



TAMING CORONAVIRUS RAMPAGE

Work from home taking a toll

MAHMUDUL HASAN

When the multinational company Shaker Hossain introduced work from home option from the third week of March, just as the rogue coronavirus was gaining a foothold in the country, he was beside himself with relief.

Relief that he no longer would have to sit through the Dhaka traffic for two hours on his commute to and from work; relief that he has fewer chances of catching the deadly virus now.

After a few days of working remotely, the novelty soon wore off. And in its place entered insomnia, backache, weight gain, restlessness, stress and anxiety.

"It has just become a 24-hour job for me," said the mid-level employee at the multinational company.

He now opens his laptop at 9 am and shuts its lid at midnight as his bosses are giving him work, one after another.

"The day and the night seem the same to me now. A strange sense of ennui has taken hold of my life," he said, adding that his output is not satisfactory when compared with his input.

Still, he is putting up with his bosses' whims as the fear of losing his job looms large on his mind. Many of his friends from his business school have been furloughed or laid off recently.

Like Hossain, hundreds and thousands of jobholders are going through the gamut of emotions as companies shut office operations after the nationwide shutdown was announced from 26.



COLLECTED

ICT State Minister Zunaid Ahmed Palak has been thriving working from his home in Dhaka, conducting a raft of meetings every day.

Initially imposed for 10 days, the shutdown has been extended thrice as the coronavirus caseload escalated in the country. At present, the shutdown will be effective until May 16.

The sedentary lifestyle that Tariqul Islam Khan, a deputy general manager at the Bangladesh Oil, Gas and Mineral Corporation (Petrobangla), leads means he has gained 5 kilograms in weight in the last 40 days.

While working in his office space, he would be attending meetings and interacting with people. But, now, absolutely everything has gone virtual and managing it that way is proving to be highly stressful for him.

"Stress and anxiety are such things that can devastate any one's

life. My blood pressure is constantly fluctuating and I can't sleep at night," said Khan, who also suffers from Type 2 diabetes.

And it is not just the middle-aged jobholders who are finding the new working arrangement difficult to get a handle on.

Munir Momtaj, a young sub-editor at a news portal, working remotely was immensely enjoyable at first and did not mind doing twice the normal amount of work.

"But my life feels monotonous now without going outside for days on end," he said, while expressing an overwhelming sense of anxiety of when normalcy would return to his life.

To make matters worse, the distressing news on the novel

coronavirus pandemic is also taking a toll on the mental health of people.

Sharmin Ahmed, a faculty member of the University of Dhaka, thought she would be working on her academic interest with the free time she has been afforded for the suspension of classes.

"But I can't concentrate on my work. So many people, including some of my students, are in such distress and it is hampering my research work," she added.

The tremendous strain that jobholders are now battling for homeworking and overall sense of doom has given rise to calls from clinical psychologists for employers to be a little sensitive and reassuring.

Many people are now suffering from depression because of the fear of getting infected with the virus, fear of an uncertain professional future and economic vulnerability, said Mohammad Hossain, professor at the neurosurgery department of the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University.

"People need to be assured of economic safety. For that, a concerted effort of the government and the riches are needed," he added.

Kazi Inam Ahmed, a director at Gemcon Group that has introduced work from home from March 18, though is looking at the bright side.

"I personally feel holding meetings over Zoom makes them more efficient. Maybe the biggest positive from this is we might learn to do more work from home, which means, considering the Dhaka traffic we can also spend more time with our families," he added.

Remote work prompts decline in demand for personal grooming products

AHSAN HABIB

The pandemic is changing the way we present ourselves to the world.

Weeks into the countrywide general shutdown and coronavirus is starting to lay waste to basic personal grooming routines as we are told to stay home and work remotely if possible.

People are washing their hair less often, going makeup-free, putting off shaving and even abandoning deodorant, according to supermarkets and fast-moving consumer goods companies.

Take the case of Samirah Rahman, who works at a foreign non-governmental organisation. She said she has not used any cosmetics in the last one-and-a-half month at least as she does not need to go to work or do the school run.

"I may have even forgotten how to use an eyeliner," she added.

Last month, makeup giant L'Oréal said the global cosmetics market was down 8 per cent in the first quarter as consumers pulled back on skincare and beauty products.

Unilever reported along these lines. The Anglo-Dutch company said the lockdown had affected its haircare portfolio in China and India, while skincare sales were also down.

Its Chief Financial Officer Graeme Pitkethly said people were spending "more time at home, more time cooking" and maybe has "less personal care occasions" now.

Didarul Alom, a high official of a multinational company, also said he let his grooming standards slip.

He has not been using any deodorant or hair gel since the lockdown started as he is confined at home. "I am not shaving either, so shaving gel and after-shaving products are not needed any more," he added.

"Our cosmetic products sales are almost zero now," said Md Iqbal Hossain, head of business of ACI logistics, which runs the supermarket chain Shwapno.

Normally, people use the colour cosmetics when they go out, but now that they are confined to home, so these products are of no use. Colour cosmetics includes eyeliner, eye shadow, foundation, face powder, lipstick, nail polish etc.

However, personal cleaning products like soap and hand wash sales have doubled between March 8 and April 25, he said. Shampoo sales also surged 40 per cent, Hossain added.

"Hygiene products are now mostly demanded by the customers," said Christabel Randolph, company secretary of Marico Bangladesh.

The Mumbai-based FMCG company that operates in the beauty and wellness space started operations in Bangladesh in 2000 with its flagship brand 'Parachute' coconut oil.

"Soap and shampoo sales remain strong. But pure cosmetic products are not doing well," Randolph added.

Development budget to become a casualty of stimulus packages

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The annual development programme (ADP) is set to become a big casualty of the resource reshuffling that the government is set to deploy to bankroll the massive stimulus packages announced to jumpstart the economy once the rogue coronavirus has been tamed.

Over the years, the government has always increased the size of the development budget by about 20 per cent from the outgoing year.

But the ADP that the Planning Minister MA Mannan would be finalising today for fiscal 2020-21 would be 6.33 per cent higher than this year's revised development budget at Tk 205,145 crore.

To accommodate the massive spending needing in the immediate future, the government has already suspended financing to all low priority projects.

But allocation for the large projects would not be affected, however, in the next fiscal year. Some Tk 50,000 crore to this end.

The Padma Bridge project would get Tk 5,000 crore, Metro Rail project Tk 4,200 crore, Rooppur nuclear power plant Tk 1,582 crore, Payra seaport Tk 700 crore, Karnaphuli river tunnel Tk 500 crore, Padma Rail Link Tk 3,735 crore, Bangabandhu Rail bridge project Tk 2,744 crore and rail track from Dohazari to Gundum project Tk 1,500 crore.

"The health and agriculture sectors would get priority in the next ADP," Mannan told The Daily Star yesterday.

The pandemic has uncovered the shortcomings in the health sector and the government has been able to avoid a major food crisis because of the agriculture sector, he said.

So the two sectors warrant the utmost attention.

After finalisation, the ADP would be sent to the National Economic Council for approval.

Because of the social distancing being enforced since March 26 to stop the spread of the deadly bug, it is not clear whether the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council chaired by the prime minister would meet, as would have been the case under normal circumstances, to approve the ADP.

The prime minister may approve the ADP through an executive order and thereafter it would be passed in parliament. Alternatively, the prime minister and some key ministers may sit and give the consent.

"We will send the proposal and the government will decide. The situation is different this time," said Mannan.

The changing situation also compelled the planning minister to decide to finalise the ADP on a limited scale.

Only a few secretaries such as those from the finance and planning ministries and the Economic Relations Division and some members of the planning commission would be present at today's meeting, whereas all secretaries would be present on such an important meeting in previous years.

At the meeting, the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics may present the provisional estimate of the gross domestic product (GDP) for this fiscal year. The GDP growth would be 5.5 per cent, down from the 8.2 per cent hoped for at the beginning of the fiscal year and higher than the projections made by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.

The ADB forecasted that the Bangladesh economy would grow at 3.8 per cent and the WB between 2 per cent and 3 per cent.

FISCAL 2020-21'S ADP BY THE NUMBERS

Budget may be Tk **205,145**cr

6.33pc bigger than current year's

Govt portion to be Tk **134,643**cr

Foreign aid to be Tk **70,502**cr

Tk **50,000**cr would go to large projects

GDP growth likely to be **5.5**pc this fiscal year

VAT receipts tank on economic lull

SOHEL PARVEZ

Collection of value-added tax, the biggest source of revenue for the government, dropped 1 per cent in the first 10 months of the fiscal year to Tk 67,760 crore as the countrywide shutdown since March 26 that have brought almost all economic activities to a standstill is starting to show its effect.

In April, VAT collection, which accounts for 39 per cent of total tax receipts, plummeted to Tk 3,650 crore from more than Tk 6,000 crore a month earlier, in what can be viewed as the clearest indication of the economic toll of the shutdown.

This has led the National Board of Revenue to ask its VAT field offices to devise strategies to boost collection as the overall receipts of the indirect tax fell far behind the revised target of Tk 108,600 crore for this fiscal year.

To attain the revised target, revenue officials have to collect Tk 20,000 crore in both May and June against the average monthly collection of Tk 6,777 crore in the first 10 months.

"We are aware of the latest situation. The situation may prevail or improve. Whatever the situation is, we have to proceed by devising required strategies to attain the target," said the NBR directive, issued by Md Jamal Hossain, NBR member of VAT implementation, on May 10.

The revenue authority would now be targeting items that generate higher revenue, the directive said, citing areas such as cigarette, mobile usage, mobile financial service providers, internet and medicine.

Intensive communication should be established with big firms. Besides, attention should be given on realising VAT arrears and collection of VAT-at-source, it said.

As part of its efforts to mobilise VAT collection, the NBR has asked its field offices to stay open next Friday, which happens to be the 15th of the month, which is the last day for businesses to file returns for April.

The NBR received 31,000 returns last month, which is half the number it got the previous month.

This has prompted the revenue watchdog to direct its offices to enquire whether firms that did not file statements for March were actually closed or they ran their operations in secret.

The VAT Commissionerate in Dhaka North and Chattogram detected some firms that were up and running although they declared their businesses were shut because of the shutdown.

Nearly 90 per cent of the government revenue comes from tax collection, of which 65 per cent are from indirect taxes, including VAT and other duties.

However, the pandemic is expected to significantly reduce tax receipts, said the Asian Development Bank last week.

Non-tax revenue will also be severely affected by the reduction of imports and other fee sources. A minimum revenue loss of 2 per cent of GDP (\$6.7 billion) is projected by the government, said the Manila-based lender in a document.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ
কমান্ডিং অফিসারের কার্যালয়
২ আর্মড পুলিশ ব্যাটালিয়ন
মুজাপাছা, ময়মনসিংহ

স্মারক নং-কিউ এম-২৭৩/২০১৯-২০/১১৮৩

তারিখঃ ১১/৫/২০২০খ্রিঃ

উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র আহ্বান বিজ্ঞপ্তি

এতদ্বারা 'দি পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট আইন-২০০৬ ও পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট বিধিমালা-২০০৮, ২০০৯' এবং তদীয় সংশোধনী অনুযায়ী ২০২০-২০২১ অর্থ বৎসরে ২ আর্মড পুলিশ ব্যাটালিয়ন, মুজাপাছা, ময়মনসিংহ এর লট ভিত্তিক কাজের টিকাদার নিয়োগের লক্ষ্যে প্রকৃত বাংলাদেশী টিকাদারগণের নিকট হতে সীলমোহরকৃত 'উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র' আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে।

০১।	মন্ত্রণালয়/বিভাগ	স্বরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রণালয়।
০২।	এজেন্সী	বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ।
০৩।	সমগ্রাহক সত্তার নাম	কমান্ডিং অফিসার (এসপি), ২ আর্মড পুলিশ ব্যাটালিয়ন, মুজাপাছা, ময়মনসিংহ।
০৪।	সমগ্রাহক সত্তার কোড নং	৩-২২১৩-০৪০০
০৫।	সমগ্রাহক সত্তার জেলা	ময়মনসিংহ।
০৬।	কি জন্য আহ্বান	লট নং-০১, ০২, ০৩, ০৪ ও ০৫-এ বর্ণিত কাজের টিকাদার নিয়োগ।
০৭।	আহ্বানের সূত্র	দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি স্মারক নং-কিউএম-২৭৩/২০১৯-২০২০/১১৮৩
০৮।	তারিখ	১১/৫/২০২০খ্রিঃ।

মূল তথ্যাদিঃ	
০৯।	সমগ্র পদ্ধতি

তহবিল সংক্রান্ত তথ্যাদিঃ	
১০।	বাজেট এবং তহবিলের উৎস

বিশেষ তথ্যাবলীঃ	
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১১।	দরপত্র প্যাকেজ নং	১২/২০১৯-২০২০
১২।	দরপত্র প্যাকেজ এর নাম	২ এপিবিএন, মুজাপাছা, ময়মনসিংহের লট নং-০১, ০২, ০৩, ০৪ ও ০৫-এ বর্ণিত কাজের টিকাদার নিয়োগ।
১৩।	দরপত্র প্রকাশের তারিখ	১১/৫/২০২০খ্রিঃ।
১৪।	দরপত্র তফসিল বিক্রয়ের শেষ তারিখ	০৩/৬/২০২০খ্রিঃ বেলা ১৪:৩০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।
১৫।	দরপত্র গ্রহণের তারিখ ও সময়	০৪/৬/২০২০খ্রিঃ বেলা ১২:৩০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।
১৬।	দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ ও সময়	০৪/৬/২০২০খ্রিঃ বেলা ১৩:০০ ঘটিকা।
১৭।	দরপত্র তফসিল বিতরণ/সরবরাহকারী অফিসের নাম ও ঠিকানা	(ক) ডিআইজি, এপিবিএন কার্যালয়, বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ, উত্তরা, ঢাকা এবং (খ) কমান্ডিং অফিসারের কার্যালয়, ২ এপিবিএন, মুজাপাছা, ময়মনসিংহ এর কার্যালয় হতে দরপত্র তফসিল (সিডিউল) সংগ্রহ করা যাবে।
	দরপত্র গ্রহণ ও খোলার স্থান	কমান্ডিং অফিসারের কার্যালয়, ২ এপিবিএন, মুজাপাছা, ময়মনসিংহ।

দরপত্রের দলিলপত্রাদির বিবরণঃ	
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১৮।	দরপত্র ক্রয়ের ক্ষেত্রে টিকাদারের প্রাকযোগ্যতা	(ক) হালনাগাদ ব্যবসায়িক বৈধ ট্রেড লাইসেন্স (খ) হালনাগাদ আয়কর পরিশোধের সনদপত্র (গ) ভ্যাট নিবন্ধন সনদপত্র (ঘ) তফসিলভুক্ত বাণিজ্যিক ব্যাংকের আর্থিক সচ্ছলতা সনদপত্র (ঙ) নাগরিকত্ব সনদপত্র (চ) সংশ্লিষ্ট কাজের অভিজ্ঞতা সনদপত্র (ছ) এফিডেভিট মূলে ফর্ম/প্রতিষ্ঠানের মালিকানা ঘোষণাপত্র (জ) প্রতিনিধির ক্ষেত্রে ফর্ম/প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিজস্ব প্যাডে প্রতিনিধির স্বাক্ষর সত্যায়নসহ ক্ষমতা অর্পণ দিতে হবে। ১ম শ্রেণির পেজেটেড কর্মকর্তা কর্তৃক সত্যায়িত সকল দলিলপত্রাদিসহ ফর্ম/প্রতিষ্ঠানের প্যাডে আবেদনপত্র প্রাপ্তি সাপেক্ষে দরপত্র তফসিল (সিডিউল) বিক্রয় করা হবে। দরপত্র তফসিল ক্রয়ের সময় ফর্ম/প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিজস্ব সীল সঙ্গে আনতে হবে। অন্যান্য শর্তাবলী দরপত্র তফসিলে উল্লেখ করা হবে।
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১৯।	কাজের বিবরণঃ			
লট নং	লটের পরিচিতি	দরপত্র তফসিল (সিডিউল) এর মূল্য (অফেরতযোগ্য)	দরপত্র জামানত	কাজ সমাপ্তির সময়সীমা
০১	স্বাস্থ্যবিধান সামগ্রী (কোড নং-৩২৫২১০৮) সরবরাহ কাজ	৭৫০/-	৩০,০০০/-	২০২০-২০২১ অর্থ বৎসর
০২	অন্যান্য মনিহারি (কোড নং-৩২৫২১০৫) সরবরাহ কাজ	৭৫০/-	৪০,০০০/-	
০৩	ব্যবহার্য দ্রব্যাদি (কোড নং-৩২৫৬১০৩) সরবরাহ কাজ	৮৫০/-	৬০,০০০/-	
০৪	ফোর্সের কমব্যাট পোশাক (ইউনিফর্ম) সেলাই কাজ	৭৫০/-	৩৫,০০০/-	
০৫	১২ (বার) আসন বিশিষ্ট ০৩ (তিন)টি উন্নতমানের মাইক্রোবাস মাসিক হিসেবে ভাড়া সরবরাহ কাজ	৭৫০/-	৩০,০০০/-	

সমগ্রাহক সত্তার বিবরণঃ	
২১।	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্মকর্তার নাম
২২।	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্মকর্তার পদবী
২৩।	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্মকর্তার ঠিকানা
২৪।	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্মকর্তার সহিত যোগাযোগের মাধ্যম

২৫।	বিশেষ শর্তাবলীঃ
ক)	নির্দিষ্ট সময়ের পর আর কোন দরপত্র গ্রহণ করা হবে না।
খ)	দরপত্র দাখিল সংক্রান্ত বিস্তারিত তথ্যাবলী দরপত্র গ্রহণকালে অফিস হতে এবং দরপত্র তফসিলে পাওয়া যাবে।
গ)	দরপত্র বিক্রয়িত উল্লেখিত প্রতিটি কাজের জন্য পৃথক পৃথক খামে পৃথক পৃথকভাবে উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র দাখিল করতে হবে।
ঘ)	দরপত্র পিপিআর/২০০৬ ও পিপিআর/২০০৮ মোতাবেক সকল শর্তাবলী কার্যকর হবে।
ঙ)	সমগ্রাহক সত্তা কোন কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকে সকল দরপত্র গ্রহণ অথবা বাতিল করার ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।

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ফোনঃ ৭৫৩৪৪, ফ্যাক্সঃ ৭৫২০১

জিডি-৮২০