

PM helps out 6,970 Qawmi madrasas

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has provided financial assistance of Tk 8.63 crore to 6,790 more Qawmi madrasas across the country ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr.

"The prime minister has given the financial assistance of Tk 863,45,000 for the country's another 6,970 Qawmi madrasas," PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim told the news agency yesterday.

The allocated money was sent to the bank accounts of the deputy commissioners through electronic fund transfer (EFT) on Sunday.

Of the 6,970 Qawmi madrasas, 839 are in Rangpur, 662 in Rajshahi, 431 in Khulna, 202 in Barishal, 937 in Mymensingh, 2,202 in Dhaka, 1,211 in Chattogram and 486 in Sylhet divisions.

Earlier, the premier had provided financial assistance of Tk 8.31 crore to nearly 7,000 Qawmi madrasas during the month of Ramadan.



In a desperate effort to hide from the glaring sun, several men lie down under the shade of a tree, finding little respite during the long day. The blistering heat is especially merciless to those who must stay outdoors, and it is during such weather that these towering trees become their best friends. This photo was taken from the capital's Gulistan Park on Sunday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

'Donate plasma to save lives'

Plasma therapy unit urges Covid-19 survivors

PORIMOL PALMA

Plasma therapy unit working to apply the life-saving treatment to novel coronavirus is seeking plasma from Covid-19 survivors as it sees high demand for the therapy amid rise in the infection every day.

"We are getting calls from people infected by the novel coronavirus for plasma therapy. We have already extracted plasma from three survivors. We need more. We can save more lives if we get more donors," said Prof MA Khan, who heads the technical sub-committee on plasma therapy.

The health ministry has in principle approved the protocol on plasma therapy, and administration of the therapy will begin in a day or two, he told The Daily Star yesterday.

"What we need the most is donors of plasma," said Prof Khan of Bone Marrow Transplantation at the Department of Hematology of Dhaka Medical College Hospital. He has been recently co-opted as a member to the National Technical Advisory Committee (NTAC) formed to combat coronavirus pandemic.

Convalescent Plasma therapy can quickly develop passive immune system of a person against a virus and fight Covid-19 and thus can help save lives before any vaccine or medicine is developed.

Medical scientists in the US and China as well as other studies have found that those who recover from Covid-19 develop neutralising antibody in their plasma. This antibody, if transfused into the body of an infected person, can destroy the virus and save the infected ones.

Plasma therapy was used effectively before the specific treatment was developed for H1N1 influenza (Spanish virus), Ebola, SARS-1 and MERS virus. Elderly people who are critically ill and health workers could be priority groups for administration of this plasma therapy, said Dr Khan.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Mother, daughters assaulted by landlord 'over rent'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A mother and her two daughters were beaten up by their landlord and his family allegedly for not being able to pay rent.

The incident took place at Kalachandpur in the capital on Sunday. The victims are Subhra Ghagra, and her daughters Jhumu Ghagra (17) and Mou Ghagra (25).

Subhra alleged that they were attacked for not paying this month's rent while the landlord, Nazrul Islam, and his family claimed there was a "minor scuffle" between them as they did not want the tenants to bring their relatives or guests inside the building frequently amid ongoing shutdown.

According to Subhra, the homeowner on Sunday morning asked for this month's rent and she requested him to wait till May 20.

As her daughters, who work in parlours, are now out of work and needed more time. She said the rent is Tk 12,000 for two rooms on the 5th floor.

"Nazrul became angry and misbehaved with us," she said. Around 5:30pm, her daughters and three-year-old granddaughter while coming back from a local kitchen market found the main entrance of the building closed.

They asked guards to open but they did not as per Nazrul's order, alleged her eldest daughter Mou.

Meanwhile, Nazrul came down and engaged in an altercation with them.

At one point, his wife Fatema Begum appeared and started hitting them in front of passersby, she alleged. Soon her son joined in.

"Our dresses were torn and my younger sister was strangled by the landlord's son," alleged Mou, adding that all the groceries

they bought fell on the street.

When her mother came down to help them, she was also attacked by the owner's family, she further alleged.

They said they were not able to enter the building until they went to the nearby Gulshan Police Station and complained. Upon their complaint, an SI from the station helped them get in, she added.

Contacted over phone, Nazrul Islam's wife Fatema Begum denied the allegations. "They were bringing guests frequently and we asked them not to do so amid the shutdown. But they did not listen and brought guests that day. An altercation took place between me and the girls, nothing more," she added.

At this point of the conversation, she handed the phone over to her son, Fahad Islam, saying her husband was not feeling well. Fahad, a university graduate, also denied the allegations.

Asked, Mou Ghagra said, "We did not bring any guest or relative. They [owners] always have such restrictions. You can ask other tenants."

This correspondent spoke with a number of locals who said they witnessed the incident and the mother and daughters were attacked and beaten by the landlord and his family members.

One of the guards from an adjacent building said, "I saw the landowner's son strangling one of the girls and the wife slap the other."

Wishing anonymity, a tenant of the building said the landlord often misbehaves with them and their guests.

Upon verbal complaint, Sub-inspector Mohammad Belal of Gulshan Police Station visited building around 9:30pm.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

Prof Muntassir Mamoon beats Covid-19

RAFIUL ISLAM

Panicking does not help; all should remain resilient during this time of crisis, said noted historian Prof Muntassir Mamoon yesterday, after winning the battle against Covid-19.

"Panic over coronavirus has become rampant... We need to thoroughly follow health guidelines. My 85-year-old mother has also won the battle against Covid-19," said the 68-year-old Dhaka University teacher, who returned home yesterday after two weeks of treatment at Combined Military Hospital, Dhaka.

He was first admitted to the Mugda Medical College Hospital on May 3 with Covid-19 symptoms after his mother tested positive.

Prof Mamoon was found positive the next day.

A six-member medical board was formed for his treatment following the prime minister's directives. After his health deteriorated, the professor was shifted to the ICU.

He was later taken to CMH as per the PM's direction.

"When my mother tested positive, I got tested too but at that time the result came negative. Yet, I isolated myself from others, as I assumed that I was infected. Four to five days later, I faced difficulty in having meals and started vomiting. Those

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



Biman focuses on freight service to make up losses

Another airline to follow suit

RASHIDUL HASAN

After US-Bangla Airlines, national flag carrier Biman Bangladesh Airlines has fully started air-freight service using its passenger aircrafts.

Apart from the two airlines, Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) temporarily permitted Meghna Aviation to operate cargo-flights between domestic destinations using its helicopter.

"As regular passenger flights were directed to be suspended from March 16-May 30, different airlines have applied to us to operate cargo flights, using passenger aircrafts or helicopters, to recover from their huge losses," Air Vice Marshal Mafidur Rahman, chairperson of CAAB, told this correspondent yesterday.

"After formulating necessary guidelines, we have given temporary permission to three airlines so far, considering their losses," added the CAAB chief.

Mohibul Haque, senior secretary at civil aviation ministry, told The Daily Star yesterday that for the first time, Biman was forced to go for air-freight operation to make money, as it has been suffering from serious cash-crunch due to the pandemic.

He said the national airline so far has incurred losses worth Tk 939.19 crore in the last four months since January, due to dwindling passengers and suspension of flights.

The senior secretary also said Biman will primarily use its two wide-bodied Boeing 777s for freight operation.

"We will use more aircrafts if we get more orders," Mohibul said. "We will be able to go to any destination depending on demand and orders."

He said Biman has already trained its ground and other staff so aircraft seats are not damaged while carrying cargo items.

Sources at Dhaka airport said Biman operated its maiden full-cargo flight on May 15, which came to Dhaka from China carrying medical equipment.

During normal flight operation, any aircraft can carry cargo items in its belly.

Although passenger flights remain suspended for the defined period, freight and special flight operations are ongoing.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

FISHING BAN IN BAY VGF rice for over four lakh fishermen allocated

UNB, Dhaka

The government has allocated 23,496.98 tonnes of rice under the Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) programme to assist the families of 4,19,589 fishermen in 44 upazilas of 12 districts and Chattogram city during the period when fishing in the Bay of Bengal is banned.

The Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock has allocated the VGF rice, said a press release yesterday.

Under the programme, the families of registered fishermen will get 40kgs of rice per month for May and June in the first phase.

The deputy commissioners concerned have been asked to complete the distribution of rice within June 15, said the release.

The upazilas span across Khulna, Bagerhat, Satkhira, Chattogram, Cox's Bazar, Noakhali, Laxmipur, Barguna, Pirojpur, Patuakhali, and Bhola.

The government is going to impose a 65-day ban from May 20 to July 23 on fishing in the bay in the interest of the national economy.

Bogura road mishap kills 2

UNB, Bogura

Two women were killed and three others were injured in Sherpur upazila after a truck hit an auto-rickshaw on the Sherpur-Dhaka Highway at Zamuna Para area on Sunday morning.

The deceased were identified as Nila Khatun (35) and Arpita Saha (20).

The accident occurred around 10am when the Dhaka-bound truck hit the auto-rickshaw, leaving Nila dead on the spot and four other passengers injured, Sherpur Fire Service and Civil Defence station officer Ratan Islam said.

The injured were rushed to Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital, where on-duty doctors later declared Arpita dead.

Road crashes claim thousands of lives every year and they are mainly blamed on unskilled drivers, unfit vehicles and rundown road condition.

Even during the countrywide shutdown, road crashes refuse to cease completely and regular cases keep occurring around the country.

Last year, road crashes left 5,227 people dead and 6,953 injured, according to a road safety advocacy group.

ANTI-MOSQUITO DRIVE

DNCC teams slap Tk 76,000 in fines

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) yesterday filed Tk 76,000 to owners of different house, under construction buildings and establishments at different place of DNCC for getting Aedes larva.

DNCC teams at its third day drive visited 1,349 houses, structure and under construction buildings at Uttara, Baridhara, Mirpur, Paikpara, looking for Aedes larvae.

"We all know Aedes mosquito breeds in clean water at residential and non-residential buildings, and especially under-construction buildings," said Dhaka North City Corporation mayor Atiqul Islam while overseeing the operation, along with LGRD minister Tajul Islam at Baridhara yesterday morning.

The mayor said they had announced that they would take action against house owners if they find Aedes larvae in any house or under-construction building, but unfortunately they are not paying any heed.

Urging people to clean up stagnant water every three days, the mayor said those who construct buildings are rich people, but they are putting all citizens under risk of dengue for their negligence.

During the visit, the teams found a large number of Aedes larvae at an under-construction building at Road-9 Park Road in Baridhara.

According to control room data from Directorate General of Health Services, a total of 302 patients were admitted to different hospitals across the country since January 1 with dengue, of which 67 were outside of Dhaka.

DSCC MAYOR URGES SOCIAL DISTANCING

Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh yesterday inaugurated relief distribution programme to provide food to 8,000 families of ward-59.

Through a videoconference from Nagar Bhaban, he extended Eid greetings to residents of ward-59 and talked with the local wrad councilor. He urged locals to maintain social distancing and use mask and gloves to keep themselves safe from coronavirus.



Large portions of a road leading to Shapla Chattar in the capital's Motijheel have been dug up, as sewage work continues there for the metro rail project. At any other time, this would cause a serious headache for commuters on one of Dhaka's busiest roads, but thanks to the general holiday, that has not been the case. The photo was taken earlier this week.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ