

Domestic violence on the rise: MJF

Urges govt to take swift action

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As lockdowns have been enforced all around the world to contain the spread of coronavirus, incidents of domestic abuse have increased. Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) in a statement yesterday expressed grave concern about the matter.

Drawing attention to recent call by UN Secretary General to take speedy action to prevent domestic violence across countries, MJF urged the government to take effective measures by prioritising issues of violence against women and children in the official Covid-19 National Response Plan.

MJF Executive Director Shaheen Anam said, "Instead of ensuring protection and safety at homes, many women and girls in several parts of the country are suffering from domestic violence, which is worrying. Confined at homes, it's not possible for them to report violence or take legal action."

Citing data received from reliable sources, MJF said 36 rape incidents occurred in March in Bogura, Jamalpur and Cox's Bazar, while more than 300 incidences of domestic abuse and violence occurred in these three districts during the same period.

MJF also urged the government to mobilise Domestic Violence Prevention Committees at all levels of local government to provide legal assistance to victims.



People keep their grocery bags in the demarcated spots for the queue and sit on the road divider as they wait for a Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) truck to show up with daily essentials. Some had been waiting since 8am, and the truck still hadn't arrived when this photo was taken around 1pm at Jamal Khan area of Chattogram city yesterday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

COMBATING COVID-19

Govt seeks to bring experts from China

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh sought to bring a Chinese team of experts to support Sheikh Russel Gastro Liver Institute and Hospital, which has been declared a dedicated facility in Dhaka for coronavirus treatment.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen made the proposal during his 45-minute telephone conversation with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Tuesday evening, said a foreign ministry statement yesterday.

He also spoke about the possibility of accepting a Chinese medical team of experts comprising of doctors, nurses and technicians to treat coronavirus patients and provide training to Bangladeshi medical professionals.

Momen also discussed the possibility of importing ventilators from China during this critical moment.

He requested the Chinese foreign minister to consider deferral of payments against all back to back letters of credit opened in favour of Chinese suppliers for one year.

Wang Yi responded positively and assured him of their full support to Bangladesh.

While recalling the meeting between Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and President Xi, Momen requested his Chinese counterpart to help early repatriation of Rohingya to Myanmar as promised.

Wang Yi assured to extend Chinese support to that end. The foreign ministers also reiterated support for each other in the international arena.

Wang Yi expressed gratitude and thanks to Bangladesh for the contribution of masks, hand sanitiser and hand gloves during the critical moments of coronavirus outbreak in Wuhan and other parts of China.

Momen also expressed gratitude to the Chinese government for its testing kits, personal protection equipment and infrared thermometers.

He also mentioned the contribution of Jack Ma Foundation and Alibaba Foundation.

Fruits in short supply

Imports stuck at Ctg port; traders say prices may rise further in Ramadan

MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN and
MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Amid a supply shortage of imported fruits -- that reportedly meets 60 percent of the country's demand, prices are rising in markets at the capital.

Importers say a large volume of fruits are stuck at the Chattogram Port as flight shutdowns have caused paperwork not reaching banks on time, that are required to release the consignments.

Until the beginning of this week, approximately 14,234 tonnes of apple, pears and orange and dates from South Africa, Brazil, Australia, New Zealand, Chile, Morocco, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and UAE were stuck at the port, according to Bangladesh Fresh Fruit Importers' Association (BFFIA).

A similar amount of fruits was en route, and is supposed to reach the port by April 20, they added.

If these cannot be released soon, businessmen fear that the country will see a steep rise in fruit prices in Ramadan, when the fruit consumption usually goes up.

During last Ramadan, BFFIA statistics show about 7,000 tonnes of orange, 10,000 tonnes of apple and pears and 40,000 tonnes of date were imported.

About 35,000 tonnes of date are already in cold storage this year. BFFIA has ordered 5000 tonnes of orange, 8,000 tonnes of apple and pear and 6,000 tonnes of date targeting Ramadan this year.

LOCAL MARKET
Visiting local markets, this newspaper found the price of imported fruits already on the rise. In Jatrabari, one Kalim Uddin Ahmed was seen arguing with a fruit seller last week.

"Last week I bought orange at Tk 120 per kg. Now he is asking for Tk

160 for the same quality orange," he said.

Fruit seller Azimuddin said, "We're buying orange from wholesalers at high price. They tell us there is no orange in stock."

The price will increase further in the coming weeks, he added.

Visiting the capital's largest wholesale fruit market in Badamtali, the correspondents saw importers and businessmen passing relaxed time.

"Usually the road remains occupied with trucks from which labourers offload containers," said Bijoy Mukherjee, owner of Tuktuk Enterprise.

He said the price of apple and oranges has already increased by Tk 40 to Tk 50 per kg.

The price was supposed to fall as the demand has decreased due to the virtual lockdown in the country, but it is increasing which is

abnormal, said Sukumar Sarkar of SRS Group, a wholesaler.

SITUATION AT CTG PORT
Imported fruits and other perishables must be kept in reefer (refrigerated) containers that need electrical power.

Chattogram Port has a total capacity of reefer plugging for some 1,600 containers, port sources confirmed.

"The capacity is full with existing containers," said an official.

Contacted, BFFIA President Salimul Haque Essa said, "Now, about eight to 10 containers are released from the port every day, which is 60 to 70 usually."

DHL, the courier service used by suppliers, could not reach documents on time to banks here, and as a result the situation has worsened.

"The gridlock would be over if

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Ctg transport workers bear brunt of outbreak

3,000 workers to get aid from CMP

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN, Ctg

Thousands of transport workers in the port city are facing financial troubles due to the ongoing government declared shutdown to contain the spread of novel coronavirus.

They and their families are struggling to get by as their main sources of income have disappeared following the suspension of transports. Workers claimed that no transport workers' organisation are taking steps to minimise their misery by providing aid.

In these circumstances, Chattogram Metropolitan Police (CMP)'s north traffic zone is providing food to the workers as part of their ongoing aid programme across the city.

CMP Commissioner Md Mahabubur Rahman inaugurated the relief distribution programme in port city's Engineering Institute on Sunday.

With the help of S Alam Group, CMP will carry out distribution, said police

officials.

CMP Deputy Commissioner (Traffic North) Md Shahidullah told The Daily Star, "We will distribute relief among 3,000 transport workers across the city as per our list."

Police officials will go to designated spots and hand over food packages -- which will include rice, lentil, oil, onion and potato -- keeping social distancing in mind, Shahidullah said.

According to leaders of transport workers' organisations, there are one lakh transport workers under greater Chattogram.

Sarak Paribahan Sramik Federation leaders said 13,000 CNG-run auto-rickshaws used to ply the port city roads, and 40,000 used to move about in the districts.

Around 20,000 trucks and covered-vans usually carried goods from the port to other parts of the country, but that number

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Veteran journo Roushanuz-zaman no more

UNB, Dhaka

Veteran journalist Roushanuz-zaman, former executive editor of UNB, passed away yesterday evening at his Uttara residence. He was 70.

Roushan had been suffering from respiratory and other complications, his sister Rosy Akhter told UNB.

Rosy said her brother will be buried at Uttara Sector-4 graveyard today, following a namaz-e-janaza at Sector-7 mosque at 10am.

Roushanuzzaman worked for UNB, Dhaka Courier, The Financial Express, The Holiday, The Daily Sun and New Age in senior positions.

He last worked at New Age as its associate editor before retiring in 2018.

Hajj reg deadline extended again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Due to a lack of response from people wishing to participate in this year's hajj, the religious affairs ministry yesterday extended the deadline for registration till April 16, according to a notice issued in this regard.

This is the third time that the government has extended the deadline, as only around 55,000 aspiring pilgrims have so far registered, said officials at the ministry.

Due to the outbreak of Covid-19, many hajj aspirants are confused whether hajj will be held at all this year, several of them told The Daily Star.

Earlier, the religious affairs ministry and Hajj Agencies Association of Bangladesh (HAAB) said the pilgrims will get back their money if they fail to perform hajj this year due to the spread of coronavirus.

M Sahadat Hossain Taslim, president, HAAB, yesterday told this correspondent that registered hajjis will be able to go to Saudi Arabia to perform hajj next year if the annual congregation is not held this year due to the pandemic.

A total of 1,37,198 Bangladeshis are scheduled to perform hajj this year, which is likely to be held on July 31, depending on moon sighting. Of them, 17,198 would perform hajj under government management while the rest are scheduled to make the pilgrimage under HAAB.

Hajj flights are scheduled to start from June 23. On March 14, Saudi Arabia had suspended all international flights for two weeks to contain the spread of coronavirus.

On April 1, the Saudi government urged different countries to delay their hajj plans, following the outbreak.

'Declare curfew or emergency'

Says Oli Ahmed

UNB, Dhaka

President of Liberal Democratic Party Oli Ahmed yesterday demanded that the government either declare a state of emergency or impose a curfew to contain the coronavirus outbreak in the country.

In a statement, he said the crisis is escalating at an alarming rate over the past four days, and countries around the world have either declared emergency or enforced curfew to force people to stay at home.

"I urge the government to enforce a curfew or a state of emergency to protect the nation. The country may face a serious disaster if the government neglects such a timely demand," he warned.

Oli called upon people to stay home, unless it is urgent to leave the house.

Each for the other

UNO drops off stranded garment worker, her children home

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

An empty-handed Rozina Begum stood stranded at Mogtula Bazar in Ishwarganj upazila with her two kids on Monday night.

Out of food and out of money, the family was a long way from their home at Sutibhorat in the upazila, still another seven kilometres from where they were.

The 26-year-old garment worker had just been through something of a traumatising experience. Trying to navigate the deserted roads amidst the lockdown, the family was down on their luck.

Their journey started on Saturday. Upon being informed that her factory at Malekabari in Gazipur would open from Sunday, Rozina and her kids -- two-year-old Imran and six-year-old Jahidul -- made the difficult journey to her workplace, only to be informed that it would remain closed.

What's worse, she now discovered herself without any money, as the factory did not pay her outstanding salary. Her husband Abul Bashar, a



Rozina and her two kids with UNO Zakir Hossain.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

rice shop staffer at Gazipur, borrowed Tk 400 to help send them home, while a kind man gave another Tk 100 hearing of their woes. But all of it ran out just to get to Mogtula Bazar.

Suddenly, when all hope seemed lost, a car stopped by.

The man who came out of the car was none other than Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) of Ishwarganj Md Zakir Hossain.

Out on his night patrol, the UNO

discovered the distraught family waiting by the road, afraid and unfed, as whatever little light food they carried had run out long before.

As Rozina narrated their nightmare scenario, the UNO couldn't help but be moved, he told this correspondent.

"The sufferings cannot be described in words. When I met her, she had a bag on her shoulder, one child on her lap with the other one in tow," said

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United Group donates Tk 5cr to PM's fund for Covid-19

CITY DESK

United Group has donated Tk 5 crore to Prime Minister's Relief and Welfare Fund on Sunday to help combat the coronavirus outbreak, according to a press release.

Hasan Mahmood Raja and Moinuddin Hasan Rashid, chairperson and managing director of United Group respectively, handed over the cheque to Dr Ahmad Kaikaus, principal secretary to the prime minister.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina attended the ceremony by video conferencing from Gono Bhaban.

The PM thanked United Group and other organisations for their contributions.



No vehicles on roads means no need for oil and gas. And yet, fuel stations, including this one in the capital's Sayedabad, are open for nonexistent customers every day. With nothing to do, workers just come in and sit around until their shift ends. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

'Gambling addiction led to triple murder'

Man held for killing wife, two children in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Detective Branch (DB) of police yesterday claimed to have arrested the former Bangladesh Telecommunications Company Limited (BTCL) official for killing his wife and two children in Dakshinkhan area of the capital in February.

Based on information, a team of DB (north) arrested Raquib Uddin Bhuiyan alias Liton (46) from Brahmanbaria on Tuesday night, Mashiur Rahman, deputy commissioner of DB (north), told The Daily Star.

On February 14, Dakshinkhan police recovered decomposed bodies of Raquib's wife Munni Begum (37), son Farhan Uddin (12) and daughter Laiva Bhuiyan (3).

Munni's brother Munna Rahman filed a murder case with Dakshinkhan Police Station, accusing Raquib as only suspect as he remained traceless.

While conducting a shadow investigation, the detectives recovered a note which matched Raquib's handwriting. In the letter, he admitted killing them, said police.

"Analysing that, we primarily suspected Raquib killed them. He was facing some financial problems; and also took hefty loans," said DC Mashiur.

Since then, DB started hunting for Raquib and was finally able to arrest him from Brahmanbaria when he went to the district to communicate with his sister, said the police officer.

"In primary interrogation, Raquib confessed to the killings and said he used to move to different places in disguise and act as a person with mental disabilities so that no one would be able to identify him," said Mashiur.

Raquib said he used to work as a junior assistant manager in BTCL's Uttara office. Everything was going fine until he got addicted to online gambling. He eventually ended up taking loans of Tk 1.15 crore from different people at high interest.

Once people started pressuring him for money, he started to take out his frustration on his family. He even went missing for some days in December last year to get

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