

Zafrullah

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Dr Zafrullah tested positive for Covid-19 on May 25 through a test using rapid testing kit-- GR Rapid Dot Blot, which was invented by the researchers at the Gonoshasthaya Kendra.

Since then, he has been under treatment at the Gonoshasthaya Nagar Hospital. He has undergone plasma therapy thrice.

Later, he tested positive for Covid-19 in rt-PCR test at the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University.

The 79-year old physician is a kidney patient and has been undergoing dialysis and also has a pre-existing lung problem.

For nearly three months, Dr Zafrullah and a team of scientists have been working on the Gonoshasthaya Kendra-developed rapid coronavirus test kit -- GR Rapid Dot Blot -- trying to get it approved.

He has been calling for emergency authorisation of the kit for large-scale tests and isolation of the new coronavirus patients -- the best way to check its spread.

861 died showing

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said they found recorded incidents which took place between May 24 and 30, but those were reported in the media the following week.

That's way some incidents which occurred between May 24 and 30 have been recorded in the latest report, Humayun told The Daily Star over the phone.

The report stated that 83 incidents of spreading rumour over Covid-19 were recorded in the country. At least 87 people, including the highest 35 from Dhaka division, were arrested in connection with those incidents.

Furthermore, 473 people were picked up and another 9,557 fined between the second week of March and June 6 for committing various offences related to the virus outbreak, including relief embezzlement, violation of social distancing rules, arranging social gatherings, and opening businesses.

At least 448 people were reportedly detained, fined and seven were arrested across the country between May 31 and June 6. Most of the fines and penalties were imposed due to the violation of health and safety regulations in public transport and business institutions after the general holidays ended on May 30.

The report found that 138 protests took place across the country between April 26 and May 6. Some 45 percent of the demonstrations was organised demanding unpaid wages and Eid bonuses and 33 percent demanding relief, aid or food.

Eleven percent of the protests was staged over shutdown rules, lay-offs, and waiver of rents, while six percent was organised against irregularities in the distribution of relief, aid or food and five percent against hike in bus fares, the CGS said. Besides, 123 incidents of violence related to novel coronavirus took place between March 1 and June 6, resulting in 13 deaths and 541 injuries, the report added.

No break for middle class

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for the first three slabs have been set at five, 10 and 15 percent -- down from 10, 15 and 20 percent respectively.

As the government targets the ultra poor with stipends and cash transfers, there is nothing for those like Nabil's family during an unprecedented crisis. No unemployment benefit scheme like that in the United States, no house rent assistance like in the United Kingdom, no universal basic income scheme like in Hong Kong.

Small businessmen in rural areas will get microloans and high school graduates will receive employment training under the Skills for Employment Investment Program -- but service-providing professionals hit by the pandemic are left out.

It seems as if middle-class families like Nabil's are being told -- we have nothing to give, but we'll be taking less of what you earn.

In addition, those with personal cars will now have to pay 15 percent (up from 10) in duties for services by the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority.

Nor is there any reduction in Value Added Tax (VAT) of significant consumer goods like infant milk and oil that were hiked last year.

As the Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal himself stated in his budget speech, "Although a large section of our population can afford

to pay taxes, the number of taxpayers is only 20-22 lakh."

He also said, "VAT is the largest contributor to the NBR [National Board of Revenue] tax revenue."

Meaning, while the government fails to crack down on tax evasion by the rich, the economy will be bankrolled by the middle class and even the low-income population.

This comes in a year when consumption inequality, measured by the Gini coefficient, is 0.35 -- up from 0.32 in 2016 -- according to the Centre for Policy Dialogue's latest review of the economy.

Last month, Mosammat Sumaiya, who runs a business doing house-calls for beauty services, had to depend on relief for the first time in her adult life.

The single mother could not bear the thought of running after relief trucks, and had been reaching out to people she knew to connect her with donors personally. She received a month's worth of food supplies from a charitable organisation.

"I used to earn around Tk 25,000 per month but since the pandemic, nobody wants to avail salon services because of social distancing guidelines," said Sumaiya.

On a lighter note, locally produced potato chips will be cheaper with the VAT reduced from 15 percent to 10, so the middle class can at least eat their feelings.

Nothing special

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rural economy and help marginal farmers, he said.

The government could have allocated a Tk 2,000 crore fund in this regard. In India, the authorities have already launched such programmes, he said.

Currently, there are 2.8 crore enlisted farmers with cards.

However, allocation of Tk 3,198 crore to promote farming mechanisation and reducing custom duty on importing parts of agriculture machinery would reduce the price of farming equipment and generate employment, he said.

"Many small businesses related to agriculture machinery will grow in the rural areas and generate employment," Prof Sattar said.

About the allocation of Tk 5,000 crore for the agriculture refinancing scheme through Bangladesh Bank announced by the finance minister, Sattar said only the farmers who deal with banks would be able to avail the service.

"But most of the small farmers are illiterate and they would not be able to avail it as they remain out of the banking system," he said.

Meanwhile, Prof Asaduzzaman, senior researcher at Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), said the initiative of mechanisation in the agriculture sector would help farmers cultivate and harvest crops, but it might render thousands of farm labourers unemployed.

"Only allocation for machinery will not help small farmers as they would not be able to buy the farming machinery equipment," said Prof Asaduzzaman, adding that the machinery would help only those cultivating paddy.

"What about those cultivating

vegetables and fish? How are they going to benefit from those equipment?" he asked.

Rather, it was necessary to create an agriculture business linkage, storage facilities for agro products and build a supply chain.

"Actually it was necessary to think about the whole agricultural sector holistically," he said.

Even though the finance minister mentioned the prime minister's directive on ensuring that not even an inch of land is left uncultivated, he did not come up with any plans to ensure it in the coming fiscal year.

The government is, however, going to encourage onion farmers by increasing import duty on onions, so that local farmers get interested in growing it.

Shykh Seraj, eminent agriculture expert, said the government emphasised on mechanisation of agriculture in the proposed budget.

"But I think the government should have emphasised on digitalisation of agriculture by now," he said.

We're preparing for the worst

Indian doctors says

AFP, New Delhi

Doctors in one of India's top private hospitals shuffle through the intensive care unit wearing full protective suits. Every bed is occupied by coronavirus patients, and fear is building that the worst is still to come.

"We don't know when this is going to peak," Dr Deven Juneja told AFP during a pause from his rounds at the Max Smart Super Speciality Hospital in New Delhi, as heart monitors beeped throughout the ward.

Bangladesh

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20 were from Dhaka, seven from Chattogram, three from Sylhet, four from Rajshahi, two from Barishal and one was from Rangpur.

They were aged between 31 and 80, Prof Nasima added.

According to DGHS, the number of daily infections used to remain between 1,000 and 1,200 a month ago. From the last week of May, the number of cases started jumping over 2,000. Since June 9, the country has seen over 3,000 cases daily.

Data show Bangladesh constantly ranked the 10th position from June 6 in terms of detecting high number of new cases.

During the period, the Covid-19 case growth factor (daily new cases / new cases on the previous day) remained between 0.9 and 1.

According to WHO, the growth factor between 0 and 1 indicates a decline; when it is above 1 it signals an increase, and if it is persistently above 1 this could signify exponential growth.

On April 3, the growth factor for Covid-19 cases in Bangladesh reached the highest 2.5; on 12 April, it was 2.3.

Since the beginning of May 2020, the growth factor has been within the range of 0.8-1.4, and on June 8 it was 1.0, reads the WHO Situation Report.

Smuggling

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India, the chief minister says that a certain quarter is spreading such propaganda to tarnish the image of both governments. He asks people to be aware of conspirators who are trying to drive a wedge between the friendly neighbours. He says that friendship between the two countries is forged in blood and sacrifice.

TAJUDDIN RETURNS FROM INDIA Finance Minister Tajuddin Ahmed returns today after successful completion of his three-day visit to India. In a press conference at Tejgaon Airport he says that India will provide all kinds of support to rebuild the war-torn economy of Bangladesh. Both governments are committed to fully implement the friendship treaty and strengthen trade and industrial cooperation between the two neighbours, he adds.

INDIA WILL BE ASKED TO HAND OVER POWS

Bangladesh government has prepared a list of war criminals. The list will be sent to India, and the Indian authority will be requested to hand over the prisoners of war (POWs) to Bangladesh.

TK 10 CRORE FOR REBUILDING DAMAGED HOUSES

The government has allocated Tk 10 crore to repair and rebuild houses that were damaged during the Liberation War, informs Relief and Rehabilitation Minister AHM Qamaruzzaman. The housing scheme will be run by local administration and relief committee, he adds.

SOURCES: June 13, 1972 issue of Purbodesh.

Not so good news

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Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal did not give any specific guidelines on how the major challenges of creating jobs will be resolved. He, however, spoke of the initiatives that have already been taken.

"We have announced a large stimulus package of about Tk 1,03,117 crore to fight the economic fallout from the coronavirus, one of the main objectives of which is to remove temporary job losses by revitalising the economic activities," the minister said.

Experts and entrepreneurs, however, said the government could have taken a special measure to address the employment problem.

"We already have a mismatch in the skills and job market. Now amid the coronavirus situation, the problem will be more acute," Brac University's Professor Emeritus Manzoor Ahmed said.

"Employment creation is now stagnant. Opportunities of job in informal and many formal sectors are shrinking in home and abroad. Many migrant workers are returning home and will return soon. They [government] could have taken special plan, but it remains a traditional budget," he added.

Rasheda K Choudhury, executive director, Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), said the government should have given priorities on economic recovery, investment and allocation in human resource capacity development through education and health sector.

"Creating skilled human resources is directly related with job market."

ADB's policy brief titled "Covid-19 Impact on Job Postings: Real-Time Assessment Using Bangladesh and Sri Lanka Online Job Portals", which came out on May 29, said businesses in Bangladesh stopped hiring workers because of the Covid-19 outbreak.

The number of job postings decreased by 87 percent in April this year, in comparison with same month of 2019, according to ADB's policy brief.

The number of job postings in April 2020 was down by 95 percent in textile and education industries, and by 92 percent in the manufacturing industry. The sharp decline in the textile industry could be related to the pandemic affecting key export markets such as Europe and the United States.

"This is the time to take new steps," said Anwar-ul Alam Chowdhury, president of Bangladesh Chamber of Industries (BCI).

"Steps should be taken to increase capacity in some sectors like retail, cottage industry and SME. Opportunities in light engineering, blue ocean, agro process and IT sector are opening up due to relation among China, US and EU," he said.

Anwarul suggested creating a separate human resources ministry, which will conduct research. This ministry will make recommendations, and the education ministry will prepare curriculum along that line, he said.

EDUCATION BUDGET NOT ADEQUATE

The finance minister allocated Tk 66,400 crore for education sector for 2020-21. The amount makes up 11.69 percent of the total outlay and its share in the GDP stands at 2.09 percent.

Bangladesh has committed in the Dakar Declaration and other global forums to spend 6 percent of GDP or allocate at least 20 percent of the national budget for education. Unesco also stipulates a similar budgetary allocation for education.

Educationists say the government expenditure on education as a proportion of GDP has been hovering around 2 percent for the last several years, which is lower than that in many other South Asian countries.

The bulk share of the budget goes to salaries and operational expenditure, leaving little scope for ensuring a quality education and skill human resource development.

With this little education budget country will not be able to reap the benefit from the demographic dividend, they added.

Demographic dividend is the economic growth potential that can result from shifts in a population's age structure, mainly when the share of the working age population (15 to 64) is larger than the non-working age share of the population (14 and younger, and 65 and older).

About 65 percent of Bangladesh's population is between the age of 15 and 64 now.

STIMULUS PACKAGES

The stimulus packages include a subsidised loan fund of Tk 5,000 crore to enable payment of salaries and allowances of workers and employees in export-oriented industries, including ready-made garments.

Two separate low interest loan facilities -- Tk 30,000 crore low-interest working capital loan to affected large industries and service sector organisations, and Tk 20,000 crore low interest working capital loan to the micro, cottage and small and medium enterprises.

"We will expand the system of distribution of low interest loans to poor village farmers, returned expatriate workers and trained and unemployed youths for their engagement in business and self-employment activities in the rural areas in agriculture, agriculture related production and services, small businesses and small and cottage industries," said the finance minister.

To support this initiative, a low interest loan facility of Tk 2,000 crore has been created, which will be distributed through Palli Sanchay Bank, Probashi Kallyan Bank, Karmasangsthan Bank and Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF).

Mustafa Kamal said the fourth priority sector will be job creation and rural development.

The objectives are to tackle unemployment in the industry, SMEs and services sector and the rural non-formal sector due to partial closure of overall economic activities, and to create employment opportunities for expatriate Bangladeshis who have been forced to return from abroad, he said.

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Memo No. _____ Date: _____

e-Tender Notice

e-Tender is being in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) by Executive Engineer, RHD, Road Division, Madaripur for the procurement of:

Sl No.	Tender ID	Name of work	Last selling date & time	Closing date & time	Opening date & time
1.	468907	Supplying of other spare parts for Pickup No. Dhaka-Metro-Tha-11-6558 of Repair Works under Madaripur Road Division during the year 2019-2020.	21-06-2020 at 17:00	22-06-2020 at 12:00	22-06-2020 at 12:00
2.	468995	Supplying of other spare parts for Mitsubishi Pickup No. Dhaka-Metro-Tha-11-1908 of Repair Works under Madaripur Road Division during the year 2019-2020.	21-06-2020 at 17:00	22-06-2020 at 12:15	22-06-2020 at 12:15
3.	468996	Supplying Break System & other spare parts for Pajero Jeep No. Dhaka Metro Gha-11-4543 for Repair Works under Madaripur Road Division during the year 2019-2020.	21-06-2020 at 17:00	22-06-2020 at 12:30	22-06-2020 at 12:30
4.	468997	Supplying of Wheel spare parts for Truck No. Faridpur-Ta-130 for Repair Works under Madaripur Road Division during the year 2019-2020.	21-06-2020 at 17:00	22-06-2020 at 12:45	22-06-2020 at 12:45

1. This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the e-GP Portal.
2. To submit e-Tender registration in the e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.
3. For further information, please contact e-GP helpdesk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Md. Rafiqul Islam
ID No. 601951
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GD-981

Cars become

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A car or jeep with the engine capacity of 2,000-2,500cc will have to pay 50 percent more -- Tk 75,000. Similar vehicles with an engine capacity of 2,500-3,500cc will have to pay 25 percent more.

There is no increase at all on the engine capacities beyond 3,500cc. In addition, microbus owners will have to pay Tk 30,000 as tax, which 20,000 the previous fiscal.

Tax paid during registration and fitness renewal is non-refundable. The Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) collected Tk 1,005.75 crore as advance tax from vehicles in the fiscal 2018-19, according to its annual report.

This raise is worrisome for middle-class families with single family cars.

It comes at a time when the number of private car registrations has been falling since 2017. BRTA data shows that the number fell from 19,573 in 2017 to 16,319 in 2018, and 15,016 in 2019.

While the increase will amp up potential revenue from the transport sector, it will further disincentivise the private ownership, even as the public transport sector sees no particular improvement.

Virus deaths

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Development revealed yesterday that in the first three months of 2020, the G20 major economies shrank by 3.4 percent.

This is the largest decline since records began in 1998, with the steepest decline in China, where the economy shrank by 9.8 percent.

THE SECURITY PRINTING CORPORATION (BANGLADESH) LTD.
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INTERNATIONAL e-TENDER FOR SUPPLY, INSTALLATION, TESTING & COMMISSIONING OF A PROGRAMMABLE CHEQUE BOOK FINISHING MACHINE.

Electronic tenders (e-tenders) are hereby invited from the competent international manufacturers/suppliers for supply of the above machine for this Corporation as per under noted schedule. Tender documents showing terms and conditions with specification will be available at web: etender.spcl.org.bd/114.130.43.56. It is to mention here that this is online tender where only e-Tender will be accepted and no hard copy will be accepted except price of e-tender schedule and earnest money. To submit e-Tender bidders need to register on e-Tender.spcl.org.bd/114.130.43.56. For more details please contact cell: 880-1534002183 & 880-1534002184. Necessary information is given below:

- Price per e-Tender schedule : 2,000.00 (two thousand) Taka only.
- Date of publishing of e-Tender : 11.06.2020.
- Date, time and place of pre-bid meeting : 24.06.2020 at 11.00 A.M in the premises of the Security Printing Corporation (Bangladesh) Ltd, Gazipur.
- Last date & time for submission of e-Tender : 15.07.2020 up to 11.00 A.M.
- Date & time for opening of e-Tender : 15.07.2020 at 11.15 A.M.

Bidder may collect e-tender schedule from the aforementioned website. Earnest money @ 3 % (three percent) of the total quoted price shall have to be submitted in the form of Bank Draft/Pay Order/ Irrevocable Bank Guarantee from any scheduled bank in Bangladesh in favour of The Managing Director, The Security Printing Corporation (Bangladesh) Ltd., Gazipur alongwith the price of e-Tender schedule in the form of a separate pay-order/DD in the tender box kept at Corporation's office in Gazipur on or before the scheduled deadline for submission of e-Tender. Irrevocable Bank Guarantee may also be given as earnest money from any international commercial bank abroad with a counter guarantee from any scheduled bank in Bangladesh. e-Tender(s) without earnest money and price for procurement of e-tender schedule shall not be acceptable. The e-Tender shall have to submit as per e-Tender guidelines mentioned at above website. Offer(s) shall be opened as per schedule mentioned above in presence of the tenderer(s) if any. 01 (one) e-Tender schedule is applicable only for one supplier/manufacturer for submitting one offer alongwith earnest money and price of e-Tender schedule. The authority reserves the right to reject or accept any e-Tender(s) without assigning any reason whatsoever. Submission of e-Tender after the specified time shall not be acceptable under any circumstances.

(Sheikh Mohammad Shoib Nazir)
General Manager (Foreign Purchase)
Phone: 88-02-9205661.

GD-980