



Staying home not an option

Farm workers in Rajshahi forced to venture out for work as little relief material reached them

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

Inadequate relief distribution is compelling farm labourers in Rajshahi, mostly from indigenous communities, to travel outside their villages and unions to look for agricultural work.

As a result, they are not able to follow the health advisory to stay home and maintain social distance to stem the spread of coronavirus.

Through local representatives, the government started to provide food support from March 27 to low-income groups outside social safety nets to help them pull through the virus-induced shutdown.

But many poor families among the farm labourers in Rajshahi are yet to receive any relief.

Talking over phone on April 3, Ashonto Bakla, a representative of the indigenous Orao community of Chhatinipara under Rishikul union of Godagari upazila, said most members of the 150 Orao families in his community went to work at potato fields in Tanore, Paba and Mohonpur upazilas.

While many of them returned towards the beginning of April, some 40 members of the community, mostly

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Boatloads of watermelons arrive in the capital's Badamtoli Ghat from different districts across the country yesterday. The summer fruit used to have heavy demand and a large one would sell for Tk 300 or even more. But now, due to the coronavirus outbreak, demand has dropped. Traders were seen trying to sell large ones for Tk 180, but no one was buying.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

FOR ASKING FOR AID UP chairman beats up farmer, gets arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

Police yesterday arrested Abdus Sattar, chairman of Arjunpur Baramahati union parishad, for allegedly assaulting a farmer who called the hotline for relief in Natore's Lalpur upazila.

Superintendent of Natore police Liton Kumar Saha announced the arrest of Sattar at a press briefing in his office.

The farmer, Shahidul Islam of Angaripara village, had fallen upon hard times during the coronavirus outbreak and the ensuing countrywide shutdown, and so called the hotline 333 for relief on April 10.

Angered by the incident, Sattar called him to the union parishad on April 12, took him to a room and beat him up, said Lalpur Upazila Nirbahi Officer Ummul Bani Dutty.

The incident went viral and the Lalpur UNO issued a show-cause notice on April 13.

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7 held for selling, hoarding relief materials

STAR REPORT

Law enforcers yesterday arrested seven people on charges of illegally storing and selling over nine tonnes of rice, 3.65 tonnes of sugar and 980 litres of edible oil meant for poor people in different districts.

They were arrested in four districts in possession of the goods supplied under several government programmes.

In the wake of widespread allegations over theft of rice and other food items meant for the poor, law enforcers and civil administration have continued drives to recover the relief goods.

Since March 30, law enforcers have recovered over 306 tonnes of rice, 4.5 tonnes of sugar, 7,460 litres of edible oil and 25 sacks of chickpea. Besides, 56 persons were arrested in different districts in this connection, according to reports.

In Barishal, a mobile court seized over 7.68 metric tonnes of rice of the government's Food for Work (Kabikha) programmes from a wholesale shop at Uttarpar Bazar of Banaripara municipality yesterday.

The mobile court jailed AKM Yusuf Ali, vice-president of Banaripara upazila unit Awami League, on charge of storing and selling the rice.

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FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

Bangladesh enters Commonwealth



A Bhutanese government delegation led by the Bhutanese Foreign Minister Dawa Tsering calls on Bangabandhu on April 17, 1972 at his official residence.

April 18, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

COMMONWEALTH MEMBERSHIP FOR BANGLADESH

Bangladesh is today admitted to the Commonwealth as its 32nd member. The announcement of the membership is made by the Commonwealth Secretary General Arnold Smith. Bangladesh Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad welcomes the announcement and says that the decision of the Commonwealth is an acceptance of the reality of Bangladesh by the world's first community of nations. He further says that Bangladesh will maintain good and friendly relations

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TIB opposes 'partisan relief committees'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Transparency International Bangladesh yesterday expressed concerns over the ruling Awami League's announcement that partisan "relief committees" would be formed to help officials distribute relief goods among the poor.

Although all kinds of participation irrespective of political affiliations is necessary to mitigate the crisis, there are reasons to doubt whether the "relief committees" would play a positive role, said a statement issued by the graft watchdog.

BSS reports, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday asked the grassroots AL leaders and activists to form relief distribution committees following the instructions of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and to join the relief distribution process

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STAY HOME, STAY WELL

Take special care of the elderly

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Elderly people require special attention in the days of coronavirus as they are the most vulnerable, said experts.

Talking to The Daily Star, physician Tanveer Ahmed suggested some special measures should be taken for the elderly people.

Elderly people suffer from different old age complications, thus, take medicine regularly. It would be wise to keep their regular medications and other supplies well stocked, he said.

They should wash their hands frequently and if possible stay alone in a room that has attached bathroom, he added.

They should not expose to others at this time and stay away from children to protect themselves from infection, he further added.

To stay safe, family members should not share food, water bottles, utensils and other personal items with each other, the doctor said.

He suggested that elderly people should postpone their regular medical check-ups and non-essential doctor visits unless it is very serious.

Other than the elderly people, none should go out of home during the shutdown. If needed, home delivery services should be availed for groceries and other essentials, he said.

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Mogh Party man shot dead in Bandarban

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

A member Arakan Liberation Party, locally known as Mogh Party, was shot dead at remote Kenaiju Para in Rowangchhari upazila of Bandarban yesterday morning.

The dead is Mong Sai Hla, 30, of remote Thanchi upazila, said Touhid Kabir, officer-in-charge of Rowangchhari Police Station.

Mong was a member of Mogh Party, said the OC,

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PRAYER TIMING APRIL 18

Fazr Juma Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4:35 12:30 4:45 6:24 7:45
JAMAAT 5:10 1:15 5:00 6:28 8:15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

South Asia virus cases hit 22,000

The Maldives locks down capital

REUTERS, New Delhi/Male

The number of people infected with the coronavirus crossed 22,000 in densely populated South Asia yesterday driven by a rise in cases in India as the tiny Indian Ocean island nation of Maldives locked down its capital.

Health officials have warned that the region, home to a fifth of the world's population, could be the new frontline against the disease because of millions living in packed slums and fragile public health systems.

India's caseload rose to 13,387, a jump of nearly 700 over the previous day, despite a harsh lockdown now in its fourth week and which will last at least until early May.

Authorities have identified a fifth of India's hundreds of districts as red zones with the highest number of cases,

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A large number of people shop at a kitchen market in the capital's Matikata yesterday. Such poor physical distancing practices run the risk of coronavirus infection.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

China revises death toll

Adds 1,290 deaths not mentioned before; US plans reopening of economy in phases

AFP, Wuhan

The Chinese city at the origin of the coronavirus outbreak revised up its death toll by 50 percent yesterday, as global criticism mounted over China's handling of the deadly pandemic.

Since emerging from Wuhan late last year, the coronavirus has embarked on a deadly march across the planet, killing more than 145,000 people and wrecking the global economy as more than half of humanity -- 4.5 billion people -- is trapped indoors.

While President Donald Trump announced a phased reopening of the United States, the economic devastation was clear to see in China, where gross domestic product slumped into reverse for the first time since records began.

Several countries across Europe are starting to slowly ease back weeks-old restrictions after deaths and infections showed signs of stabilising, and the German health minister said Thursday his country's outbreak was "under control".

In China, Wuhan's city government added 1,290 deaths to its toll, bringing the total to 3,869 after many dead were "mistakenly reported" or missed entirely, adding to growing global doubts over China's transparency.

Leaders in France and Britain joined Trump's broadsides against China, as two US media outlets reported suspicions the virus accidentally slipped out of a sensitive Wuhan laboratory that studied bats.

President Emmanuel Macron told the Financial Times

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