



Primary dropouts can increase

No stipend for 6 months, no school feeding for over a month

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Risk of poor students dropping out from primary schools is growing as the government stipend distribution remains halted for six months and school feeding programme withheld for over a month.

About 1.37 crore students of government primary schools across the country haven't received the help since October, while over 30 lakh vulnerable children of poor families are out of the school feeding programme from March 17 when all educational institutions were closed to contain the spread of coronavirus.

Primary Education Stipend Project (PESP) officials argue that the project extension work remains stopped due to the ongoing government holidays announced to fight the Covid-19 outbreak. They also said a proposal on extending the project has been awaiting Ecneq nod since December, when the third phase of the project ended.

Officials involved in the school feeding programme said they were planning to reach 50 packets of fortified biscuits to each beneficiary in one go, to save them from malnourishment.

Manzoor Ahmed, senior adviser at Brac University Institute of Educational Development and also the university's professor emeritus, said chance was there that the dropout rate might go up if vital benefits like stipend and feeding programmes remained unavailable.

Directorate of Primary Education Director General Md

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



Ignoring the government's directives on social distancing, a few hundred garment workers leaving their Ashulia factory in flocks. The reality here appears to be contradicting the factory owners' promises of strictly maintaining health rules. The photo was taken around 3:30pm yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Hundreds of RMG workers stage sit in for arrears

STAR REPORT

Hundreds of workers of a garment factory yesterday staged a sit-in inside the factory in Gazipur's Sreepur, demanding their arrears.

Workers of MHC Apparels Ltd at Bhangnathi said 1,900 out of 3,000 workers entered the factory in the morning but did not work.

The factory authorities did not pay their dues for the last three months, the workers said, claiming that they had not been getting their overtime bills since last August.

Although the authorities assured them of paying their arrears several times, they were yet to get their dues, they said.

They also alleged that the authorities had threats issued to them by local musclemen.

But the authorities denied the allegation.

SR Azad, assistant general manager (admin) of MHC Apparels Ltd, however, said Tk 4,000 was sent to each worker through mobile financial service accounts as part of March salary.

The remaining dues will be paid on May 13, he told The Daily Star by phone.

Regarding the arrears for the month of February, Azad said some eight to

SEE PAGE 4 COL 8

Govt suspends all hajj activities

Cites poor response from people wishing pilgrimage; advice of KSA

RASHIDUL HASAN

The government has suspended all hajj activities following lukewarm response from intended hajis and advice from Saudi Arabia amid the coronavirus outbreak.

So far, only 66,000 intended hajis have got registered against a quota of 137,198 Bangladeshis to be allowed by Saudi Arabia to perform this year's hajj, according to the religious affairs ministry.

"Upon the expiry of the fourth deadline for hajj registration on April 30, we found that only 66,000 intended hajis completed their registration for performing hajj. That's why we have decided not to extend the deadline further... All hajj activities have been suspended," Nurul Islam, secretary at the ministry, told The Daily Star yesterday.

"Last month, the Saudi government advised us not to proceed further with this year's hajj plan," said the secretary.

"There is uncertainty over this year's hajj due to the coronavirus pandemic. We are now waiting for Saudi government's message to decide on our next course of action," added Nurul.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

'Work as a servant of the people'



A delegation of Indian National Congress calls on Bangabandhu at his official residence and hands over some books on May 4, 1972.

May 4, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

BE AWARE OF THE CONSPIRATORS

Prime Minister Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman declares today that the machinations of the foreign agents would not be able to undo the hard-earned freedom of Bangladesh. Speaking at a meeting organised by secretariat employees, the prime minister tells them to be aware of these conspirators and prevent these elements from tarnishing the image of the country.

Bangabandhu urges government employees to devote themselves to the reconstruction of the country. He reminds them that they are not masters but servants of the people. Old bureaucratic, time-consuming methods will not just do anymore, he adds. He declares

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



Be ready to live with coronavirus

Says Delhi CM, announces relaxations of lockdown

NDTV ONLINE

Delhi is "ready to lift the lockdown" Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said yesterday, announcing a list of services and industries which have been given restricted relief as the nationwide lockdown is set to enter its third phase.

"The time has come to re-open Delhi. We will have to be ready to live with coronavirus," declared the chief minister at a press conference yesterday evening.

Delhi has so far seen 4,122 cases of coronavirus, of whom 1256 patients have recovered, 64 have died.

Indicating a phased removal of the lockdown, the chief minister said Delhi is prepared to ease restrictions "in places other than containment zones".

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Scientists create glowing flowers



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Scientists have created glowing flowers after editing the DNA of a plant.

The researchers spliced DNA from a glowing mushroom into a tobacco plant and found that it was possible to make them glow with a "pleasant green aura that emanates from their living energy".

The researchers say that the discovery could be used to create glowing flowers or other ornamental plants, and change the make-up of the plants that surround us.

It can also be used by scientists to learn more about the plants they study, watching the glow to see their inner workings.

The new research is published in Nature Biotechnology, and was conducted by scientists from Russia, the UK and Austria.

The new plants can produce more than a billion

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

'Drug dealer' killed in 'gunfight'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

A suspected drug peddler was killed in a "gunfight" with police in Chatkhil upazila of Noakhali early yesterday.

The dead Sayem Feroz, 41, was accused in 12 cases related to drugs, arms and robbery, said Alamgir Hossain, superintendent of Noakhali police.

Anwarul Islam, officer-in-charge of Chatkhil Station, claimed a police team conducted a drive in Khilpara area around 2:00am on information that some men were smuggling a consignment of drugs there.

Sensing police presence, the gang of drug peddlers, including Sayem, opened fire, prompting the law enforcers to retaliate in "self-defence", the police official added.

At one stage, Sayem suffered bullet injuries while his cohorts managed to flee.

He was rushed to Chatkhil Upazila Health Complex where doctors

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



Wearing personal protection equipment (PPE), staffers at the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital receiving coronavirus patients. The establishment has recently been turned into an isolation unit.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

COVID-19 VACCINE, TREATMENTS

Europe pledges to raise money

Prepares for more lockdown easing

AGENCIES

The European Union will set up an international medical programme to lead the global response to fighting coronavirus with an initial pledge of raising \$8bn (£6.3bn) to find a vaccine and treatment for the pandemic.

The virtual pledging conference, due to take place today, was organised following Donald Trump's suspension of US contributions to the World Health Organization (WHO) after accusing the organization of colluding with the Chinese government in hiding the initial outbreak of the disease.

Heads of states and senior officials of the European Union, writing in The Independent, have declared their support for the WHO while unveiling the plan to work with scientists and international welfare organisations, including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Wellcome Trust, to counter the contagion.

The EU states will be joined by Norway in filling the immediate global funding shortfall estimated by the Global Preparedness Monitoring Board (GPMB). Vaccines and treatments, say the leaders, will be made available throughout the world to developing nations with an emphasis on states in Africa.

The urgent need for international unity in the crisis, and the warning that no country can go it alone, is stressed in an article in The Independent signed by German Chancellor Angela Merkel; French President Emmanuel Macron; Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte; Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg; European Council President Charles Michel and Ursula von der Leyen, president of the European Commission.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5