the Padma Bridge project, Bangladesh has been able to get the fund back for other projects, she added.

Lambasting those who criticised the government for construction of the bridge with own funds, Hasina said they have a lack of self-confidence. "But I am the daughter of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. I say what I can do. Inshallah, I must do what I say."

Responding to a question over the construction of a second Padma bridge between Manikganj and Rajbari, the PM said its necessity must be assessed first.

Regarding the possibility of lodging a case against the conspirators over cancellation of the WB funding for Padma Bridge, she said, "Time will say what to do."

About launching an investigation against Prof Muhammad Yunus over donating \$6 million to a foundation (Clinton Foundation), the PM said, "You journalists can carry out the investigation as you are doing such kinds of work."

She said if she started the probe, journalists would say the investigation was being done out of vengeance.

"We have 54 private banks and they have managing directors. How many MDs have the financial capacity to donate such a huge amount of money to a foundation? So, it will be better to get the matter investigated by the

journalists."

The PM said she has more information about how much money Prof Yunus has in banks and how much money is being laundered by him.

Hasina, also the Awami League president, said she does not want to stay in power snatching people's votes.

She said she is the person who has been outspoken against military dictators, has carried out movements, embraced jail, repression, and faced bomb and grenade attacks. "The development of the country has been possible as I am able to protect democracy and maintain its continuation."

She urged all to see the changes in the country since 2009.

The premier said, "Is there not a single qualified leader of the BNP in Bangladesh so that they can make him the party chairman?"

Turning to the flood situation in the country's northeast, the PM said the government will construct bridges and culverts at all

the identified points of roads for the drainage of flood water in order to prevent such calamities in future.

Noting that the flood has affected 11 districts, Hasina said the flood water was channeled smoothly after cutting roads at different points at her directive.

"I will construct bridges or culverts at those points where the roads were cut or damaged so that water does not get stagnant there anymore in future."

The PM said the government has taken timely measures to ease the sufferings of the flood-affected people.

She said she has also directed the authorities to take steps to face the post-flood situation, particularly to prevent post-flood diseases and to boost crop production.

Senior Awami League leader Amir Hossain Amu, Information and Broadcasting Minister Hasan Mahmud, and PM's Principal Secretary Ahmad Kaikaus were present, among others.



A fire from a gas processing plant continues to burn behind a field of wheat after the plant was hit by shelling a few days prior in Andriivka in the Kharkiv region as Russia's attack on Ukraine continues in Ukraine.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Earthquake kills 1,000 in Afghanistan

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international assistance because of sanctions.

Shaking was felt by about 119 million people in Pakistan, Afghanistan and India, the EMSC said on Twitter, but there were no immediate reports of damage or casualties in Pakistan.

The EMSC put the earthquake's magnitude at 6.1, though the USGC said it was 5.9.

Adding to the challenge for Afghan authorities is recent flooding in many regions, which the disaster agency said had killed 11,

injured 50 and blocked stretches of highway.

The disaster comes as Afghanistan grapples with a severe economic crisis since the Taliban took over as US-led international forces withdrew following two decades of war.

In response to the Taliban takeover, many nations imposed sanctions on Afghanistan's banking sector and cut billions of dollars worth of development aid.

Humanitarian aid has continued, however, with international agencies, such as the United Nations,

operating.

The United Nations' humanitarian agency said it was scrambling to get emergency shelter, trauma care and food aid to the scene of the deadly earthquake, reports AFP.

Unicef, the UN children's agency, has also deployed at least 12 teams of health workers to Gayan, and several mobile health and nutrition teams to Barmal district in Paktika province and Spera district in Khost province, OCHA said.

A foreign ministry spokesman said the Taliban would welcome

international help. Neighbouring Pakistan said it was working to extend assistance.

Large parts of South Asia are seismically active because a tectonic plate known as the Indian plate is pushing north into the Eurasian plate.

In 2015, an earthquake struck the remote Afghan northeast, killing several hundred people in Afghanistan and nearby northern Pakistan.

In January, an earthquake struck western Afghanistan, killing more than 20 people.