

Country's youngest coronavirus patient recovering in Ctg

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

A 10-month-old-baby, who was tested Covid-19 positive on April 21, is getting better at Chattogram General Hospital (CGH).

Doctors said the first sample of the country's youngest coronavirus positive patient tested negative yesterday and they would release the boy from the hospital if the second sample showed a similar result.

If the baby gets discharged from the hospital, it will be a milestone for the hospital where Covid-19 patients of all ages have received treatment and recovered; the child will be the youngest survivor in the country.

Earlier, a 67-year-old man, the first Covid-19 positive patient in Chattogram, was discharged from this hospital. He was followed by a number of patients of different ages, said hospital sources.

Till yesterday, 15 patients have been discharged from CGH while 36 have been undergoing treatment at the hospital's isolation ward, said Dr Abdur Rab, a senior consultant of medicine at CGH. He said three patients have so far died.

"We'll send the second sample of the child for testing within a few days," said Dr Rab. "If the test is also negative, we will release the child, who is the youngest Covid-19 patient in the country," he said. Dr Rab said the condition of all the patients undergoing treatment is now stable.

CGH is one of the two hospitals in Chattogram dedicated by the government for treating Covid-19 patients. The

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PHOTO: RASHED SHUJON

The May Day comes at a strange time this year. As a shutdown continues across the country and many parts of the world, debates on labour rights and essential work are raging across the world. Amid such circumstances, sewage workers in Dhaka were seen at work yesterday clearing up Mohammadpur's Ramchandrapur canal of waste, with no safety gear on -- to fend against the polluted water or stave off the coronavirus.

Railway to operate three parcel trains

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Railway has decided to operate three special parcel trains to transport food, daily essentials and perishable goods to Dhaka from different districts amid the nationwide shutdown.

The three trains will operate from today on Dhaka-Chattogram-Dhaka, Dhaka-Dewanganj-Dhaka and Dhaka-Khulna-Dhaka, the railway said through a press release yesterday. Two trains will operate every day on first two routes while three days on Dhaka-Khulna-Dhaka route.

Bangladesh Railway suspended all its passenger services on March 24 to contain the spread of Covid-19. It however, continued operation of freight trains.

BR usually transport luggage vans with passenger trains, but as passenger train services are suspended, authorities decided to operate three parcel trains, officials said.

BR Director General Md Shamsuzzaman said they had operated such special trains during political unrest in 2014 and 2015 when operations of most of the goods-laden vehicles were halted.

He, however, said the service would depend on demand. Traders would be benefited if they avail the service for carrying vegetables, foods and perishable items, he told The Daily Star yesterday.

Health safety of the railway staff would be ensured, he said, adding that the special service would be stopped once normalcy resumes. Asked about resuming passenger services, he said they did not get any directive in this regard.

Although all public transports remained suspended, operation of goods-laden vehicles continues. But farmers in many areas are counting losses as sale of the products had fallen during this shutdown.

Fishers ready to set sail for hilsa

60-day ban on fishing ends in the south



Fishermen prepare their nets to sail out to sea. The photo was taken from Barishal's Tungbaria village on Wednesday.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barishal

A two-month government ban on catching hilsa at six estuaries in the country's southern region ended last night, paving the way for fishermen to catch the national fish.

However, many fishermen -- especially those who returned from sea due to shutdown -- said they will not be able to go back out soon.

However, many others are getting ready to set sail, considering their difficulties.

Estuaries of the rivers Meghna, Padma, Elisha, Tetulia, Kalabadar and Andharmanik in Barishal, Bhola, Patuakhali, Chandpur, Laxmipur and Shariatpur were under the purview of the ban, said sources at the Department of Fisheries (DoF).

The government imposes the prohibition from March to April to facilitate safe spawning and increase national fishing wealth by saving fish fry, said Syed Azizul Haque, deputy director of DoF, Barishal division.

Since 2006, the spots -- stretching 392km in total -- have been declared sanctuaries for fishes during the period, said the official.

"With the help of law enforcing agencies and local administration, we enforced the ban," said the deputy director.

Kalam, a fisherman from Ulania in Mehendiganj upazila, said, "Although the ban period is over, we need to wait to go to sea until the shutdown is withdrawn or relaxed."

Similar comments came from Md

Israfil, president of Jatiya Khudro Matsyajibi Samity. Motahar Majhi, from Patharghata upazila of Barguna, expressed frustration at the situation. "How will I survive if I do not fish? I need to go to sea."

FISHERS SAY VGF FOOD HAS BEEN MISAPPROPRIATED
Meanwhile, many fishermen alleged that they did not get any compensation or food support during the ban period.

Anis Chaprasi, a fisherman from Tungbaria in Barishal, said if they do not get assistance from the government, they have to struggle to cope with the situation.

Also, the food assistance they get under vulnerable group feeding (VGF) programme is not adequate, said many fishers.

Fishermen allege that local public representatives embezzle the food items allocated for them. Israfil, a leader of a group of fishermen, said in Barishal division half of the fishermen did not get VGF food support. "Some UP chairmen and members misappropriated that," he alleged.

Zakir, another fisherman, said he was included in the priority list but was yet to receive VGF food.

Md Bahauddin Ahmed, chairman of Tungbaria Union Parishad, said the allocated food is not enough to meet everyone's demand. "Only 566 fishermen out of 1,200 in the union got VGF food."

"We sent letters to upazila nirbahi officers (UNO) concerned to take action against those involved in VGF food misappropriation," said Syed Azizul Haque, the DoF deputy director.

Ensure wage, bonus for workers before Eid: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Trade union and labour leaders yesterday demanded that the government ensure that factory owners provide workers their due wages and bonuses ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr.

Besides, the government has to take specific, sector-wise measures for both formal and informal sector workers to support them in fighting the pandemic's economic consequences and for their health safety, they said at a virtual roundtable discussion.

Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS) and The Daily Star arranged the roundtable on "Covid-19: Situation of Working People, Challenges and Way Forward to the Future of Work". BILS Secretary General Nazrul Islam Khan moderated it.

The event was held prior to May

Day, to be observed globally today.

Speakers claimed that the government's relief effort has not reached many workers in rural areas, with no income opportunities. These workers and their family have been spending days starving, they added.

Addressing the roundtable, Bangladesh Trade Union Kendra General Secretary Wajedul Islam Khan said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has declared some specific directives to fight the current situation, which should be followed accordingly.

Authorities concerned have to ensure that workers are being paid three months' wages, he said. "Workers should be given dues and bonuses, and they cannot be fired ahead of Eid due to the shutdown," he added.

Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments Chief Inspector Shihbath Roy said they have asked inspectors to monitor that factory owners ensure hygiene, and

provide face masks at the entrance following standard health guideline.

These measures were taken alongside regular activities, he said. Samajtantrik Shramik Front President Razequzzaman Ratan said many migrant workers are at risk of losing jobs, and the government should arrange special training for them.

Noted rights activist and Shramik Nirapotta Forum Convener Hameeda Hossain said it is imperative that trade unions and workers fight the situation hand in hand.

Chairing the programme, BILS Chairman Habibur Rahman Shiraz spoke on the significance of May Day and urged all to follow its core values.

Among others, Jatiya Shramik League General Secretary Azam Khasru, Jatiyatabadi Shramik Dal President Anwar Hossain and Dhaka University's Prof Rashed Al Mahmud Titumir spoke at the roundtable.



Amanullah Chowdhury passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Amanullah Chowdhury, vice chairman and founding director of Rangs Group, passed away yesterday at 73.

He had been suffering from pneumonia and various health complications.

He left behind his wife and two daughters to mourn his death.

Amanullah Chowdhury graduated in pharmacy from Dhaka University, and later completed his MS in the USA. He worked

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Appoint 2,000 doctors, 5,000 nurses: PSC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Public Service Commission yesterday recommended to recruit 2,000 doctors and 5,054 nurses to meet the emergency demand of state to tackle the coronavirus crisis.

The doctors will be recruited from the waiting list of 8,107 doctors who passed 39th BCS, while the nurses will be recruited from the waiting list of senior staff nurse recruitment examinations held recently, said a statement of Public Service Commission.

It said the recommendations were made based on demand of public administration ministry on emergency need to provide treatment to Covid-19 patients.

So far, more than 300 doctors have been infected with coronavirus, while many others have had to go to quarantine. Besides, some new hospitals are also being set up for coronavirus patients.

As a result, demand letters were sent to the PSC for the recruitment of 2,000 doctors and 6,000 nurses to address the manpower crisis.

MD TAJDIN HASSAN

A month of relentless efforts have turned out to be efficacious, as Mission Save Bangladesh has completed a milestone of collecting funds amounting to more than Tk 1 crore. Moreover, more than a hundred brands have come on board the initiative so far.

Perhaps with these numbers reflecting the achievements, the journey of Mission Save Bangladesh so far can be highlighted but these are not just numbers as the story behind these numbers has never been easier.

"One month" does not refer to a significant measure of time. A dream to save Bangladesh from a difficult time we have been in over the last month, is a reflection of the realisation of that

MISSION SAVE BANGLADESH

The power of passion, people and partnerships



dream. Thanks to the tireless work of everyone involved with this initiative, Mission Save Bangladesh has been able to help more than five thousand families and more than twenty thousand people.

"One crore taka" does not just mean some amount of money. This "one crore" is evidence that the sense of humanity is still alive in the world.

"One hundred" alone does not indicate the number of partners of Mission Save

Bangladesh. This "one hundred" is a reflection of the fact that the impossible can be achieved if everyone stands with each other during times of crisis.

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Discrimination galore in relief distribution

Observes monitoring committee

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The newly-launched monitoring committee on relief distribution during coronavirus situation yesterday alleged that there is rampant discrimination in providing assistance.

The committee, from an online press conference, alleged that most poverty-prone areas are getting smaller assistance than comparatively less-vulnerable prone area.

In a statement, it said according to the government's household survey, Kurigram is the most poverty-prone area. For the district, per person rice allocation was only 874g, and per person cash allocation was Tk 3.85.

Naryanganj is a much better-off area, but for the district, per person rice allocation was 22.5kg and per person cash allocation was Tk 88.17.

If relief distributions at grassroots level is not done properly, a catastrophic situation is waiting for all, said the statement. The government should reach necessary help to doorsteps of people, but so far there are reports that indiscriminate corruption, irregularities and partiality are taking place in the name of relief distribution.

Against this backdrop, the monitoring committee demanded that all allocations should take place in the light of marginal people's needs. All poor and jobless families should be provided 30kg rice and Tk 10,000 through mobile financial services each month, until the crisis is over, it added.

"The government should buy 50 lakh tonnes of paddy and 25 lakh tonnes of rice from farmers, and should use all schools as silo. It should stop funding of less-important projects under Annual Development Project," the monitoring committee recommended.



Fruit traders in Sylhet are incurring huge losses due to the lack of retail buyers, consumers, and even load workers. Even though harvest was great this year, the volume of trade has come down astronomically. For example, daily banana trade of around Tk 7 to 8 crore has come down to Tk 2 to 3 crore only. The photo was taken at Sylhet's Kadamtali fruit market.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

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3 cops closed after man dies in custody

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Three police officers, including an assistant sub-inspector (ASI), were closed after a 65-year-old shop employee died while being in custody at Chattogram city's Bakshirhat Police Outpost.

The deceased is Giridhari Chowdhury of Chattogram's Paitya upazila, said police. He was a staffer of a shop at Teri Bazar's Mohiuddin Market.

The closed police officers are ASI Kamrul Islam and his two constables.

Colleagues of the victim alleged that police beat him up and that lead to his death. Police denied the allegation.

Officials formed a three-member probe committee -- headed by Shah Md Abdur Rauf, additional deputy commissioner (ADC, south) of Chattogram Metropolitan Police (CMP) -- to investigate the matter.

CMP Deputy Commissioner (DC, South) Md Mehedi Hasan said Giridhari and a colleague of his were loading clothes from their shop onto a rickshaw after iftar, despite the market being closed. A security guard of Teri Bazar confronted them and asked why they were there amid the lockdown.