



Burhanuddin Khan Jahangir passes away

UNB, Dhaka

Renowned educationist and writer Burhanuddin Khan Jahangir passed away at his Gulshan residence in the city yesterday. He was 84.

The Ekushey Padak-winning author had been suffering from different old-age complications, said Fatema Mamun, a relative.

His body will be taken to his village home in Kachua of Chandpur district for burial, said Fatema.

State Minister for Cultural Affairs KM Khalid expressed deep shock at the demise of the noted writer, and conveyed profound sympathy to the bereaved family.



A packed line formed in front of Jatiya Press Club yesterday, as Trading Corporation of Bangladesh sold daily essentials at affordable prices. Even in the time of a viral outbreak, many do not have the luxury to stay home without worrying about finances.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

'Want to supply 5 lakh kits per month'

Says Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury on Gonoshasthaya Kendra's coronavirus detection initiatives

ROBAB ROSAN

Gonoshasthaya Kendra has developed a kit it claims can detect the novel coronavirus quickly and at a much cheaper price than the currently-used technology. Under the leadership of Dr Bijon Kumar Sil, a team of scientists invented a method of testing for the virus, and raw materials for production of the kit are being imported from the UK.

Gonoshasthaya Kendra founder and trustee Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury yesterday spoke to The Daily Star on the production of the kit, and his plans with it going forward.

TDS: At which stage is the production process?

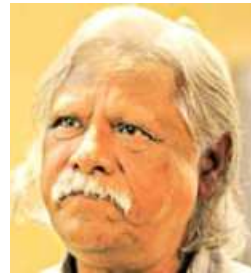
ZC: The process of importing the raw materials from Britain is underway. We're hoping to receive the materials within tomorrow.

Once the materials reach Bangladesh, those must be released quickly. According to government rules, we'll get duty-free benefits. However, we have not yet received the documents for the process.

If there are any bureaucratic delays regarding the documents, the production process will also be delayed. So it's imperative that the raw materials are released fast.

TDS: Will you be able to start production as soon as you receive the raw materials?

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'Neo-JMB' using female wing to recruit online

Counterterrorism officials on the hunt for 100 suspected social media accounts

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Counterterrorism unit officials of police claim to have identified around a hundred social media accounts, whose users have allegedly showed interest in joining militancy or the war in Syria.

A number of these users were waiting have meetings with leaders of IS-inspired militant outfit "Neo-JMB", a high official of the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit, told The Daily Star on Sunday.

The CTTC unit unearthed the information after interrogating Shirina Khatun alias Tahsin Abdullah (23), the second-in-command of Neo-JMB's female wing.

Officials arrested Shirina from the capital's Gabtoli on Thursday. She was placed on a three-day remand for

interrogation on Friday. Yesterday was the third day.

"Shirina has three to four social media accounts. She was responsible for maintaining communication with a number of Neo-JMB operatives and giving them instructions," SK Imran Hossain, assistant commissioner of CTTC unit, told The Daily Star.

She was working to set up a meeting between the top leadership of the outfit and these operatives but got arrested before that, said Imran. "We are now trying to trace the location of these social media accounts and take action against them after analysing their involvement," he added.

Hailing from Jhenidah, Shirina is a homemaker. She got married two years back but got separated within a year. Six months back, she married another person

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'It's a matter of national survival'

Dr Kamal calls for concerted response to tackle coronavirus

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh needs careful planning and decisive policymaking to limit public sufferings in the months and years ahead, said Dr Kamal Hossain in a statement yesterday.

"Our nation needs to prepare for deprivation, economic disruption and a long and painful period of recovery," said the statement, also signed by Dr Reza Kibria.

Both Kamal and Kibria came up with the observation following some recommendations placed by a group of 63 academics and researchers in an open letter to the authorities concerned on Sunday.

"The global economic downturn is likely to be deeper and longer than at any time in the past century, so its indirect adverse impact on trade and reduced external employment may be substantial," the statement said.

It also said: "The problem in Bangladesh is likely to be much worse for the marginalised."

It may therefore be necessary to feed tens of millions for months to prevent hunger, malnourishment [particularly

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CORONAVIRUS

Declare it a national crisis: Workers Party

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Workers' Party of Bangladesh yesterday urged the government to declare the current coronavirus situation a national crisis, considering its severity and rapid transmission.

In a press release, the party called upon authorities to maintain strict lockdown or partial lockdown in the vulnerable areas, and form a national disaster committee under direct leadership of the prime minister.

The party, a component of the ruling 14-party alliance, issued the press release after holding its politburo meeting through videoconference regarding the Covid-19 situation. The meeting was presided over by party President Rashed Khan Menon.

Criticising the government, the party said, "The health ministry has been talking about various measures, but there is no evidence of any of those."

The party also criticised the Institute

of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) for its "reluctance" in testing people with Covid-19 symptoms.

It also asked the government how is it possible to test a huge number of people using just a single lab of the IEDCR.

In the press release, the party demanded that the government provide food support to working class people, as their livelihood has been severely hampered by the outbreak.

SHUT GARMENT FACTORIES TILL MARCH 31

Meanwhile, several associations of garment workers yesterday urged the government to shut down all garment factories of the country till March 31, for the sake of workers' safety.

They also urged authorities and factory owners to provide necessary safety gear to all workers until closure of factories.

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UGC urges univs to continue classes online

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has urged all universities to continue their academic activities online, during the closure of higher educational institutions in wake of the global coronavirus outbreak.

"The teachers can be encouraged to deliver lecture online to recover the loss," the commission said in a letter to all public and private universities yesterday.

In this online work process, Zoom Application can be used, and Bangladesh Research and Education Network (BdREN) can facilitate the activities without any price, it stated.

The UGC authorities urged all teachers to contact BdREN for all kinds of support and it will remain open 24/7.

Students will be able to connect with teachers using desktop, laptop and smartphone, making the process interactive, it said, adding that it has been seen across the world that online education is a time-befitting decision to face coronavirus.

SAGAR-RUNI MURDER

Probe report delayed for 72nd time

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday again asked Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) to submit by April 23 the probe report in a case filed over the murders of journalist couple Sagar Sarowar and Meherun Runi.

Metropolitan Magistrate Md Shahinur Islam passed the order after Khondker Shafiqul Alam, an additional superintendent of Rab and also the investigation officer of the case, failed to submit any probe report by yesterday.

With this, the investigation officer failed 72 deadlines to submit the report.

On November 11 last year, the High Court expressed disappointment at the lack of significant progress in investigation into the sensational murder case.

On that date, the IO appeared before the HC and said he was continuing the probe to find out the real culprits responsible for committing such crime.

The HC had asked the IO to appear before it following a writ petition filed by one of the accused Tanvir Rahman for scrapping the case's trial proceedings against him.

On March 2, the IO submitted a report to the HC but there was nothing new in the report of the case.

Earlier, the lower courts also expressed their dissatisfaction over the probe and asked the investigation officers to complete it as early as possible.

Sagar, news editor at private TV channel Maasranga, and his wife Runi,

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Five 'muggers' held in Gabtoli

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detective Branch (DB) of police yesterday claimed to have arrested five members of a mugging gang, who used to hire vehicles to loot valuables from victims.

The arrestees were identified as Rasel Mahmud Sarker (37), Md Mizanur Rahman (28), Md Dabir Mia (33), Md Hasanul Banna (29), and Israfil (28).

A team of DB (north) arrested the five from Gabtolia on Sunday night, Md Golam Saklain, additional deputy commissioner of DB police, told The Daily Star.

A motorbike, Tk 6,000 in cash and seven cell phones were seized from their possession. Later, the arrestees were placed on a one-day remand for interrogation, said Saklain.

On March 14, the group

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'500-member body to fight coronavirus'

Says Obaidul Quader

UNB, Dhaka

Road, Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday said a 500-member committee has been formed to tackle the coronavirus situation in the country.

The committee had been formed with prominent doctors of Bangladesh Medical Association following a directive by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, and it would coordinate with the sub-committees of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), said Quader while briefing reporters on current situation at the secretariat.

The government has taken several steps to face the situation, he said, adding, "Various important programmes of Mujib Year were rearranged, and several were cancelled. All programmes of the Independence Day have been cancelled."

Quader, also the general secretary of ruling Awami League, urged grassroots public representatives to raise awareness among people about coronavirus.

Replying to a question, he said there was no food crisis in the country. "The government will take action if anyone stockpiles food," he said.

A list would be prepared on overseas returnees and that would be given to local administration and the DGHS, said Quader.

Quader also directed party leaders to remain alert against all fake news and rumours over coronavirus.

HC petition seeks PPE for journo, cops

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Supreme Court lawyer yesterday filed a writ petition with the High Court seeking its directive on the government to supply personal protective equipment (PPE) to law enforcers and journalists.

Advocate Md JR Khan Rabin submitted the petition as a public interest litigation, requesting the HC to order authorities of the government to improve diagnosis, treatment and quarantine facilities for coronavirus patients.

The petition said law enforcers and journalists have to go to public places to discharge duties, and therefore they need PPE to protect themselves from the risk of coronavirus.

The HC may hear on the petition today, Rabin said.



A water bowser of Dhaka North City Corporation sprays antiseptic-mixed water at the Sonargaon intersection of Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

DNCC sprays antiseptic around town

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) yesterday sprayed antiseptic in different areas as part of its effort to prevent coronavirus.

"We have started the drive on Sunday to prevent coronavirus and sprayed 7.5 lakh square feet area. This will continue according to necessity," said an official of DNCC.

He said they have sprayed antiseptic through three water bowlers at Karwan Bazar, Mirpur's Tolarbagh, Kuwait-Maitri Hospital, National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopedic Rehabilitation, Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College &

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E-passport, new MRP operations suspended

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Department of Immigration and Passports (DIP) has suspended electronic and machine-readable passport (MRP) operations as of yesterday, as a precautionary measure to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

However, MRP renewals will continue, in case there is no change in information.

"We have suspended the operations for e-passport and MRP until further notice, considering health risk and spread of the deadly virus," Maj Gen Shakil Ahmed, director general of DIP, told The Daily Star.

Brig Gen Saidur Rahman Khan, e-passport project director, said they have to take biometrics and retina scans for the e-passport application process.

"This is risky as the virus can spread while giving finger prints on the machine reader; the operators also assist the applicants by touching their hands to complete the procedure," he added.

Besides, an applicant needs to insert

a part of their face into a machine to complete their retina scan, he said.

"We do not know the physical condition of the previous applicant, and it is also not possible to clean the scanning machine with sanitiser every time as it would damage it," said the project director.

"Therefore, we have suspended operations. It will resume once the situation returns to normalcy," the official added.

He said the process of issuing new MRPs also requires biometrics.

However, if any applicant comes to re-issue their MRP and if they do not need to change any information, then they can get their passport, he added.

New MRP applications and re-issue of a child's MRP will remain suspended as they will need to change their information and go through the biometric process, he added.

In the case of Hajj or special cases, the MRP operations will remain open, said Maj Gen Shakil Ahmed, director general of DIP.