

Allocate funds for women-friendly infrastructure: MJF

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) yesterday called for more allocation in the upcoming budget for women-friendly infrastructure.

The organisation also hoped that the issues of social safety of women and sharing of household chores will get prominence in this budget.

MJF said in a press statement, women have to bear the burden of additional household work during the pandemic as many families are staying home at all times. Violence against women also increased during this time, it said.

A working woman has to put an extra three hours behind household chores while their male counterparts spend less than one-and-a-half hours behind housework. On the other hand, women who don't work outside spend over six hours doing household chores.

The organisation said Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal, at a policy dialogue organised by MJF this year, assured that he would raise the issue of giving recognition of women's household work through satellite accounts for this year's budget.

MJF thinks women's unrecognised work in the household and peripheral areas should be accounted for in the budget.

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The area surrounding Dhanmondi Hawkers' buzzes with crowds yesterday, posing a heavy risk of community transmission as people roam around the area, some of them without even wearing masks. It is inadvisable to touch your face amid a coronavirus outbreak, but many appear to be taking the health guidelines lightly since the shutdown was lifted.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

'Covid-19 or not, no one will be refused treatment'

Pvt hospital owners in Sylhet pledge after patients died being turned away

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Whether a patient is infected with Covid-19 or not, no hospital in Sylhet will refuse them treatment, said Private Hospital and Diagnostic Centre Owners Association yesterday.

The association came up with the decision after several people died in the city within the last couple of weeks after being turned away by hospitals. Dr Naseem Ahmed, president of the association, made the announcement at a press conference.

Stating that incidents of people being turned away were very unfortunate, the organisation also took three decisions in an emergency meeting on Sunday.

These decisions are: North East Medical College Hospital and Mount Adora Hospital (Akalia branch) will be dedicated for Covid-19 patients besides government hospitals; all private hospitals will provide primary treatment to suspected patients at isolation centres and will refer them to dedicated hospitals by arranging oxygen support; and as the cost of treatment at private hospitals is expensive, the association encourages Covid-19 patients to look for government hospitals.

The association also urged the government to promptly sign a contract with North East Medical College in this regard.

They said the hospital has already been given verbal permission by the health ministry and the patients' treatment cost should be covered by the government.

It also urged the government to offer incentives to doctors and nurses of private hospitals along with providing them with safety gears.

Since May 31 night, at least five persons have reportedly been turned away by private hospitals in Sylhet and died without treatment.

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Magistrates can hold virtual remand prayer hearings: SC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Magistrates across the country can now virtually hold hearings on remand prayers of accused without physical presence in courts.

The Supreme Court yesterday cleared barriers and directed all magistrates to hold remand prayer hearings through videoconferencing with jail authorities.

Before hearing, the magistrate will send a virtual link to respective jail authorities responsible for the accused.

After connecting with jail authorities, the conducting magistrate will witness the accused virtually and hold a hearing, said a gazette notification issued yesterday.

Before the gazette, it was a mandatory provision of the Criminal Procedure Code that during remand prayer hearing, the accused must be produced before the court.

Following court closure, many remand prayers remained pending with different courts, as the accused could not be physically present.

For example, Rapid Action Battalion on

Riva Ganguly Das may be transferred

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Riva Ganguly Das is likely to be shifted, a year and a half after appointment. She is likely to be given either new responsibilities in the Indian Ministry of External Affairs headquarters in South Block or given another diplomatic assignment outside India, sources said.

The Indian government, however, has not issued any formal announcement as yet.

The move has been in the offing since February but the Covid-19 pandemic put it in on hold, sources said.

Riva could be made secretary (east) but has to wait till Vijay Singh Thakur retires in September.

The strongest front-runner for succeeding Riva Ganguly Das in Dhaka as the high commissioner is India's current Ambassador to Afghanistan Vinay Kumar.

However, sources said they are not ruling out three other diplomats, including two who had earlier served as senior diplomats in Bangladesh, to be in the running to replace Riva as the new high commissioner of India to Bangladesh.



Allocation for WASH key to controlling Covid-19

Experts tell press conference

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Allocating adequate budget to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) sector in the upcoming national budget should be a key priority to prevent and control Covid-19, said experts yesterday.

They made the remarks at a virtual press conference held by WaterAid, Unicef, PPRC, FANSA-BD, WSSCC, B, FSM Network, Sanitation and Water for All and WASH Alliance, says a press release.

Eminent economist Dr Hossain Zillur Rahman, said the upcoming budget must prioritise hygiene as a critical area in the light of Covid-19 threat and the complexities of SDG-6 attainment.

Hasin Jahan, Country Director of WaterAid, also said investment in nationwide hygiene promotion and behaviour change campaigns must get priority in the budget to control Covid-19.

Other speakers also stated that the allocation of the budget shouldn't differ from urban infrastructure to rural areas, as everyone around the nation are at risk of contracting the coronavirus.

An analysis of PPRC revealed that the government has made commendable progress on WASH financing, as the allocation has demonstrated an upward trend from the budget of 2007-08 (Tk 25.63 billion) to 2019-20 (Tk 106.87 billion).

The analysis also shows geographical inequality of WASH allocation remains significant, where cities and towns received higher percentage of funding compared to rural, char, hilly, and coastal areas.

The press conference put forward recommendations including increase of immediate investment in WASH, including hygiene and WASH in healthcare facilities, with a particular focus on hard-to-reach areas and other marginalised groups.

Shahan Ara Begum passes away

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

Shahan Ara Begum, a freedom fighter, politician, cultural activist and a witness of the heinous August 15 killings, has passed away at the age of 72.

She breathed her last at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib University Hospital on Sunday night after a brain stroke, said family sources.

Shahan was the wife of Barishal-2 lawmaker Abul Hasanat Abdullah, and mother of Barishal City Corporation Mayor Serniabat Sadiq Abdullah.

Shahan Ara lost her son Sukanta Babu and four of her relatives on the fateful night of August 15, 1975, while she was living at her father-in-law Shaheed Abdur Rab Serniabat's Minto Road residence in Dhaka. She was also shot and injured.

Her first namaz-e-janaza was held at BSMMU on Sunday. She was buried with state honour at Barishal's Muslim Graveyard yesterday, following a second janaza.

She was a vice president of Barishal district Awami League. AL district and city units, Barishal City Corporation, and many other organisations expressed deep shock at the death.



Human traffickers will not be spared: Rab DG

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion's Director General (DG) Chowdhury Abdullah Al Mamun warned that those involved in human trafficking and responsible behind the killing of 26 Bangladeshis in Libya will not be spared and appropriate legal action will be taken against them.

"What has happened in Libya is tragic. We have already arrested the mastermind behind it. We will not give concessions to anyone and our operation is still ongoing," said the DG.

He was speaking at the launching ceremony of an application for monitoring the elite force members' treatment at Rab's media centre in the capital Karwan Bazar yesterday.

At the programme, the Rab DG also provided financial assistance to four family members of journalists who died from Covid-19.

"We are conducting our usual operational activities. Members of the force are constantly working against narcotics, militancy and terrorism during the period," he said.

Regarding financial aid to journalists, Rab DG said, "We do not want anyone to lose their relatives in this way. We do not to do such ceremony and join in such program. We will meet in other events and we will stand by the journalists."

Regarding the operational update during the period of Covid-19, Lt Col Sarwar-Bin-Quasem, director of legal and media wing of Rab, said they have arrested around 2,000 people involved with narcotics trade and recovered narcotics worth around Tk 60-70 crore.

Besides, the elite force arrested around 26 people involved with spreading rumours, he said.

Addressing the programme, Rab Additional Director General (Operations) Colonel Tofail Mostafa Sarwar said, "We have tried to make a model for coronavirus treatment. We have taken some steps to reduce the pressure from hospitals of the country."

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BRINGING THE GREENERY HOME ... With thousands of Dhaka residents confined to their homes, gardening seems to have gained popularity as a pastime. This woman was seen roaming around Dhaka University campus on a rickshaw, looking for nurseries to pick the right samplings for her balcony. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



Amid the sweltering heat and humidity that Dhaka has been undergoing, a splash of rain brings out the dancer in these two children. The photo was taken in front of BG Press in the capital's Tejgaon.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Drug price hike continues in Ctg

Authorities deny, customers complain

MOHAMMAD SUMAN, Ctg

Medicine traders are hiking price of pain and fever medicine and disinfectant items with the excuse of supply shortage amid the coronavirus pandemic in Chattogram city.

While visiting a large wholesale drug market in the city's Hazari Goli area, this correspondent found that drugs were being sold at double the usual price. This included cold medication, cough syrup, antibiotics, diabetes, heart medication, vitamin-C tablet, hand sanitiser and other items used to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

Faisal Ahmed, who visits this market from Agrabad to buy medicine at cheaper prices, told The Daily Star, "It appears there is little change in prices here in comparison to the local pharmacy."

He said, "Even the price of paracetamol has doubled. I bought a strip of C-vit tablet for Tk 40 and a strip of Napa at Tk 30, almost double the usual prices."

Another customer Shorif Uddin said that he bought a strip of antibiotic azithromycin for Tk 650, which is much higher than its usual price of Tk 350-375.

He said "I also bought one litre of Savlon at Tk 490 although the maximum retail price was given Tk 225."

Traders said a supply shortage caused by a sudden rise in demand for some drugs was to blame for the price hikes.

Zishu Sarkar, owner of Sarkar Medico in Hazari Goli, said he had to

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'MPO-enlisted schools should forgo tuition fee'

Petition seeks HC order

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A writ petition has been filed with the High Court seeking it's directives on collection of monthly tuition fees by private educational institutions, which get the monthly pay order (MPO) facilities during coronavirus pandemic.

Two students of Ideal School and College in Dhaka jointly submitted the petition to the High Court recently, praying to the court to order the authorities concerned of the government to take necessary steps so that the schools, colleges and madrasas getting MPO facilities do not collect monthly tuition fees from the students amid the pandemic.

The High Court will hear on the petition today, petitioners' lawyer Advocate Saifur Rahman told The Daily Star.

He said guardians of most students have been facing financial crisis during the coronavirus outbreak. Many of them are out of work or unemployed, hence they cannot afford the monthly fees, he added.