

Follow local authorities' directives

IEDCR asks Bangladeshis living in coronavirus-hit countries

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research yesterday advised the expatriate Bangladeshis to follow the directives of the local authorities to keep themselves safe from coronavirus.

The IEDCR came up with the advice as the new virus spread alarmingly in many countries beyond China.

Raising the number of the affected countries to 32 as of yesterday, Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait and Bahrain reported their first coronavirus cases, all involving people who returned from Iran, reports BBC.

World Health Organization (WHO) kept the global alert level at "high". For China, the alert level was "very high".

In a press release issued yesterday, Prof Meerjady Sabrina of the IEDCR said, "So far, several [six] Bangladeshis in Singapore and the United Arab Emirates have been infected. However, all countries are at risk. We request the expatriate Bangladeshis to follow the directives of the local authorities."

2 held for raping teen in Pirojpur

STAR REPORT

Police arrested two young men early yesterday on charges of gangraping a schoolgirl in Pirojpur's Mathbaria upazila.

Madrasa student Ariful Islam, 20, of Jariperchar village and school student Nayan Mollah, 19, of Badurtali village, admitted to police that they raped the schoolgirl.

The girl, a class-X student, was walking home around 9:30pm on Sunday when the duo stopped her near Kallakata Bridge and forced her into a nearby house and gangraped her, said Masuduzzaman, officer-in-charge of Mathbaria Police Station.

As the girl hadn't returned home on time, her father called the police a few hours later. Around 3:00am yesterday, police rescued the girl from the house and arrested the men.

Her father filed a case against the two later, said the OC, adding that the accused were sent to jail and the girl was sent to a hospital.

In Joypurhat's Kalai on Sunday night, a 15-year-old boy was arrested on charge of raping a six-year-old girl of his neighbourhood.

Police said the girl was playing near her home Saturday afternoon when the boy took her to a nearby bush after offering her some candies and raped her.

When the girl returned home, her mother noticed that she was bleeding and took her to a hospital, said Abdul Maleque, inspector of Kalai Police Station.

Her father filed a case accusing the boy the next day. Police arrested him later.

Our Dinajpur and Pirojpur correspondents contributed to the story.

BNP picks Shahadat

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former councillor Niaz Muhammad Khan and Mohila Dal leader Lusi Khan were among the nomination seekers.

On February 15, the ruling Awami League nominated Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, joint general secretary of the party's Chattogram city unit, instead of incumbent mayor AJM Nasir Uddin.

The Bogura-1 and Jashore-6 seats became vacant following the deaths of AL MPs Abdul Mannan and Ismat Ara Sadique.

AL picked Sahadara Mannan, wife of Mannan, for Bogura-1, and Shahin Chakladar for Jashore-6.

On February 16, the Election Commission announced the schedule for the upcoming CCC elections.

One killed, 35 hurt in Delhi

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This has led to accusations that Modi and his Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) are undermining India's secular traditions.

The BJP denies any bias against India's more than 180 million-strong Muslim minority, but objectors have been holding protests and camping out in parts of New Delhi for two months.

Yesterday's clashes were among the worst seen in New Delhi since the protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) began in early December.

The latest round of violence came as Trump began his first visit to India as U.S. president, addressing a rally in Modi's home state of Gujarat.

Trump landed in New Delhi yesterday.

The clashes stretched over a nearly kilometre long road and lasted from early afternoon until well into the evening, leaving at least half a dozen people injured.

Police yesterday imposed an emergency law prohibiting any gatherings in the violence-hit areas.

The protesters appeared to be divided along religious lines, and some repeatedly hailed Hindu god Ram while pelting stones at the predominantly Muslim group opposed to the new law.

A Reuters witness saw at least one Muslim man and a burqa-clad woman beaten by dozens of pro-law protesters with sticks and iron rods.

Earlier, local politician Yogendra Yadav described the violence as "communal" and urged police to intervene.

But for several hours, Reuters witnesses saw the outnumbered policemen mostly stand beside those backing the citizenship law, a majority Hindu group, and do little to quell the violence. The police also stood by as a mob vandalised a store with a Muslim name, pulling out vehicles and setting them alight.

"Go ahead and throw stones,"

one policeman shouted to protesters backing the law, during one of the running battles.

On side streets, young boys drained fuel from motorcycles to make petrol bombs, and protesters pulled up paving stones and flung construction material at opponents.

"We are in support of the CAA. If they want to protest, they should go somewhere else," said a protester who gave his name as Amit.

India's junior home minister G Kishan Reddy said the violence was a "conspiracy to shame India globally" during Trump's visit.

"We have deployed additional forces, and we will do everything to bring law and order under control," he told Reuters partner ANI.

In Gujarat, Trump told a gathering of more than 100,000 people that "India is a country that proudly embraces freedom, liberty, individual rights, the rule of law, and the dignity of every human being."

Coronavirus spreads further

FROM PAGE 16

In Iran, an unusually small number that would mean an extremely high mortality rate.

Afghanistan has detected its first novel coronavirus case, the country's health minister said yesterday.

In China, 2,592 people have died out of 77,000 infections.

South Korea has seen a rapid rise in infections since a cluster sprouted in a religious sect in the southern city of Daegu last week.

More than 200 infections and two more deaths were reported in South Korea yesterday, bringing the total cases to more than 830 -- by far the most outside China.

Eight people have died from the virus in South Korea, where President Moon Jae-in over the weekend raised the country's virus alert to the highest "red" level.

As part of the containment efforts, school holidays were extended nationally and the start of the new

K-league football season, scheduled for this weekend, was postponed.

At the main high-speed train station in Daegu, a normally bustling city of 2.5 million people, just a small trickle of commuters were seen.

FOOTBALL, FASHION CURBED
In Italy, a fourth fatality was confirmed yesterday, deepening fears about the virus spreading through Europe.

More than 150 people have been infected in Italy, where several Serie A football games were postponed over the weekend.

The famed Venice Carnival was also cut short and some Milan Fashion Week runway shows were cancelled.

More than 50,000 people in about a dozen northern Italian towns have been told to stay home, and police set up checkpoints to enforce a blockade.

Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte has said that residents could face weeks of lockdown in an effort to sit out the virus.

ECONOMIC TOLL
The virus is taking an increasingly

heavy toll on the global economy, with many factories in China closed or subdued due to quarantines, and global travel choked.

Stock markets in Asia and Europe fell yesterday following the surge in infections and deaths around the world.

"While the coronavirus is probably slowing in China, it is speeding up elsewhere," said Charles Gillams at RJMG Asset Management.

The International Monetary Fund warned Sunday that the epidemic was putting a "fragile" global economic recovery at risk.

G20 financial chiefs also voiced concern about its ripple effects around the world.

Chinese President Xi Jinping acknowledged Sunday that the virus had become the country's "largest public health emergency" since the founding of the People's Republic in 1949.

"This is a crisis for us and it is a big test," Xi said in comments reported by state television.

Oxygen spotted

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is swirled around a black hole and glows visibly through the universe.

As well as being the site of the first ever detection of breathable oxygen outside of our galaxy, Markarian 231 contains the most oxygen ever seen outside of our own solar system.

Astronomers from China's Shanghai Astronomical Observatory were able to spot signs of oxygen using radio telescopes on Earth.

Using that equipment, they saw

radiation at a wavelength of 2.52 millimetres. That is the signal for O2 in its breathable form, leading researchers to that they had made the "first detection of extragalactic molecular oxygen", as they write in the paper published in the *Astrophysical Journal*.

Oxygen is so hard to see from Earth because many of the signals that would alert us to it are absorbed by Earth's atmosphere. The new discovery was possible in part because the light is redshifted as it

travels through space, allowing it to be stretched out into a wavelength that could more easily get through the atmosphere.

While the gas is present in Markarian 231 in the form that humans breathe, actually travelling there and breathing it would not be possible. The swirl of gases present in the atmosphere does not have the same makeup as it does on Earth, and those other gases are required to allow humans to breathe in oxygen.

Hajj pilgrims to pay more this year

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of 1,500 metres, and under the package-3 a hajj pilgrim will get accommodation beyond the distance of 1,500 metres," he added.

The Hajj packages include the expenses of food, airfare, and all other costs except those surrounding the observance of Eid-ul-Azha, the cabinet secretary said.

Each pilgrim will have to pay around Tk 12,075 to complete Eid formalities, including slaughtering the animal, said Khandker.

This year, 1,37,198 people will go to Saudi Arabia to perform hajj and 17,198 of them will go under government management. The rest will perform hajj under different private hajj agencies.

In 2019, the Saudi government fixed a quota of 1,27,198 Bangladeshis to be given the opportunity to perform

hajj and 7,198 made the pilgrimage availing government packages.

Upon Bangladesh government's request, the Saudi government raised the quota for Bangladesh by 10,000 this year.

The airfare for a hajj pilgrim has been fixed at Tk 1,38,000, a Tk 10,000 increase from last year, but cost of fuel and other charges at Saudi Airport have remained the same. The visa fee has also increased by Tk 7,000 this year, said sources at the religious affairs ministry.

Hajj Agencies Association of Bangladesh, a platform of private hajj tour operators, and State Minister for Religious Affairs Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah had earlier criticised the civil aviation ministry's decision to increase the airfare.

Talking to The Daily Star, HAAB President M Shahadat Hossain

Taslim said yesterday that they would announce the hajj package within three to four days in line with the government hajj package.

The holy hajj is likely to be held in July 31 depending on the moon sighting in Saudi Arabia.

Khandker Anwarul yesterday said that the government is trying hard to ensure that pre-arrival immigration of all hajjis are completed from Dhaka so that pilgrims can avoid the hardship of waiting hour upon hour at the Saudi Airport.

According to the government's draft hajj policy, a private hajj agency can send a maximum of 300 and minimum of 100 hajjis from Bangladesh. A guide will be assigned for every 44 pilgrims.

The registration of prospective hajjis is likely to start within a week, said the HAAB president.

HC questions

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freedom of expression and thought.

The court asked secretaries to the ministries of law, and information and communication technology to respond in four weeks.

According to section 25 (1) of the act, "If any person using a website or any digital device-(a) deliberately or knowingly distributes any information or data that is attacking or intimidating in nature; or if a person publishes or distributes any information despite knowing that it is false to irritate, humiliate, defame or embarrass or to discredit a person.

(b) Damages the image and reputation of the State or spreads confusion or with the same purpose publishes or distributes fully or partially distorted information or data despite knowing that it is false, and if any one assists in such actions then all such actions of the individual will be considered a crime".

Section 31 says, "If a person deliberately publishes or broadcasts via a website or any digital platform anything that creates enmity, hatred or acrimony among different classes or communities, or upsets communal harmony, or creates unrest or chaos, or causes or begins to cause deterioration in law and order, then that activity of the said person will be considered a crime".

The petitioners are Dhaka University teachers Mohammad Ismail, Md Kamruzzaman and Md Rafiqul Islam, journalist Mohammad Abdullah, Supreme Court lawyers Md Asad Uddin, Md Asaduzzaman, Md Zobaider Rahman, Md Mohiuddin Molla and Md Mujahidul Islam.

The petitioners said the two sections imposed a blanket prohibition on publication of materials and thus violate the fundamental right of freedom of speech and expression guaranteed under article 39 of the constitution.

They also said it conferred arbitrary and uncontrolled powers upon the executive and the prosecuting authorities to determine whether a particular act satisfies the vague and unspecified ingredients of offence and therefore, the sections are liable to be struck down as being in violation of the constitution.

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The Digital Security Act was passed on September 19, 2018 in parliament.

But ever since it was mooted, drafted and eventually passed, journalist community has been protesting it, terming it an act to gag freedom of expression.

On October 13, 2018, Sampadak Parishad (Editors' Council) held a press conference at the capital's Jatiya Press Club demanding proper amendments to nine sections of the controversial act.

The Parishad, a coalition of editors of the country's national dailies, said those sections were likely to seriously harm the cause of independent journalism and freedom of expression.

"Sections 8, 21, 25, 28, 29, 31, 32, 43, and 53 of Digital Security Act must be amended appropriately to safeguard freedom of the media and freedom of speech," Bhorer Kagoj Editor Shyamal Dutta, a senior leader of the council, said at the event.

Two days later, the editors formed a human chain in front of Jatiya Press Club to press home their demand.

"We think the Digital Security Act is an obstruction to press freedom," Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, said there.

"If the law remains in force, none of us -- the press media, television [channels], and the online media -- will be able to do our professional duty independently," he added.

On November 1, 2018, some leaders of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) and Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ) staged a sit-in in front of the secretariat in the city, demanding abolition of the Digital Security Act.

Terming the act an obstruction to the freedom of speech and the press, the journalists at the event said they would boycott the Posts, Telecommunications and Information Technology Minister Mustafa Jabbar, unless the "worst law" was scrapped.

But several ministers and top brass of the government -- including Law Minister Anisul Huq -- on different occasions urged the journalist community not to worry about the act and assured them that the loopholes and vagueness would be removed.

Nothing has changed yet. Barrister Imran A Siddique and Advocate Shishir Monir appeared for the writ petitioners yesterday.

Road made cutting hills

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Sources at the CU said around 7,000 trees were cut in Hathazari in four years.

Officials of the Department of Environment said the traders didn't seek permission from them for felling the trees.

Visiting the area two months ago, this correspondent found several workers cutting trees in Hathazari and collecting logs. A log-laden pick-up was seen plying on the dirt road.

Locals said the traders stopped cutting trees on Sunday after a national daily ran a report on the incident.

According to Bangladesh Environment Conservation (Amendment) Act, 2010, cutting and/or razing a hill or hillock by an individual or institution is prohibited. This can be done only after availing a clearance certificate from the DoE if in the national interest.

Yesterday, a team of the DoE visited the area to investigate the complaints. It found the allegations of cutting trees and hills to be true.

Speaking to The Daily Star, DoE Deputy Director (Chattogram division) Jamir Uddin said none can cut a portion of a hill, let alone building a dirt road.

He said they would soon submit a report to the higher authorities in this regard.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

RESIGN

On January 29, the CU authorities formed a five-member body, "Committee to prevent cutting trees", to check felling of trees on the campus.

On Sunday, three members of the committee stepped down saying they could not work due to pressure and threats from an influential quarter. Among them are Prof SM Monirul Hasan, also proctor of CU.

Talking about his resignation, he told this newspaper, "Why will we work if our dignity is harmed?"

Expressing grave concern over the incident, Prof Kamal Uddin of the CU's forestry and environmental science institute said the effect of cutting hills and trees would be dangerous.

"Due to cutting of hills, the low-lying lands in and around the campus would be filled up. It would ultimately cause flooding in the area in the near future," he added.

CU Vice-Chancellor Prof Shireen Akhter said they would form a new committee in this regard and would take action against cutting of hills and trees after receiving reports from it.

Contacted, Hanif said he didn't know that taking permission from the DoE was necessary for cutting hills and trees.

"We bought trees from the owners of some gardens. We only cut a small portion of the hills as we had to build a narrow dirt road for carrying logs from there."

The trader said they paid the university Tk 100 for each pick-up as daily gate-pass charge. He also showed a few money receipts to this correspondent.

Bajal, however, denied the allegations of cutting trees and hills.



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'Persuade Pindi to stop persecution'

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stop persecution of Bangalees in Pakistan.

Bangabandhu also appeals to the heads of some friendly governments to use their good offices immediately to stop the Pakistani authorities from persecuting Bangalees. In a telephone conversation with Indira Gandhi, Bangabandhu seeks support of the Indian government in the repatriation of Bangalees from Pakistan.

NON-ALIGNMENT POLICY REITERATED

Bangabandhu reiterates his government's attachment to a policy of non-alignment in an interview with Soviet news agency, TASS. Bangabandhu expresses his gratitude to the government of the Soviet Union for the stance they took in the UN to stifle the imperialist plot against the liberation struggle of Bangladesh. Mujib also says that his visit to the Soviet Union early next month would contribute to the establishment of a personal connection between the leaders of the two countries.

INDONESIA, MALAYSIA RECOGNISE BANGLADESH
Indonesia and Malaysia extend formal recognition to Bangladesh ignoring Pakistan President ZA

Bhutto's plea to refrain from doing so until he has talks with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Indian troops pull out of Bangladesh. The decision by Indonesia and Malaysia has raised the number of countries that have recognised Bangladesh to 46. Their partners in ASEAN, Singapore, Thailand and the Philippines extended recognition earlier.

It is reported that the US has told ZA Bhutto of its plan to recognise Bangladesh without setting a specific timetable.

SUPPLY WORKING CAPITAL FOR IMMEDIATE PRODUCTION

The three-day conference of the trade representatives of Bangladesh today pleads for providing raw materials, spare parts and working capital to the industries to go into production immediately. Sponsored by the Dhaka Chambers of Commerce and Industries, the conference discussed the problems of economic reconstruction and made detailed recommendations on the future economic policy covering industrial, labour and commerce policies both short and long-term and the infrastructure. The conference opposes the appointment of administrators to industrial

establishments who are unable to perform their responsibilities with an absentee owner. In such cases, experienced employees from the executive side of the enterprise can be appointed, delegates of the conference suggest.

SOURCES: February 26, 1972 issues of Dainik Bangla, The Daily Ittefaq, Azad, Morning News, The Bangladesh Observer and Purbodesh.

Two dead after Haitian police attack army HQ

AFP, Port-Au-Prince

Haitian police demanding better working conditions shot up the army headquarters on Sunday, killing two servicemen and wounding a dozen more, the Defense Ministry said, prompting the government to cancel an upcoming carnival.

In a statement issued Sunday evening, the government said it had observed "with concern and dismay that terror has reigned in certain arteries of the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area."