



As lockdown continues across the country, even busy Bongshal gets to witness some lazy afternoons. Two children play with rickshaw vans left by the street, while people in protective masks busily pass through. These narrow alleyways were once jam-packed and action-filled at all hours, but it's almost as if the clock has stopped now. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Govt to bring back some expat workers

Decision taken at inter-ministerial meeting

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has decided to bring back some expatriate Bangladeshi workers who are in difficult situations overseas, amid the evolving situation over the coronavirus pandemic.

The decision was taken at an inter-ministerial meeting held at the expatriates' welfare ministry yesterday, says a press release.

Some 316 Bangladeshis will be brought back from Kuwait, said Expatriates' Welfare Minister Imran Ahmad, who chaired the meeting.

At the meeting, a proposal was also made to send relief materials and food on the return flight, he said.

On the other hand, the government will arrange a chartered flight of Biman Bangladesh Airlines to bring home 150 workers under employment permit system (EPS) and 26 students from South Korea, the minister said.

"The government has taken all kind of measures to support expatriate Bangladeshis currently staying abroad including food, treatment and overall protection," he added.

For this, about Tk 4.5 crore has been allocated for the Bangladesh missions abroad, he further said.

Imran said the government was making a diplomatic push to extend visas and work

permits of Bangladeshi workers in the respective countries.

Besides, in case any worker loses their job, efforts are on from the government's side so that they do not have to return home, but can be employed at other companies in the same country, he also said.

Furthermore, Bangladeshi missions have been asked to provide necessary support to expatriates if they face problems regarding accommodation, said the minister.

The expatriates' welfare minister also said a decision was taken to send letters signed by him and the foreign minister to different relevant ministries of overseas countries.

Addressing the meeting, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen said some expatriates are being brought back home following requests made by different countries.

As a result, labour diplomacy with those countries will be stronger and Bangladesh will get priority in case of labour recruitment, he said.

"Expatriates are assets to the country. It is our moral duty to stand by their side amid the current crisis," he also said.

Emerging from the meeting, the foreign minister told reporters that four to five countries including the Maldives have reached out to Bangladesh to take back undocumented nationals from their

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Protectors still unprotected

Police walk accused to court in close proximity; most don't have PPE

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

At a time when law enforcers are enforcing social distancing among people to prevent the spread of Covid-19, the agency is failing to apply the same for its own members.

Bizarre as it may seem; police still walk accused to the court in close proximity and without proper safety equipment.

"It seems the repeated calls from the directorate of health department to maintain safe distance [one metre between persons] fell on deaf ears," said Mohammad Lokman, a clerk at the court. If one of them gets infected, not only police personnel but also the court staffers and officials will be at risk, he said.

This newspaper on Wednesday afternoon visited the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court in Dhaka and witnessed how poorly police members are maintaining personal hygiene.

According to Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP), under the present circumstances every day 10 to 12 accused who are arrested for petty crimes are sent from different police stations to court, which then sends them to jail.

"When they arrive, we spray disinfectant and make them wash hands. There is also a basin," Lokman said at the main entrance of the custody next to the CMM court building in the old town.

These correspondents saw a thin green mark on the basin, which apparently is a soap for cleaning fabrics. While waiting, a police member showed up with a bottle filled with white liquid and sprayed on the correspondents.

Asked, he said the liquid was made of water and Dettol. He, however, did not know how it was prepared. There was bleaching powder on the passage, which led to the elevator and some on the first floor of the building.

A few minutes later, two police officials were seen taking five accused to the court. All of them were walking way too close. Though the officials were wearing fabric masks, they were holding the rope of the handcuffs with bare hand.

"They walk and talk as if there is no coronavirus in the country," said Alim Ahmed, a local.

Asked, one of the officials said, "We bought the mask ourselves. We weren't given any gloves either."

Jafor Hossain, deputy commissioner (prosecution) of DMP, told The Daily Star on Thursday that they have set up multiple basins in front of the CMM court and prison.

"We have instructed every official to wash hands and

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Artists put brushes aside to help doctors

Make reusable PPE for BSMMU physicians, staff

ZAHANGIR ALOM

For students and teachers of Dhaka University's Faculty of Fine Arts, the beginning of April is usually a busy time, as the campus premises bustle with preparations for the Mangal Shobhajatra rally to usher in the Bangla New Year, marking Pahela Baishakh (on April 14).

However, the global coronavirus pandemic has put all celebration plans in the back burner, and the artists have also decided to join the fight against the virus. Instead of papier-mâché masks or traditional clay pot painting, artists and alumni of Charukola (DU's Faculty of Fine Arts) have been making personal protective equipment (PPE) for doctors, teachers, nurses, staff and sample collectors of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU).

Engr Mainul Abedin, youngest son of Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin, initiated the project, alongside Prof Nisar Hossain, dean of the faculty. For over a week, Prof Nisar held multiple discussions with Prof Dr Shahana Akhter Rahman, pro-vice chancellor of BSMMU, and Khondoker Manzare Shamim, head of its ICU.

Following their pointers on proper design and safety concerns, alongside WHO guidelines, Prof Nisar started the production of reusable PPE with approval from the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

"Moshiul Azam Shajal, a senior vice president of BGMEA and a friend of ours, contributed the materials to make the PPE. We are planning to provide 3,500 units of the equipment," said Prof Nisar.

He said he, along with two alumni of the faculty and some teachers



Prof Nisar Hossain, dean of Dhaka University's faculty of fine arts, makes face shields alongside two younger artists -- Shahabuddin Sheikh and Tanvir Mahmud. These are for the doctors, nurses and staff of BSMMU. Initiated by Prof Nisar and Engineer Mainul Abedin, renowned artists and teachers of faculty of fine arts donated to the fund for making PPE. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

and volunteers who are currently in Dhaka, are working on the project.

Prof Dr Shahana confirmed on Saturday that 1,545 units of PPE were handed over to BSMMU.

"Dhaka University is closed now, so there is a crisis of volunteers, while shops are also closed. We have issued a letter addressing shopkeepers concerned to provide us with necessary materials, and also to law enforcement agencies so that the FFA authority can do the job smoothly. We

are sincerely grateful to all the artists," she added.

Prof Rafiqun Nabi, Mohammad Eunus, Prof Naima Haque, Kazi Ghiyasuddin, Prof Mostafizul Haque, Prof Shishir Bhattacharjee, Prof Sheikh Afzal Hossain, Ahmed Shamsuddoha, Anupam Huda, Dr Azharul Islam Sheikh Chanchal, Prof Syed Abul Barq Alvi, Mohammad Iqbal, Prof Lara Rukh Selim, Bishwajit Goswami were among those who contributed funds for the initiative.

Primary students' TV classes go on air Thursday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Authorities are all set to provide education to primary students through television from Thursday, aiming to minimise the loss of the academic session due to closure of educational institutions.

"We will start broadcasting recorded lectures of renowned teachers for students from pre-primary to Class V through Sangsad Bangladesh Television," Directorate of Primary Education Director General Md Fasiullah told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said classes will take place for two hours from 2pm daily and students will be informed detail routine.

DPE oversees over 1 lakh primary schools, madrasas, and kindergartens, which have over 1.74 crore students.

Teachers said in an almost lockdown situation it is critical to provide help to children, who are turning restless in home confinement. Such class work might bring them some relief, said their parents as well as other caregivers.

On March 16, government closed down all educational institutions March 17 to 31; later the shutdown was extended to April 9.

Top education officials said there is a strong possibility that the government will extend the closure till April 14 -- and perhaps even till the 25th. And in case of the latter, schools and colleges will remain off till May 31 for the Ramadan and Eid-ul-

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"They asked for Tk 1,000"

Allegation against BITID staff of seeking money to test for Covid-19

ARUN BIKASH DEV, Chattogram

An allegation has been raised against some healthcare providers at Bangladesh Institute of Tropical and Infectious Diseases (BITID) -- the only organisation in Chattogram authorised to test for coronavirus -- over demanding money for conducting the test.

On Wednesday, Zeenat [not the real name], a diabetic patient, found her blood sugar levels fluctuating and felt breathing difficulties. When her family took her to a private hospital in the port city, hospital authorities did not want to admit her until they were confirmed that the patient was not infected with the Covid-19 virus.

The hospital authorities advised the patient to contact BITID for a Covid-19 test, and accordingly, the family contacted hotline of the hospital. The receiver said they could come to collect samples but the patient's family would have to pay Tk 1,000 "for their expenses".

"We were worried at that moment, and had no alternative but to agree to their proposition," her son told The Daily Star. "A team came in an ambulance after around an hour, and collected samples from my mother." "I requested him to take Tk 500, but they declined," he said, adding, "I had to pay Tk 1,000 to them."

"As far as I know, the government has kept the whole process free of cost, but the staffers are extorting patients," he said.

Although the sample was collected on Thursday, the family did not hear back about the result till Friday afternoon. When worried family members contacted the hospital, staffers replied that it would take time. "Why are you so restless?" they allegedly asked the family members.

"I told them that my mother is sick and cannot be admitted to a hospital unless she gets the report, but they did not seem to care," he said.

The family got the report on Saturday, after interference of a doctor at the hospital.

Asked, Dr Mamunur Rashid, an associate professor of Clinical and Tropical Medicine at BITID, said he also heard a few such allegations. "I have asked them to lodge complaints with specific time and date, so that we can identify them," he told The Daily Star.

Dr Mamun said the test for Covid-19 is totally free of cost at BITID.

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মহিলা ও শিশু বিষয়ক মন্ত্রণালয়
নারী নির্বাহিত প্রতিরোধকল্পে মাল্টিসেন্ট্রাল প্রোগ্রাম

করোনাতাইরাস পরিস্থিতিতে মানসিক স্বাস্থ্য সেবা

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