



The closer Eid gets, the more people seem to flout health directives and swarm stores and roadside stalls without a care in the world. Be it a family with children choosing a dress from a street vendor in Gausia or locals waiting in queues to get inside a market in Badda or two women shopping at a clothing outlet in Dhanmondi, physical distancing still remains a far cry in the capital. The photos were taken throughout this week.



PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON ANISUR RAHMAN FIROZ AHMED

Worth the risk?

People forgo social distancing in capital for Eid shopping

HELEML ALAM and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

People busy with Eid shopping at markets and shops in the capital are too reluctant to maintain physical distancing and health guidelines. Such an act is not only putting them at the risk of contracting coronavirus, but also spreading it to others.

Public health experts think if this situation goes on, more people will get infected with Covid-19 in the coming days, which will be difficult for the government to tackle.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police on May 7 issued at least 12 directives for city dwellers who would visit shopping malls and markets during the pandemic in an attempt to curb the virus spread.

Visiting different markets, these correspondents found that the DMP directives were disregarded in almost everywhere. Besides, roadside vendors were seen selling dresses in the footpaths where most buyers and sellers seemed oblivious to the health directives.

The government decided to reopen shopping malls, all types of shops and other businesses from May 10 on a limited scale ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr. Those would remain open from 10am to 4pm every day, according to a gazette from the cabinet division.

However, most shopping malls, including Bashundhara City Shopping Complex, Jamuna Future Park, New Market, Mouchak, Anarkoli markets, decided not to reopen at present as the number of Covid-19 cases has been spiralling.

Top leaders of Dokan Malik Samity, a platform of shop owners, earlier said the decision was also taken since an untoward situation could arise when shop employees, as instructed by the authorities, including law enforcers, would force shoppers to follow health guidelines.

They said super markets in Shahbagh, Palwal Market

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US lauds Hasina's leadership

UNB, Dhaka

The United States has appreciated Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's leadership and described Bangladesh as a "dynamic entrepreneurial society" whose social indicators have been a real success story.

The US mentioned the prime minister's leadership in lifting women up in particular saying it has been so noteworthy.

"The last three years has also seen significant growth in the US-Bangladesh relationship," said Alice G Wells, US acting assistant secretary, Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, in a special briefing via telephone on Wednesday.

Wells said Bangladesh has rightly been commended for the generous response of its government and people to the Rohingya crisis and their cooperation with international humanitarian partners.

She said the United States is the single largest contributor of assistance to the Rohingya crisis, but Bangladesh is much more than just a host nation for Rohingyas; it is a country that has achieved impressive economic growth over the last



decade, accompanied by strides in human development.

"It plays an important role in the Indian Ocean region, and our security cooperation has grown closer," Wells said encouraging Bangladesh to renew its commitments to democratic institutions and governing structures, which the US thinks will help further growth in bilateral relationship that is based on shared values.

She said the US will be a "reliable partner" in helping countries of the region on the path to economic recovery.

They have provided over \$96 million in Covid-19 related assistance to the region, but this is really on top of what has been \$6 billion in public health investments over the last two decades, said the senior US official.

Wells said they see the "devastating impact" of the disease with the cutting off of supply lines.

She mentioned that it is unfortunate but temporary; and noted loss of markets as a result of disruptions in the RMG sector.

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SSC result on May 31

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Results of Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and equivalent exams will be published on May 31.

Education ministry's public relations officer Mohammad Abul Khair in a statement said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will announce the report through video conference.

For the first time, results of SSC and equivalent exams will reach examinees or their guardians via SMS.

Education boards have started pre-registration of candidates, which will continue till 24 hours before publication of the result. Students can type SSC(space) first three letters of board (space) roll number (space) exam year and send to 16222.

Dhaka Education Board Chairman Prof Ziaul Haque, also head of the inter-board coordination committee, said students will not be able to collect results from educational institutions.

The government had earlier planned to publish the results on May 7 or 8, but could not, due to school closure.

For the first time in the last eight years, the government has not been able to publish results within 60 days of completing a public exam.

This year, SSC exams began on February 3, with the theoretical and practical tests ending on February 27 and on March 6 respectively.

Some 20,47,779 students took part in the SSC and equivalent examinations held at 3,512 centres.

Results will be also available on the education board website: <http://www.educationboardresults.gov.bd/>

EU allocates 334m Euros for Bangladesh

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

On top of the ongoing cooperation programme in Bangladesh, the European Union has allocated 334 million Euros and promised mobilising more funds in near future to mitigate the economic and social impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The EU announcement, made in a videoconference attended by Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen and European ambassadors on Wednesday, came when Bangladesh faces multiple challenges that are undermining the country's growth and poverty level might grow up.

"Covid-19 knows no borders and hits the most vulnerable hardest. Team Europe's support of some EUR 334 million will assist Bangladesh government in providing support to those who are most affected by Covid-19, in terms of health and livelihoods," said EU Ambassador to Bangladesh, Rensje Teerink, in a statement.

Of the new allocated amount, a 93 million Euro grant by EU and 20 million

Euro German grant will help Bangladesh provide cash assistance to workers in export-oriented industries, and contribute to boost the resilience of the national social protection system.

In addition, the French Development Agency will support Bangladesh with EUR 150 million to improve the country's social protection measures. 64.8 million Euro (16.5 million Euro from the EU plus 48.3 million from Germany) will be used to scale up interventions through the UN and NGO partners for vulnerable Bangladeshi host communities and Rohingya in Cox's Bazar.

Some 5.5 million Euro are earmarked for strengthening Bangladesh's research and health systems.

Furthermore, an EU grant of 246,000 Euro will assist the Directorate General of Health Services with operational and technical support. In addition, Sweden is supporting the health sector through

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SCB, Brac to help 25,000 people in lockdown

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Standard Chartered Bangladesh (SCB) has teamed up with Brac to deliver support packages to 25,000 people from 5,000 low-income families residing in locked down areas.

The packages, containing staples and non-perishable food items, are being delivered to doorsteps of the impacted households, said a press release issued yesterday.

Besides, SCB has launched several other initiatives to support the people to overcome this crisis, it said.

SCB Chief Executive Officer Naser Ezaz Bijoy

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Back in his mother's arms

Abducted from capital, four-year-old rescued by police from Manikganj after 8hr drive

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Sifat missed going out. There was a small open place in front of his house in Hatirjheel, where the four-year-old loved to play under his mother's watchful eyes.

For the last couple of months, he had been staying home and unable to step out as a precautionary measure against novel coronavirus.

Needless to say, the child was getting restless. Soon restlessness turned to sadness as he found out his father, Feroz Howlader, a construction worker who was out of work due to the ongoing shutdown, will not be able to buy any new dress for him this Eid.

Around 10am on Wednesday, a heartbroken Sifat went out of his home unnoticed. After realising that he went missing, the family searched for him everywhere but to no avail.

What transpired next was beyond their imagination.

Around 1:15pm, Feroz received a call on his cellphone; someone demanded Tk 50,000 from him, saying his youngest son has been abducted.

The family was devastated. Feroz did not know what to do. He had no source of income. Whatever money he had was borrowed from relatives and neighbours to support his four-member family.

Desperate, Feroz called Hatirjheel Police Station and informed Officer-in-Charge Abdur Rashid of the matter.

Later, he switched off his phone, fearing that the kidnapper may harm Sifat if they found out that he had sought police support.

Hearing about the incident, Deputy Commissioner of Tejgaon Division Police Biplob Bijoy Talukder located Sifat's home around 3:25pm and then took details of the child from the worried parents.

"This was the beginning of an eight-hour-long police drive to rescue Sifat," Hafiz Al Faruk, additional deputy commissioner of Tejgaon division, who coordinated the operation, told The Daily Star yesterday.

"We tried to trace kidnappers using technology and asked Feroz to continue

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PHOTO: RAJIB RAHMAN

This cremation site at Chattogram city's Uttar Kattali was designated for those who have died from Covid-19. Unfortunately, as the site is close to the sea, it gets submerged in water daily due to high tides. Volunteers sometimes have to wade through knee-deep water to put the deceased to rest. This photo was taken yesterday.



With Dhaka University now closed, these dogs wait in front of the gate every morning until volunteers show up with food for them. The dogs of DU have long been a loyal companion to students, and some students have been kind enough to regularly feed the dogs even amid the shutdown.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

COVID-19 PATIENTS

Two isolation centres opened in Cox's Bazar

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Two isolation and treatment centers for Covid-19 patients were inaugurated in Cox's Bazar - one at Kutupalong Rohingya camp and the other at Ukhiya upazila.

Cox's Bazar Deputy Commissioner Kamal Hossain and Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) Mahbub Alam Takluder, as well as partners from Relief International, Food for the Hungry, Brac and WHO inaugurated the first two such centres, said a UNHCR statement yesterday.

The Severe Acute Respiratory Infection Isolation and Treatment Centres (SARI ITCs) for refugees and Bangladeshi host communities will serve the needs of almost 200 Covid-19 positive patients suffering from moderate to severe symptoms.

"It is a historical moment for us. We have inaugurated this first centre virtually. Right from the beginning of our humanitarian activities, UNHCR has been a pioneer," said Mahbub Alam Talukder during the virtual inaugural.

"From the government's side, we are very grateful to UNHCR. In this urgent situation, UNHCR has made this facility which will help many coronavirus positive patients, both inside and outside of the camps," said DC Kamal Hossain.

While there are cases at both camps and among host communities, people now have a place to come for isolation and proper treatment, said Hinako Toki, senior operations manager of UNHCR in Cox's Bazar.

"This will keep the community safe. This has been a truly collective effort and achievement," Toki said.

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Dentists demand special appointment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dental surgeons who passed 39th special Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) examination expressed frustration over the recent recruitment of 2,000 doctors, as none of them were included in the list.

DGHS recommended the health secretary to appoint 300 dental surgeons on ad-hoc basis, but the ministry said more discussion is needed regarding recruitment.

A press release issued on behalf of the 39th BCS-passed dentists said dental services have been disrupted in hospitals, and dental surgeons are contracting Covid-19. "So far, at least 22 dentists got infected in public and private hospitals," it said.

"Each upazila hospital has one dental surgeon post. If the doctor in the post gets infected, the whole department must be closed," added the release.

"It is in the nation's interest to recruit 300 dental surgeons from those who have passed 39th and previous BCS exams, on merit basis," said Prof Abul Kalam Bepari, director (dental) of DGHS, in a letter to the health ministry on Monday.

Habibur Rahman Khan, additional secretary (admin) of the health ministry, told this newspaper that recruitment of dental surgeons was proposed, but authorities have not made any decision.