



Waliur Rahman Reza no more

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Waliur Rahman Reza, a former lawmaker and member of ruling Awami League's national committee, passed away following a cardiac arrest at his residence in Gaibandha yesterday. He was 85.

One of the organisers of the country's Liberation War, Waliur Rahman was an elected member of the then Purbo Pakistan Gono Parishad in 1970.

He left behind his wife, son and a host of relatives, colleagues and well-wishers to mourn his death. He will be buried at his family graveyard in Gaibandha.

Meanwhile, Awami League President and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina expressed deep shock and sorrow at his demise.

In a condolence

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



Drivers and helpers who could not leave Dhaka in time are now having to struggle for sustenance every day. Some set up a makeshift kitchen at Saidabad bus stand yesterday, buying ingredients using the meagre amount of money a few transport owners have provided. The workers alleged that transport workers' organisations have not come to their aid during this shutdown, and they're worried about their survival.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

COVID-19 VICTIMS Burial ground moved to Rayerbazar graveyard

HELEMIUL ALAM

The government has started using the Rayerbazar graveyard as the designated place of burial for Covid-19 victims in the capital since April 30 as the previously assigned Khilgaon-Taltola graveyard has a waterlogging problem.

"Since the outbreak, burials of coronavirus victims have taken place at Khilgaon-Taltola graveyard. But we have shifted to Rayerbazar graveyard as the one at Khilgaon gets submerged after moderate to heavy showers," said Tanzina Sarwar, chief social welfare officer of Dhaka North City Corporation.

Till May 7 evening, 246 victims have been buried in the two graveyards since the beginning Covid-19 in the country, of which 176 were Covid-19 positive while 70 were suspected of being infected.

A total of 191 persons were buried in Khilgaon-Taltola graveyard while 51 at Rayerbazar graveyard. Apart from that, two were buried at Azimpur graveyard and two at Mirpur Intellectual graveyard, said Tanzina Sarwar.

As of yesterday, the death toll stands at 214, said Prof Dr Nasima Sultana, additional director general (administration) of Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

The total number of infected has reached 13,770 while 5,465 samples were tested in

35 labs across the country since yesterday, Dr Nasima said.

The DNCC official said, "We had a plan to continue burials at the Khilgaon graveyard, which had a burial capacity of around 2,000. But we had to shift due to the waterlogging crisis."

She said the 96-acre Rayerbazar graveyard has a burial capacity of 1.20 lakh. "The graveyard has 16 blocks and we are primarily burying victims in Block-8," she said.

This graveyard was built in a planned way and has a better drainage system. "We will continue the burials here. At the same time, we also pray and hope that we don't need to use other blocks to bury more victims," she said.

HOW BURIALS TAKE PLACE

Three organisations -- Hamza Al-Markazul, Quantum Foundation and Rahmat A Elahi -- are involved with the burial process. Charity organisation Hamza Al-Markazul has played a key role since the beginning with the help of DNCC.

Till May 7, they have buried 216 victims in the two designated graveyards, of them 148 have been tested positive, said Shahidul Islam, acting chairman of Markazul. "We have also sent bodies of 21 Hindus to the cremation field at Postagola following proper procedures," Shahidul said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Fear of DSA taking terrifying form: DUJ

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A faction of Dhaka Union of Journalists yesterday demanded repeal of the Digital Security Act, alleging countrymen's freedom of expression has been curbed through the law's misuse.

Issuing a statement, DUJ leaders said recently a number of journalists and writers were arrested under the DSA while common citizens were not spared either.

Besides, people were detained under the law and sent to jail for criticising the government, they said.

DUJ leaders said they repeatedly opposed the law's enactment and even took to the streets in this regard.

On the other hand, the government in face of agitation had assured that the law will not be misused, they said in the statement.

However, the government has deviated from its previous stance and "awfully misused the law against journalists and voices of dissent", it said.

It added, the fear that had grown among the journalist community earlier regarding the DSA has now taken a "terrifying form".

Repeal Digital Security Act: BNP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday alleged that the Digital Security Act is being misused rampantly during the crisis period of coronavirus outbreak across the country.

"BNP wants to say very clearly that the government is misusing the digital security act to protect itself from people's wrath. Such unjustified act of the state must be stopped right now," Fakhrul said.

He came up with the allegation while addressing a press conference held at the party Chairperson Khaleda Zia's Gulshan office in Dhaka.

Terming the digital security act "anti-people", Fakhrul called upon the authorities concerned to repeal the act and stop the ongoing harassment including arrests under the law during the coronavirus pandemic.

He also expressed his party's condemnation regarding the recent arrests of some people including journalists, a cartoonist, a writer and others under the digital security act.

Citing the arrests, Fakhrul said the government is engaged in using the act to torture and harass people deliberately.

The government blatantly misused the law by arresting photojournalist Shafiqul Islam Kajol on World Press Freedom Day, the BNP leader said.

FAKHRUL ASKS FB TO CLOSE FAKE ACCOUNTS

Meanwhile, Mirza Fakhrul wrote to Facebook authorities yesterday, to take steps for blocking fake accounts and stopping false campaign in his name on the social media platform.

He also said a vested quarter has long been circulating false statements in his name opening fake accounts, adding that he never opened any Facebook account in his name.

'Shonge Achi' serving the hungry

Volunteers' group distributes food to the destitute and street animals

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

"Shonge Achi", a voluntary and humanitarian organisation, recently distributed food among 7,000 poor and lower-middle income families in different parts of Dhaka.

Besides, it distributed food to about 5,000 people living on the streets, whose livelihoods have been taken away by the pandemic, said a press release.

The voluntary organisation collected funds from affluent people, then procured food items including rice, lentils, potato, onion and cooking oil, packaged those and distributed among the underprivileged since March 27.

The organisation started the food distribution as part of its effort to help people in need during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Also, it fed over 4,000 street dogs around Dhaka, 100 horses who would run carts on the Sadarghat-Gulistan route and over 150 monkeys living in old part of Dhaka.



Volunteers preparing food for the underprivileged.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

"The organisation works for women, elderly, physically challenged people, sex workers and their children, dalits, hijras, street children, and low profile musicians," Md Jamal Hossain, Chief Advisor of Shonge Achi said.

Address unemployment issues of youths: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Expressing concerns over the fallout of Covid-19 pandemic on society, speakers at a webinar yesterday called on the government to take necessary steps to address the unemployment problems of youth.

They also called for adopting a holistic approach so that the country could attain the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG).

The remarks came from the webinar titled "Youth Perspective on Covid-19 Crisis in Bangladesh: Response through National Budget and Planning", jointly organised by South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM) and ActionAid Bangladesh.

SANEM's Research Director and Professor of Dhaka University Dr Sayema Haque Bidisha said anti-social activities might increase due to the frustration caused by the pandemic.

She underscored the need for national

preparation and economic diversification to address unemployment problems.

Zubayer Hossen, a research economist at SANEM, said the earning of freelancers in the country has dropped due to the novel coronavirus outbreak.

Nazmul Ahsan, manager of "Young People" at ActionAid Bangladesh suggested preparing comprehensive data on the youth to identify their specific requirements and areas of assistance.

"Such data can be helpful in providing economic assistance, guidelines, and social safety packages," he said.

Raihan presented the research by SANEM on the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on the youth of Bangladesh. The research identified six transmission mechanisms through which the youth of the country are being affected: health, education, employment, income, poverty,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

POLYTECHNIC, TECHNICAL INSTITUTIONS

Livestreamed classes begin today

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Directorate of Technical Education (DTE) is set to begin holding classes of polytechnic institutes through Facebook live, to minimise academic loss of students as those are closed due to coronavirus pandemic.

Live classes for diploma-in-engineering courses of public and private polytechnic institutes, technical school and colleges, will begin at 8am today, DTE Director (planning and development) Jahangir Alam told The Daily Star yesterday.

"Many students are now out of education due to coronavirus situation and they will fall behind. So, we are starting the online classes," he said.

The Facebook live classes will be available on pages like skills.gov.bd/dte and www.facebook.com/skills.gov.bd, he added.

A total of 3.25 lakh students are enrolled in 50 government and 553 private polytechnic institutes, and 64 technical school and colleges.

Classes of all 34 technologies for first year and five coveted technologies for second and third years students will be held via Facebook live, Jahangir said.

Five technologies -- civil, mechanical, computer, electrical and electronic -- have covered at least 80 percent of students.

Fifty teachers of polytechnic in eight divisional cities will deliver lecture by rotation and they have already prepared their speech, with the assistance from a2i project of the government.

"We have already sent information and class routine to all polytechnic institutes, technical school and colleges so that students can follow the classes," Jahangir said.

Earlier DTE introduced televised classroom lectures for about some 3.80 lakh SSC (vocational) and Dakhil (vocational) students at some 3,000 institutions, through Sangsad Bangladesh Television since April 19.

The Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education on March 29 started TV education through Sangsad TV for secondary students,

Directorate of Primary Education started TV class on the same channel on April 7 for primary students and Directorate of Madrasa Education began televised classes on April 19.

All educational institutions have been closed since March 17, and the government has now extended the closure till May 30, in a bid to stem further spread of Covid-19.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on April 27 said all educational institutions may remain closed till September if the coronavirus situation does not improve.

Academic activities of about four crore students are being hampered due to coronavirus crisis. Publishing of SSC examination results and holding of HSC exams have been deferred for an indefinite period. First-term exams of primary schools also been cancelled for the crisis.

Public universities and colleges under National University are in fear of session jam. Many private universities cannot complete their ongoing semester and that would delay their next semester.

World Thalassaemia Day observed with call for youth awareness

CITY DESK

On World Thalassaemia Day (May 8), Bangladesh Thalassaemia Foundation, Sandhani, Medicine Club, and Platform observed the day by creating public awareness online, amid the Covid-19 outbreak, said a press release.

This year's theme was "Thalassaemia prevention should start from the youth, blood screening before marriage will protect the future generations."

According to World Health Organisation, seven per cent of Bangladesh's population (about 11 million people) are carriers of thalassaemia. Every year, 7,000 children are born with the illness.

The keynote was presented by Prof Dr Manzoor Morshed. He said, "Thalassaemia is a genetic disease of the blood. Patients with thalassaemia do not make enough iron in their bodies. As a result, they get severe anaemia. Thalassaemia patients survive through monthly blood infusions. If left untreated, the patients die of anaemia. Human cells have two genes for making blood. A person with a defect in one of the genes that make blood is called a thalassaemia carrier, and a person with a defect in both genes is called a thalassaemia patient."

Dr Abdur Rahim, secretary general of Bangladesh Thalassaemia Foundation, said that Thalassaemia Foundation Hospital continues to provide services even during the pandemic. At present, 3,205 registered patients are receiving regular medical services there. From this hospital, free medical aid is provided to the poor and destitute patients. In 2019, 522 patients were provided free medical services throughout the year.

Dr Aminul Islam, joint secretary to the government and adviser to the foundation; Aktari Mumtaz, former secretary to the government and patron of the foundation, and Dr Habibur Rahman, line director, Non-Communicable Diseases Prevention Program (NCDC), Department of Health joined the discussion among many other distinguished persons.



A monkey takes food from a volunteer near Sadarghat area in the capital. Amid the coronavirus outbreak, alumni of Dhaka Collegiate School distributed food and relief aid among people in need last week, and did not forget about the native primates, who have been struggling for food as well.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

322 Bangladeshis return home from Australia, India

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 322 Bangladeshi citizens stranded in India and Australia returned home yesterday by two separate special flights of US-Bangla Airlines and a Sri Lanka Airlines flight.

Of them, 165 returned from India and 157 returned from Australia. They were stranded in the two countries for over one-and-half-a months after the Covid-19 lockdowns hit.

The US-Bangla Airlines flight carrying the 165 Bangladeshis from Chennai landed at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA) at around 2:45pm. The special Sri Lankan Airlines flight from Australia landed around 1am, after a stop at Colombo, said an official of Aviation Security, HSIA.

Meanwhile, 168 more Indian nationals and one Bhutanese national left Dhaka for their respective countries yesterday, AHM Touhid-ul Ahsan, director, HSIA, said.

A special flight of Air India carrying the Indian citizens left the airport around 1:15pm, while a special flight of Druk Air left the terminals around 9:30am, said Touhid.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2