

FROM PARLOUR TO PLANTATION

Beauticians of Madhupur now toiling at orchards
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State-run jute mills to be shut, 25,000 laid off

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

The government has put the last nail on the coffin of the country's state-run jute industry by closing all the 22 jute mills and laying off 24,886 workers.

The step has been taken as Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) continues to incur heavy losses. Textiles and Jute Minister Golam Dastagir Gazi said at a virtual press briefing yesterday.

"Financial benefits of all the retired workers, and wages and benefits of all the current workers will be paid in due course. A Tk 5,000-crore fund will be allocated for this purpose.

"The mills will be modernised and re-opened under PPP [Public-Private Partnership], joint venture or lease process. And, these laid-off workers will be given priority while manning these modernised mills," mentioned the minister.

Following the briefing, the textiles and jute ministry in a statement said, "These mills are run with machinery that dates back 50 to 60 years. The BJMC's management system is very old-fashioned and not suitable for managing modern factories."



But in reality, it's the poor workers who are the worst victim of the corporation's failure to modernise the production system. Tens of thousands of workers have been protesting against BJMC's mismanagement for years.

Talking to this newspaper, Md Mizanur Rahman, labour leader and worker of the state-run Platinum Jubilee Jute Mills, said, "We have been staging protests for our due wages for more than a year. Hundreds of our retired workers did not get their due benefits.

"According to the Productivity and Wage Commission, 2015, we are supposed to get a minimum wage of Tk 8,300 per month. However, this has not been materialised in the last five years. This is why we cannot

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A man putting on a mask while two army personnel look on in Dhanmondi's Satmasjid Road yesterday afternoon. Members of the military have been performing the vital role of reminding pedestrians and motorists on the capital's streets to put on their masks in an effort to curb the spread of coronavirus.

PHOTO: RASHED SUMON

BANGLADESH UPDATE

3,809
New cases in 24hrs

1,37,787
Total cases

1,738
Deaths

55,727
Recoveries

GLOBAL UPDATE

502,539
Deaths

10,155,571
Total cases

Real death rate higher than official

Experts say many Covid-19 deaths unaccounted for
MOUDDUD AHMED SUJAN

As the official coronavirus death toll in the country surged past 1,700 yesterday, experts said the actual figure of death would be much higher had those died with Covid-19 symptoms been taken into account.

Although the overall death rate in Bangladesh is almost similar to other countries, the rate in the elderly population (51 years or above) is higher than in many countries.

With 43 Covid-19 deaths yesterday, the death toll reached 1,738 since the first death on March 18.

The Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) yesterday recorded 3,809 new cases of coronavirus infection, taking the tally to 1,37,787.

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Distribute vaccines globally for free

A call from 105 world leaders including 18 Nobel laureates
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A unified appeal, signed by 105 world leaders, including 18 Nobel laureates, 32 former heads of state and government, political leaders, artists, international NGOs and institutions, has urged governments, foundations, philanthropists and social businesses to come forward and produce and distribute Covid-19 vaccines all over the world for free.

"We invite all social, political, and health entities to reaffirm our collective responsibility for the protection of all vulnerable persons without any discrimination whatsoever," read a press release issued yesterday by the Yunus Centre.

The call, initiated by the Centre, was signed by Nobel laureates Muhammad Yunus, Tawakkol Karman, Shirin Ebadi, Mikhail Gorbachev, Nadia Murad, Malala Yousafzai, Mairead Maguire, and Archbishop Desmond Tutu among others.

The former heads of state who signed this unified appeal include former prime minister of Pakistan Shaukat Aziz, former PM of New Zealand Helen Clark, former PM of Italy Romano Prodi, former president of Brazil Luiz Inacio, former president of Mauritius Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, and former PM of the UK Gordon Brown.

Others include former presidents and prime ministers

GLOBAL LEADERS RAISE \$6.9B FOR VACCINE -- PAGE 12

Govt to allow testing kits for antibody test

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will authorise the use of rapid testing kits for measuring antibodies in patients infected with the coronavirus.

The Directorate General of Drug Administration (DGDA) has finalised a criterion pending permission from the health ministry, Md Salauddin, director of DGDA told The Daily Star.

The health ministry formed a 14-member committee to examine the necessity of rapid test kits and the panel suggested it be used for research purposes.

On June 24, the DGDA published a notice on its website, saying kits with a minimum 90 percent sensitivity and 95 percent specificity will be approved.

Package of a rapid antibody test kit must mention that "this is

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

Team up to stop forced deportation

Countries, regional bodies urged at The Daily Star webinar; speakers stress need for a justice mechanism for the aggrieved migrant workers
DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Migrant labour sending countries should strongly oppose forced deportation of workers during the pandemic and there should be a transitional justice mechanism for those facing job loss and wage theft, experts said.

There should be a comprehensive plan for socio-economic reintegration of those returning from abroad, they added.

"Migrant destination countries are not paying heed to the calls of the UN Migration Network and rights bodies against deportation of migrants. We need to raise our voice, join other countries and regional bodies against this," Prof CR Abrar told a webinar organised by The Daily Star on Saturday.

Many of the migrants returning home have not been paid their wages and end service benefits, which means billions of dollars have been lost, the Dhaka University professor of international relations told the event titled Migrants Returning Home: to What?

Bangladeshi migrant Emdad Haque Sohel had to return home from Kuwait because his employer did not renew his work visa that expired in March. He had to face detention and non-payment as well. Referring to his case, CR Abrar said, "We cannot allow this. Today, the governments and civil societies should work together."

Starting from April to mid-June, some 30,000 Bangladeshi migrants

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No chance of reinfection

Insists Dr Bijon about Covid-19
GOLAM MORTOZA

Though the scientific community is mulling over whether the Covid-19 reinfection cases are possible, Bangladeshi scientist Dr Bijon Kumar Shil rules out the chances.

"There's no possibility of a second time infection as antibody develops naturally in the body with recovery from the virus," Dr Bijon, head of the microbiology department at Gono Bishwabidyalay, told The Daily Star.

The molecular immunologist insisted that a few reports on reinfection were not based on evidence, claiming that his own research at the university laboratory also found no link as yet.

Some researchers do theorise that there is still not enough scientific information to assess how long the antibodies in the body following a Covid-19 infection can provide protection.

A study published in Nature Medicine journal on June 18 created quite some

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JP leader Noman expelled from party

Links to Paplu the reason, sources say
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mohammad Noman, a former Jatiya Party MP of Laxmipur-2 who was also an adviser to the party's Chairman GM Quader, has been expelled from the party, read a press release yesterday.

Although the press release did not mention any specific reason behind the decision, but party leaders said he was relieved as he had been inactive since 2018 parliamentary election.

"He has been relieved from all the posts and titles including the post of primary member of JP," read the press release.

MP Noman was inactive in the party as he supported MP Mohammad Shahid Islam Papul of his constituency in the 2018 election in exchange of a huge amount of money.

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This picture taken from Postogola Bridge recently shows a boat taking a group of people away from Dhaka to their village home. As the spread of Covid-19 continues to rise, many have been leaving the capital, the most affected area of the country, for fear of contracting the virus and due to loss of income source.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

US reopening plans halted

Infections surge; global virus cases exceed 10 million, half a million dead; China puts half a million in lockdown
AGENCIES

Global infections from the novel coronavirus have surpassed 10 million as the rate of new cases surges.

One million new cases were recorded in only six days, according to the AFP count, just as countries start to unwind punishing lockdowns that have devastated their economies and thrown millions out of work.

The worldwide death toll from the disease that first emerged in China about six months ago is also nearing 500,000 as fears grow of a full-blown second wave.

The United States, the hardest hit country, has surpassed 2.5 million cases alone, as efforts to reopen the world's economic powerhouse were set back by a jump in new infections in states such as Florida.

Infections are also up in some other parts of the world that have reopened, with Europe now registering over 2.6 million.

China yesterday imposed a strict lockdown on nearly half a million people in a province surrounding Beijing to contain a fresh coronavirus cluster.

Beijing city official Xu Hejian told reporters that the situation was "severe and complicated," warning that the city needed to continue tracing the spread of the virus.

The tension between reopening battered economies -- efforts pushed in the US by President Donald Trump -- and public health is a source of debate in nearly every country.

On Saturday alone the US recorded more than 43,000 new cases, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University. US deaths now exceed 125,000, approximately one-quarter the world total of almost 499,000.

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