

CITIZEN REPATRIATION

Biman to run 3 flights from Dhaka, Japan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Biman Bangladesh Airlines is operating three special flights -- one from Dhaka and two from Japan -- to repatriate citizens of the two countries, following a ban on scheduled passenger flights due to Covid-19 pandemic.

"Biman yesterday ferried 109 passengers, most of whom were Japanese citizens, to Narita Airport in Tokyo," a top official of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport told The Daily Star.

The special flight left Dhaka airport around 9am, said Tahera Khandaker, deputy general manager (public relations) of Biman.

She also said Biman was scheduled to operate two other flights, one yesterday and the other tomorrow, from Japan to repatriate Bangladeshi citizens.

Biman is also likely to operate a special flight from South Korea to bring back Bangladeshi citizens tomorrow, said sources in the airline.



While the thoroughfares of Dhaka wear a deserted look even during peak traffic hours of the day, the scenes at Panthapath-Tejgaon link road early in the morning tell an entirely different story. The biggest wholesale fish market of the capital is abuzz with traders, suppliers, transporters and buyers, causing a hubbub reminiscent of pre-coronavirus Dhaka. The photo was taken earlier this week.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

'Other nations should share responsibility'

Foreign minister says about Rohingyas adrift at sea

UNB, Dhaka

Pointing to the international community's continuous call upon Bangladesh to shelter Rohingya people who arrive floating on boats at Bay of Bengal, the country's Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen said other countries of the region are not being requested to share the burden.

The minister urged all countries to take effective steps quickly to resolve the Rohingya crisis.

He conveyed the message when British Minister of State for the Commonwealth and the United Nations Lord Ahmad made a phone call to him on Monday requesting Bangladesh to give shelter to floating Rohingyas at Bay.

"Despite limited resources, Bangladesh has already given shelter to around 1.1 million Rohingyas on humanitarian ground. The small number of 500 floating Rohingyas are not in the country's territory," he said.

Talking to UNB, a diplomat said it is the responsibility of surrounding countries of the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea to share the responsibility and help the distressed people.

There are eight countries -- Myanmar, India, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and Bangladesh -- in the Bay of Bengal region.

Foreign Minister Dr Momen said though Bangladesh was requested to give shelter to floating Rohingyas on humanitarian grounds, other countries in the region were not requested to do the same thing.

He asked the UK Minister to shelter the floating Rohingyas by sending their [UK] royal ship.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Mysterious death of senior SBMCH doctor in Barishal

SUSHANTA GHOSH

Police yesterday recovered the body of a senior doctor of Barishal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital (SBMCH) from the bottom of an elevator shaft at Mamata Specialised Hospital in Barishal city.

Dr Zahirul Islam Manik, director of the hospital and head of surgery at SBMCH, said Dr Md Al Azad (45) went missing since Monday evening, and they informed police yesterday morning.

Dr Azad was a senior consultant at SBMCH's burn and plastic surgery unit and was working part-time at Mamata hospital, residing in a room on the hospital's sixth floor.

Zahidul Islam, a staffer at the hospital, said on Monday afternoon, Dr Azad asked for iftar and Zahidul put the meal in front his room as it was locked. Staffers went with dinner at night but still found the room locked.

Abdur Rahman Mukur, officer-in-charge (investigation) of Kotwali Police Station, said on information, police recovered the body around 1:30pm. The OC said one of Dr Azad's legs was broken but they were uncertain about how he died, as they did not find any fault in the lift. Police are investigating the cause of death.

The body was sent to SBMCH morgue for autopsy. SBMCH Director Bakir Hossain visited the spot and paid his condolences.

Shihab Uddin Ahamed, a relative of Dr Azad, said the doctor had a wife, son and daughter, all of whom live in Dhaka's Keraniganj.



Police on guard outside the hospital where Dr Azad's body was found.

PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh's tallest man Jinnat dies

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Jinnat Ali, the tallest man in the country, died at Chittagong Medical College Hospital yesterday morning.

The 24-year-old was undergoing treatment at the hospital's neurosurgery department, said Dr Khurshed Anwar, an assistant registrar of the department.

He had been suffering from a brain tumour and other complications for a long while now, the doctor said. Jinnat was admitted to the hospital on Monday and placed on life support, he added.

He breathed his last around 4am, confirmed his elder brother Ilias Ali.

Jinnat was born at Baroebel village under Ramu upazila of Cox's Bazar in 1996. Standing at 8 feet 6 inches, Jinnat was the second son of Amir Hamza and Shahpuri Begum.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina gifted him a house when he called on the premier in 2018.

Physicians informed him that he was suffering from a brain tumour when Jinnat was admitted to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) in 2018.

His height was increasing unnaturally due to a hormonal imbalance, doctors said earlier.

Ensure workplace safety before you ease the shutdown

ILO urges govt to take steps involving employers, workers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With pressures mounting on countries to ease their lockdown restrictions, International Labour Organization (ILO) has urged the government to take action to prevent and control the spread of Covid-19 in the workplace, with active involvement and dialogue with employers' and workers' organisations.

All employers need to carry out risk assessments and ensure their workplaces meet strict occupational safety and health criteria beforehand, to minimise the risk to workers of exposure to Covid-19, said ILO in a statement yesterday.

Without such controls, countries face the very real risk of a resurgence of the virus. Putting in place the necessary measures will minimise the risk of a second wave of contagion at the workplace.

ILO Director-General Guy Ryder said, "The safety and health of our entire workforce is paramount today. In the face of an infectious disease outbreak, how we protect our workers now clearly dictates how safe our communities are, and how resilient our businesses will be, as this pandemic evolves."

"It is only by implementing occupational safety and health measures that we can protect the lives of workers, their families and the larger communities, ensure work continuity and economic survival," Ryder added.

ILO Country Director (Bangladesh) Tuomo Poutiainen, said, "As some industries begin to slowly resume operations, the ILO has developed a three-pronged strategy to ensure a safer return to work in the Bangladesh context. The first step is the adoption of several safety and health measures at work based on dialogue between employers and workers, and a shared understanding of coronavirus risks."

"To prevent transmission of the virus and safeguard workers, the ILO has developed Covid-19 specific OSH guidelines, together with the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments (DIFE). Furthermore, the ILO is recommending employment retention through work-sharing and reskilling, in addition to essential social protection measures to ensure access to subsistence

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

'It is an attack on freedom of expression'

Say media rights defenders; 20 journos assaulted, held for reporting irregularity in relief distribution

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some 20 journalists were attacked, intimidated, harassed, or arrested for reporting on pilferage, corruption, and lack of accountability in food aid meant for the poor during the lockdown, noted Forum for Freedom of Expression, Bangladesh.

The network of media rights defenders expressed concern at the attacks on freedom of expression, in a statement circulated to the media yesterday.

"The forum is deeply concerned regarding the series of attacks, intimidation, and judicial harassment of journalists and other media organisations all over the country, during the 30 days of lockdown," said the statement.

The forum aggregated all such incidences in the statement as a reminder of how widespread these violations have been.

On April 19, Toufique Imrose Khalidi, editor-in-chief of bdnews24.com; Mohiuddin Sarker, acting editor of jagonews24.com; along with three other journalists -- Rahim Suvho, Thakurgaon correspondent of bdnews24.com and a local journalist Shaown Amin -- were accused under the Digital Security Act, said the statement, noting that the person filing the case was a member of Baliadangi Upazila's Swachhshasebak League in Thakurgaon.

Two days after this incident, Thakurgaon police assaulted the district correspondent of Bangladesh Pratidin and private TV channel News 24 at a checkpoint.

On April 15, Thakurgaon police also sued a district correspondent of Dainik Odhikar under the security act for criticising the district administration on Facebook, noted the statement.

Citizen journalists were similarly targeted in Thakurgaon, said the statement,

presenting as evidence, the assault upon freelance video-blogger Sagor Chowdhury by the son of the president of Borhanuddin upazila Awami League. The attacker Nabil Hyder, is also a Chhatra League activist of Dhaka University unit.

The situation has been dire throughout the country, added the statement.

It also decried the incident where three district correspondents belonging to Dainik Protidiner Sangbad, Dainik Amar Sangbad and private TV Channel-S were attacked with a cricket bat by the chairman of Aushkandi Union Parishad in Nabiganj, Sylhet for reporting on relief distribution.

The chairman, Mahibur Rahman, is also a local leader of the ruling party, added the statement.

Shah Sultan Ahmed, the Nabiganj upazila correspondent of Dainik Protidiner Sangbad was shifted to Osmani Medical College in Sylhet with critical injuries, pointed out the statement.

Also in Sylhet, a Jaintapur upazila correspondent of the Daily Naya Diganta and the Dainik Sylhet Mirror, was hospitalised at Sylhet Medical College with serious head injuries after he was attacked by one Abul Hasim for reporting a local coronavirus case, said the statement.

On April 14, police arrested Golam Sarwar Pintu, journalist of Dainik Bangladesh Alo, after Sheikh Salim, a Dhaka city councillor of Ward 38, filed a case under the Digital Security Act with Badda Police Station, said the statement.

"Pintu's crime was the publication of news regarding an angry urban-poor community held protest, demanding food aid during the lockdown," it added.

On April 23, the chairman of Amirganj Union Parishad in Narsingdi assaulted Baten Biplob, senior crime reporter and TV

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Nat'l Professor Anisuzzaman hospitalised

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

National Professor Anisuzzaman was admitted to a city hospital yesterday.

Although his condition is stable, the eminent scholar is not out of danger, Dr Asish Kumar Chakrabarty, managing director of Universal Medical College Hospital, told The Daily Star yesterday evening.

Prof Anisuzzaman was undergoing treatment at the coronary care unit (CCU) of the hospital, under the supervision of CCU chief Prof Dr Khandaker Kamrul Islam.

"He has multiple long-running health complications. Our experts have examined him. He is in a stable condition, but not out of danger," Dr Asish Kumar said.

Prof Anisuzzaman, an eminent writer and educationist, was born on February 18, 1937 in Calcutta (now Kolkata), India.

He made a notable contribution to the Language Movement in

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

COVID-19 Rab official tests positive in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A member of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab-7) tested Covid-19 positive in Chattogram's Patenga on Monday.

He is among nine people who have tested positive in the port city on the same day. The assistant sub-inspector (35) is now in isolation at Rab-7 headquarters, said Rab officials.

Alongside him, a traffic constable and a doctor of Chattogram Medical College Hospital have also tested positive.

The number of police personnel infected is now seven, according to Chattogram Metropolitan Police (CMP) sources.

Alarmed by this, CMP shifted 33 traffic police personnel to a private hotel in the city's Chawkbazar on Monday.

Rab-7 Commanding Officer Lt Col Moshior Rahman Jewel told The Daily Star, "The ASI has remained in the isolation unit of Rab-7 headquarters since April 7, after he had reported sore throat."

"He is now undergoing treatment in isolation. Ten persons who came in contact with him have been sent to isolation. They will be gradually tested for the virus," the commanding officer added.

CMP Additional Deputy Commissioner Abu Bakkar Siddique said they are trying to ease the pressure from traffic barracks by shifting the policemen to other places as it is quite tough to maintain social distancing inside the barrack.

As per the process, two separate places, including CMP School and College and GEC Convention Centre, have been chosen and different units of CMP are shifting there.

CMP ADC (headquarters) Md Moinul Islam said 33 rooms of the CMP school have already been set up for quarantine purposes. Besides, 20 isolation beds and a dedicated flu corner have been set up at Dampara Divisional Police Hospital.



With outdoor activities severely restricted due to the coronavirus-triggered nationwide shutdown, the popularity of kites seems to be soaring among the youth. A carpenter in Barishal city's Nazir Mahalla assembles a few good old-fashioned 'natai' (kite-flying wheel), presumably with other woodwork orders drying up.

PHOTO: TITU DAS