

Taposh takes hard line on corruption

Two high officials of DSCC sacked on his first day as mayor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

On the first day at work yesterday, Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh said he would free the city corporation of corruption. And true to his words, two high ranking officials of DSCC were terminated even before the day ended. They are Additional Chief Engineer Mohammad Asaduzzaman and Deputy Chief Revenue Officer Mohammad Yusuf Ali Sarder, DSCC Secretary Akramuzzaman told reporters. Allegations ran rife against the duo that they were involved in corruption and "commission business", confirmed DSCC officials wishing anonymity. "They have been terminated already," said the secretary, adding that he has also heard about allegations against the two sacked officials. Contacted, Yusuf Ali Sarder said he was unaware of the incident but the city corporation can decide what is best. On the other hand, Asaduzzaman said he heard that he has been sacked but he does not know the reason yet. 'A CORRUPTION-FREE DSCC' Meanwhile, the newly-elected mayor held the first meeting with the heads of the departments and zonal executive officers at Nagar Bhaban yesterday, a day after taking charge.

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Dhaka South City Corporation Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh places a wreath at the portrait of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in front of Bangabandhu Memorial Museum at Dhanmondi 32 yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Social unrest on the rise during shutdown: study

DU professor unveils findings at webinar; Ctg most vulnerable

DU CORRESPONDENT

Social unrest across the country has gradually increased during the lockdown period, a study on the socio-economic dynamics amid the Covid-19 crisis has found. The findings of the study--titled "Covid-19: Social unrest, protest, and conflicts in Bangladesh"--was disclosed at an online seminar by Dr Mainul Islam, associate professor of political science at Dhaka University (DU). The study sampled 1,416 incidents of socio-economic conflicts that took place in the country between March 10 and April 30. A total of 347 of these incidents occurred in March, while another 1,069 were observed in April. The incidents were recorded from a countrywide survey based on local newspaper and social media reports. The first week of March saw only nine incidents, while the highest number of incidents--383--took place in the last week of April, indicating a sharp rise of instances of conflict. District-wise, Chattogram topped the tally with 6.29 percent of cases, while Sherpur has the least percentage (3.46) of cases.

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'Smokers at heightened risk from coronavirus'

Campaigners seek higher tobacco tax in next budget

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A number of anti-tobacco organisations yesterday urged the government to raise taxes and prices of tobacco in the next national budget, in a bid to make up revenue to tackle the Covid-19 pandemic. Dhaka Ahsania Mission, ACD, YPSA, National Heart Foundation, TABINAJ and BITA presented their proposals to the media yesterday, said a press release. PROGGA and Anti-Tobacco Media Alliance (ATMA) organised the programme. Smoking is a known risk factor for many respiratory infections and increases the severity of respiratory diseases. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), tobacco accelerates the spread of coronavirus infection. A review of studies by public health experts convened by WHO has found that smokers are more likely to develop severe complications if infected by Covid-19,

compared to non-smokers. Taking this warning into account, 40 million people of Bangladesh, both active tobacco users and victims of secondhand smoke, are currently at grave risk of severe coronavirus infection, they said. Dr Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad, eminent economist and the Convener of National Anti-Tobacco Platform, said, "The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has once again showed how important the control of the use of tobacco products is. A huge portion of the population, victims of direct or indirect tobacco use, is currently at grave risk of severe coronavirus infection." In order to recover from the economic shock of Covid-19 and also to build a healthy society in the future, to rebuild the economy and ensure development, it is essential to get accustomed to a tobacco-free environment, he said.

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Protect prisoners from Covid-19

Writ petition seeks HC directive

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Supreme Court lawyer yesterday filed a writ petition with the High Court seeking its directive on the government authorities concerned to take necessary steps to protect 89,000 prisoners and the prison staff from the ongoing coronavirus infection. Advocate Shishir Manir submitted the petition as a public interest litigation to the High Court, requesting it to order authorities to take measures to maintain social distancing among prisoners and prison staff and other health guidelines. He prayed to the High Court to direct the inspector general of prisons to submit a report to the court on the preparedness and steps taken in order to protect prisoners and staff across the country. Some 23 prison guards and two inmates have tested positive for coronavirus, and a prisoner in Sylhet Central Prison has died, Manir said in the petition.

Patients' families left untested

Health officials in Ctg not keen on collecting their samples, citing manpower crisis

MOSTAFA YOUSUF, Ctg

Health officials in port city are showing apathy towards collecting samples of family members of Covid-19 positive persons by going to their residences even after they are developing coronavirus-like symptoms, alleged family members. Health officials, however, said it is no longer possible for them to collect samples door-to-door as they are facing severe manpower and logistical crisis and family members should go to nearest hospitals to have them tested. Arif Hossain, a resident of West Bakolia, whose father died on May 4 from coronavirus, told The Daily Star that after his father's death officials of Chattogram civil surgeon's office assured them that they will be tested. "Seven members of my family developed symptoms after my father died. Days went by but they did not show up in spite of our repeated phone calls. All we got is an assurance that they are coming," he said. "Only after my younger brother resorted to Facebook to share our agony, they sent an

ambulance to take us to hospital, five days into my father's death," said Arif. Saiful Islam, a journalist who got infected on May 12, shared a Facebook post urging to have his family members tested as the officials did not collect their samples even after 48 hours of him testing positive. Many family members of coronavirus patients said once a person gets affected, an area or building is locked down and as a result, family members are unable to go outside. In such a case, health officials must come and collect their samples. Contacted, Sheikh Fazle Rabbi, civil surgeon of Chattogram, said it was not possible to go to every one's home as coronavirus is in the community transmission phase. "We are suffering from manpower crisis and have only one ambulance," he said. In such a case, people should immediately go to nearby hospitals to have them tested, he added. Dr Hasan Shahriar Kabir, director (Chattogram division) of Directorate General of Health Services, said they were trying to set up seven sample

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Mamtaz Begum passes away

BSS, Dhaka

Mamtaz Begum, chairperson of the Jatiyo Mohila Sangstha and wife of Awami League Advisory Council member and Chairman of Bar Council Executive Committee Advocate Syed Rezaur Rahman, passed away at her Dhanmondi residence in Dhaka early yesterday. She was 74. Mamtaz, also a freedom fighter and Begum Rokeya Padak winner, had been suffering from various physical ailments, family sources said. Mamtaz was also a former parliament member and ex-general secretary of Bangladesh Mohila Awami League. She left behind her husband, a son, a daughter

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LAST YEAR'S DENGUE OUTBREAK

HC hearing in limbo

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

The High Court is yet to deliver any order over the "partial negligence" of Dhaka city corporations regarding last year's dengue outbreak in the capital, although a judicial inquiry report on the issue was submitted to the court two months back. According to Directorate General of Health Services, 101,354 dengue cases were reported last year, of which 49,544 were outside Dhaka. The number of deaths was 156. An annual vacation of the court and closure of its functions due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic are delaying HC hearing and the subsequent order on this matter, Deputy Attorney General Amit Dasgupta told The Daily Star recently. He said the HC may hold hearing and pass an order on the inquiry report after its reopening. The matter has been included in the cause list of the HC bench led by Justice Tariq ul Hakim, he said. He said here is no legal bar for the Dhaka city corporations to conduct anti-mosquito drive although the judicial inquiry report is pending at the HC. During the hearing of a suo moto rule, the HC bench of Justice Tariq ul Hakim and Justice Md Iqbal Kabir Lytton on

November 12 last year formed the probe committee led by Dhaka District Judge Md Helal Chowdhury to identify the persons responsible for outbreak of mosquito-borne diseases like dengue fever and chikungunya in Dhaka. The judicial probe committee submitted the inquiry report to the HC bench on March 10 this year through DAG Amit Dasgupta. The committee has found partial negligence of the authorities of Dhaka north and south city corporations over the dengue outbreak last year, said sources at attorney general's office. "Based on experts' opinions and analysis of other information, it appears that Dhaka north and south city corporations were partially negligent over dengue epidemic in 2019, but they cannot be held fully responsible for the outbreak. Besides, nobody is solely responsible for the epidemic," the committee said in the report. The inquiry committee talked to experts on how to prevent the spawning of Aedes mosquito, which causes dengue fever. In the report, the committee said an integrated initiative is needed to prevent the spread of

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Six of a family commute on a rickshaw through Airport road, barely hanging on to the edge of the seat and each other. Public transportation is not running amid the shutdown, and there is little scope for distancing while travelling on a rickshaw in an already unsafe condition. The photo was taken earlier this week.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



Barishal district authorities are going shop-to-shop to inspect safety precautions taken by owners and staffers amid the pandemic. Such measures are necessary as residents are still visiting stores for Eid shopping, putting their health at risk. This photo was taken from the city's Chawkbazar area on Saturday.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

UN OFFICES IN GENEVA Mustafizur Rahman new Bangladesh representative

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The government has decided to appoint Md Mustafizur Rahman, Bangladesh high commissioner to Singapore, as the next permanent representative of Bangladesh to United Nations Offices and other international organisations in Geneva. Rahman, a career foreign service officer, belongs to 11th batch of Bangladesh Civil Service foreign affairs cadre, according to a foreign ministry press release. He has served in various capacities for Bangladesh missions in Paris, New York, Geneva and Kolkata. He also worked as the deputy permanent representative of Bangladesh to the UN in New York. Rahman is a medical graduate from Sir Salimullah Medical College. He obtained a post-graduate diploma in international relations and diplomacy from International Institute of Public Administration in France, and a master's in public international law from University of London, UK.



ROOPPUR GRAFT CASE HC rejects bail petitions of contractor Shahadat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday refused to grant bail to contractor Shahadat Hossain in two separate cases filed over much-talked about corruption in purchasing furniture and household items for officials of Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant in Pabna. The bench of Justice Jahangir Hossain Selim passed the order after holding a virtual hearing of the petitions filed by Shahadat, managing director of Swadheen Construction Ltd that supplied the materials. The bench did not grant bail to Shahadat as another HC bench earlier had refused to grant him bail in the cases, Deputy Attorney General Dr Md Bashir Ullah told The Daily Star. Barrister Shafique Ahmed and Advocate Abdul Matin appeared for Shahadat while Attorney General Mahbubey Alam and ACC lawyer AK Fazlul Haque vehemently opposed the bail petitions. The ACC filed the two cases with its Pabna district office against Shahadat and several others on December 12 last year on charges of irregularities involving Tk 16 crore in supplying furniture and household items to the officials of Rooppur plant, the DAG said. Shahadat was also arrested on that day, he informed. According to several reports, the prices of the various items used to furnish the project's 966 flats for the Russian engineers and others were abnormally higher than market prices. The reports claimed that each pillow was bought for Tk 5,957, and the cost of carrying it to a flat was Tk 760. An electric stove cost Tk 7,747 and the carrying cost from the ground floor to the top one cost Tk 6,650. The reports also said the price of an electric iron was Tk 4,154 and the carrying cost Tk 2,945.