

## 19 dead after bus catches fire in Rajasthan

REUTERS

At least 19 people died yesterday afternoon when a private bus in the western Indian state of Rajasthan caught fire, Indian broadcaster NDTV said, citing the police.

The bus was travelling from Jaisalmer to Jodhpur with 57 passengers on board when smoke emerged from the rear of the vehicle. The driver stopped the bus along the side of the road, but flames engulfed the vehicle within moments, NDTV reported.

The police believe that a short circuit caused the fire, the report added.

Fifteen passengers, including two children, sustained serious burn injuries, with some suffering up to 70% burns, NDTV said.

Reuters could not independently verify details of the report. Rajasthan's police did not immediately respond to Reuters' request for comment.

"Distressed by the loss of lives due to a mishap in Jaisalmer, Rajasthan. My thoughts are with the affected people and their families during this difficult time," Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in an X post.



Election materials are being transported to polling stations as the Chittagong University Central Students' Union (Cucusu) and hall unions go to polls today. The photo was taken in front of the Cucusu building yesterday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

## 80 South Koreans missing in Cambodia scam centre row: Seoul

AFP, Seoul

Eighty South Koreans who were possible victims of fake jobs or scam centres were unaccounted for in Cambodia, South Korea's foreign ministry told AFP yesterday, after the torture death of a student there shocked the country.

Between January and August this year, 330 South Koreans were reported to have gone missing or been held against their will after entering Cambodia, a foreign ministry official said.

As of August, "the safety of about 80 people has yet to be verified", the official added.

The ministry said it was cross-checking the figures with police data at home to avoid overlap.

The number of abduction cases involving South Koreans in Cambodia has surged dramatically, rising fifteenfold from 2023, lawmaker Yoon Hukduk said during a parliamentary hearing.

South Korean President Lee Jae Myung said the recent kidnappings in Cambodia were causing "significant harm to South Koreans", and urged immediate government action.

"The numbers are not small, and many of our citizens are deeply concerned about their family members, friends and neighbours who have been detained in Cambodia," Lee said in a cabinet meeting.

The presidential office said it would dispatch a joint response team to Cambodia on Wednesday, led by the second vice foreign minister.

## Toxic blaze at warehouse, RMG unit claims 16 lives Cucsu polls return today

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Three of the injured — Mamun, 35, Sohel, 32, and Suruj, 30 — were admitted to the National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery. They were rescued unconscious around 2:45pm and taken to the emergency unit, said Shaon Bin Rahman, resident surgeon.

Relatives rushed between the site and nearby hospitals in desperate search for their loved ones. Many broke down in tears, holding photos of the missing.

Fire service, police, and army personnel cordoned off the site, preventing anyone from entering. Around 5:00pm, a fresh line of ambulances entered the site, worrying relatives of the missing.

Newly married Md Joy, 22, and Marzia Sultana Alo, 18, workers at the RMG unit, are among the missing.

Amanullah was searching for his cousin Anwar Islam, 21, a helper at the RMG washing unit, holding a photo.

Another person was looking for Asma Akter, 14, who worked at the unit.

One Shakil Ahmed held a photo while searching for his cousin Khalid Hasan, 32, a storekeeper at the RMG factory unit.

From the condition of the site and the burnt materials, initial signs indicated a rapid flashover — the sudden ignition of all combustible materials — which spread through the building, said the fire service.

Citing initial findings, Lt Col Tajul said, "We suspect the fire began with a chemical explosion that released highly toxic gas. Many people managed to escape, but those trapped between the first and second floors might have died instantly after inhaling the toxic fumes."

"The roof was made of tin and thatched materials, and the rooftop exit was locked with two padlocks. They could not go up, and because of the toxic gas and the flashover caused by the chemical explosion, they became unconscious and died instantly," he said.

He said the fire service was not allowing anyone, even firefighters, to enter the chemical warehouse since the site became very risky.

A total of 12 fire engines were at the site. "The fire in the garment [factory] section has been brought under control, but the fire inside the chemical warehouse is still burning," Tajul said around 7:00pm.

The fire service was using ground monitors and drones. "The process of neutralising the chemicals is not yet complete. We urge everyone to maintain a minimum distance of 300 yards from the site," Tajul said in the evening.

He also said the fire service learnt that the facility was known as Alam Chemical Factory, but the authorities have not been able to contact the owner, manager, or any employees. "Police and army personnel are trying to locate them."

Neither the garment factory unit nor the chemical warehouse had any fire safety licence, fire safety plan, licence, and proper fire protection measures, Tajul said.

Locals told the authorities that six to seven types of chemicals were stored in the warehouse, including bleaching powder, meta potash, enzymes, salt, and hydrogen peroxide.

The Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments (DIFE) formed a five-member committee to investigate the fire, Atiqur Rahman, deputy inspector general of DIFE, told The Daily Star.

Led by Md Matiur Rahaman, joint inspector general (safety wing) of

DIFE, the committee has been asked to submit its report within seven working days.

This correspondent found numerous small factories along narrow lanes in the area. Locals said most factories employ 30–40 workers and mainly operate on subcontracts.

The BNP and the Jamaat-e-Islami separately announced Tk 1,00,000 financial assistance for the family of each deceased victim.

Brig Gen Muhammad Jahed Kamal, director general of the fire service, blamed unauthorised chemical warehouses and structural irregularities for the devastating fire, saying such negligence continues to cost lives despite repeated warnings.

"I want to appeal to you all: let us be a little more aware," he said while visiting the spot.

At 11:40pm, he said smoke was still billowing from the warehouse. The fire service will bring a team from BUET to assess and help take the next steps.

"The fire is under control but we cannot declare it extinguished; because this is a chemical fire it will take time. It will not be put out as quickly as ordinary fires."

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The university administration has arranged special shuttle train trips and additional buses to help students who live in the city reach the campus, located about 22 kilometres from the city, near Hathazari upazila.

Out of the university's 14 entry gates, seven will remain closed on election day. Students can enter only by showing their identity cards. To prevent outsiders from entering the campus, security arrangements have been made at 24 points.

"Managing such a large election has been a new experience for the teachers and administration," said Ali R Raji, assistant professor at the university's journalism department.

Transparent ballot boxes and ballot papers have been prepared, said Monir Uddin, the chief election commissioner.

Enough time has been allocated for voters and all secret voting rooms will be under CCTV monitoring, he said, adding that the footage will be stored even if the electricity goes out.

Meanwhile, the Election Commission has fined the Islami Chhatra Shibir-backed panel 'Sompriti Shikharthir Jote' Tk 20,000 for violating the code of conduct. Activists of the panel used loudspeakers inside classrooms for campaigning.

So far, nearly 20 complaints about code of conduct violations have been submitted to the Election Commission office and several candidates and panels were warned after reviewing the complaints.

"Several punitive measures have been taken, but we are not making them public for now," said Amir Mohammad Nasrullah, head of the code of conduct committee.

The details will be shared after the election, he said.

"The preparations seem fair and well-organised," Raji said.

## Some advisers trying to turn admin partisan

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He went on to urge the government to appoint honest and neutral people to the important positions.

"I want to give you time to correct yourselves. If you do not heed the warning in time, we will make the names public."

He expressed doubts about the fairness of the upcoming national election.

He also criticised the appointment of a secretary to the public administration ministry.

"A person with a long record of corruption has been appointed there. He is fully loyal to a particular party

and previously held various posts in its student and political wings. We can see that four to five advisers are controlling all appointments, in favour of one particular party..."

He reiterated his demand for a referendum by November.

"Some are trying to twist it by saying the referendum and the national election should be held together," Taher added.

From the Shapla Chattar demonstration, Islami Andolan's Joint Secretary General Maulana Gazi Ataur Rahman demanded holding a referendum on the July Charter before the announcement of the election

schedule.

"Otherwise, implementation of the July Charter may face obstacles, and even the national election could become uncertain," he said.

Meanwhile, leaders and activists of Bangladesh Khelafat Majlish took positions at Dainik Bangla, Jatrabari, Asad Gate and Technical Intersections.

Speaking from Dainik Bangla intersection, the party's Secretary General Maulana Jalal Uddin Ahmad said: "The July Charter will form the basis of national unity. Its prompt implementation is necessary. If people's demands are ignored, we will be compelled to launch a tougher

movement."

Bangladesh Nezam-e-Islam Party leaders held their programme at the north gate of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque.

From there, Secretary General Maulana Musa Bin Izzar and others warned that if there was any delay in holding the referendum or in granting the July Charter a legal basis, the movement would "take a new turn".

Khelafat Majlish also held a human chain at Purana Paltan intersection, while Bangladesh Khelafat Andolan activists took position at Shahbagh intersection.

## Some critical antibiotics now show 79-97% resistance

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increasing the risk of disease spread, severe illness, disability and death, according to the World Health Organization.

Health experts say higher AMR rates can lead to more critical illnesses, prolonged hospital stays, increased treatment failures, greater surgical and medical risks, and ultimately higher mortality.

They warn it would also drive up treatment costs, increase the burden on healthcare systems, and reduce productivity.

"The latest WHO report echoes concerns highlighted in previous AMR

poor sanitation are all blamed for the situation.

Prof Halimur Rashid, the immediate past line director of the Communicable Disease Control (CDC) unit at the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), said the AMR situation has become very alarming due to the indiscriminate use of antibiotics, which can be easily bought from any pharmacy without prescription.

He added that under the Drug and Cosmetic Act 2023, selling antibiotics without a prescription is strictly prohibited, but the law is rarely fully enforced for a lack of manpower and

for four types of infections — bloodstream, gastrointestinal, urinary tract, and urogenital — and assesses the effectiveness of seven antibiotics used to treat these infections.

The drugs are: Imipenem, Cefotaxime, Cephalosporins, Ciprofloxacin, Methicillin, Penicillin G and Ceftriaxone. However, Bangladesh data regarding Penicillin G and Ceftriaxone was not available.

WHO classifies antibiotics into three categories — Access, Watch, and Reserve — to guide their appropriate use and combat antimicrobial resistance. Antibiotics under Access

79.9 percent resistance in treating bloodstream infections caused by E. coli, while third-generation Cephalosporins exhibit 88.1 percent resistance against the same infection by the same pathogen.

Cefotaxime shows 87 percent resistance in treating bloodstream infections caused by Klebsiella pneumoniae, while Imipenem shows 51.1 percent resistance against the same infections, the report shows.

Ciprofloxacin shows 89.1 percent resistance in treating gastrointestinal infections (that attacks digestive system) caused by Shigella spp while Cefotaxime shows 64.7 percent

Infection	Acinetobacter	Bloodstream				Gastrointestinal	
Pathogen	Spp.	E. coli		K. pneumoniae	S. aureus	Shigella spp	
Drug	Imipenem	Cefotaxime	Cephalosporins	Cephalosporins	Cefotaxime	Methicillin	Ciprofloxacin
Resistance	96.6%	79.9%	88.1%	88.1%	87%	79%	89.1%

reports released by icddr,b and other government agencies. "This is deeply alarming," Dr Gazi Md Salahuddin Mamun, an assistant scientist at the AMR Research Unit at icddr,b, told The Daily Star.

He said the findings of the WHO report are similar to those of an icddr,b AMR study, which monitored patients in hospital Intensive Care Units between July 2023 and January 2024.

Mamun said over-prescribing and overuse of antibiotics, patients not completing their antibiotic courses, overuse of antibiotics in livestock and fish farming, poor infection control in hospitals, lack of hygiene, and

other challenges.

"The situation will become even more alarming if we fail to stop the indiscriminate use of antibiotics," he told this paper yesterday.

**AMR SITUATION IN BANGLADESH**  
WHO began monitoring AMR in 2015, and released its latest global surveillance report on Monday, based on over 23 million bacteriologically confirmed infections reported by 104 countries, including Bangladesh.

The previous report, published in 2022, did not include data from Bangladesh. The latest report presents WHO's infection data for 2023.

It covers 16 pathogens responsible

group should be widely available and used as first- or second-line treatments for common infections.

Antibiotics under Watch group use should be monitored and restricted to specific indications while antibiotic under reserve is the last-resort antibiotics for treating infection caused by multi-drug-resistant organisms.

Of the seven drugs mentioned above, six are from Watch group while Penicillin from Access group.

These drugs show 79 to 96.6 percent resistance in dealing infection caused by five types of pathogens, shows the report.

For example, Cefotaxime shows

resistance in treating urinary tract infection caused by E. coli.

In treating at least five pathogens, resistance levels of some of these drugs in Bangladesh are among the highest of 11 South-East Asian countries, the report shows.

All these pathogens can be treated with several drugs, five of which have developed at least 79-97 percent resistance.

For other pathogens, Bangladesh ranks between the second and fifth highest in terms of drug resistance.

At least five pathogens have developed resistance between 16 and 30 percent three pathogens between 51 and 65 percent resistance.

## 'Jamaat shadow over EC's polls plan'

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"If Jamaat-linked officials remain on election duty, they may try to rig votes or influence the process," said a Standing Committee member.

The meeting decided that Standing Committee members Abdul Moyeen Khan and Nazrul Islam Khan will meet the EC soon.

BNP leaders said the team will formally seek appointments and submit specific complaints about partisan officials.

The leaders said during past elections, the Awami League did not rig votes through politicians but "used government officials on election duty". The party fears a repeat of such tactics.

One Standing Committee member who was present at the meeting said, "Already, a large number of officials, including DCs, SPs and UNOs, have Jamaat connections."

"I've heard that around 4,000 officials from Islami Bank will work as presiding officers. These are the concerns."

The EC plans to finalise the panel of polling officials by October 30.

A circular issued on September 2 instructed district election officers to prepare lists of presiding, assistant presiding and polling officers with recruits from government offices, private institutions, schools, colleges, banks and insurance firms.

At the Standing Committee meeting, BNP leaders said many of those being shortlisted were once affiliated with Shibir or currently maintain ties with Jamaat.

They said that from their own survey and local information, they found a large number of individuals with Jamaat ties holding various positions in government offices, schools, and colleges.

They alleged that chairmen of

governing bodies of schools and colleges were also being removed and replaced with partisan persons.

They said that recent remarks and actions by some advisers are hurting the interim government's neutrality.

The BNP leaders said a few advisers have shown bias in recent administrative changes and appointments, favouring a "particular political group".

They alleged that while lists of polling officials were being prepared, people linked to "one party" were being prioritised.

**JULY CHARTER**

The BNP reaffirmed that it is ready to sign the July Charter.

A delegation of over 100 leaders will attend the October 17 signing ceremony, where Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir and Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed will sign on behalf of the party.

The BNP also reiterated that if a referendum is held, it must take place on the same day as the national election, and that the party will not accept holding the polls under the proportional representation (PR) system.

Although the National Consensus Commission said it would send a final version of the charter to parties yesterday, BNP leaders said they did not receive any copy until 8:00pm.

The meeting also reviewed organisational readiness for the polls. Leaders admitted weaknesses in field-level campaigning and discussed plans to strengthen the party's media and communication cells.

They also expressed concern over growing online smear campaigns and misinformation targeting the BNP and discussed strategies for countering them, especially through stronger social media outreach.