

COVID-19
Petition seeks quick disposal of test results

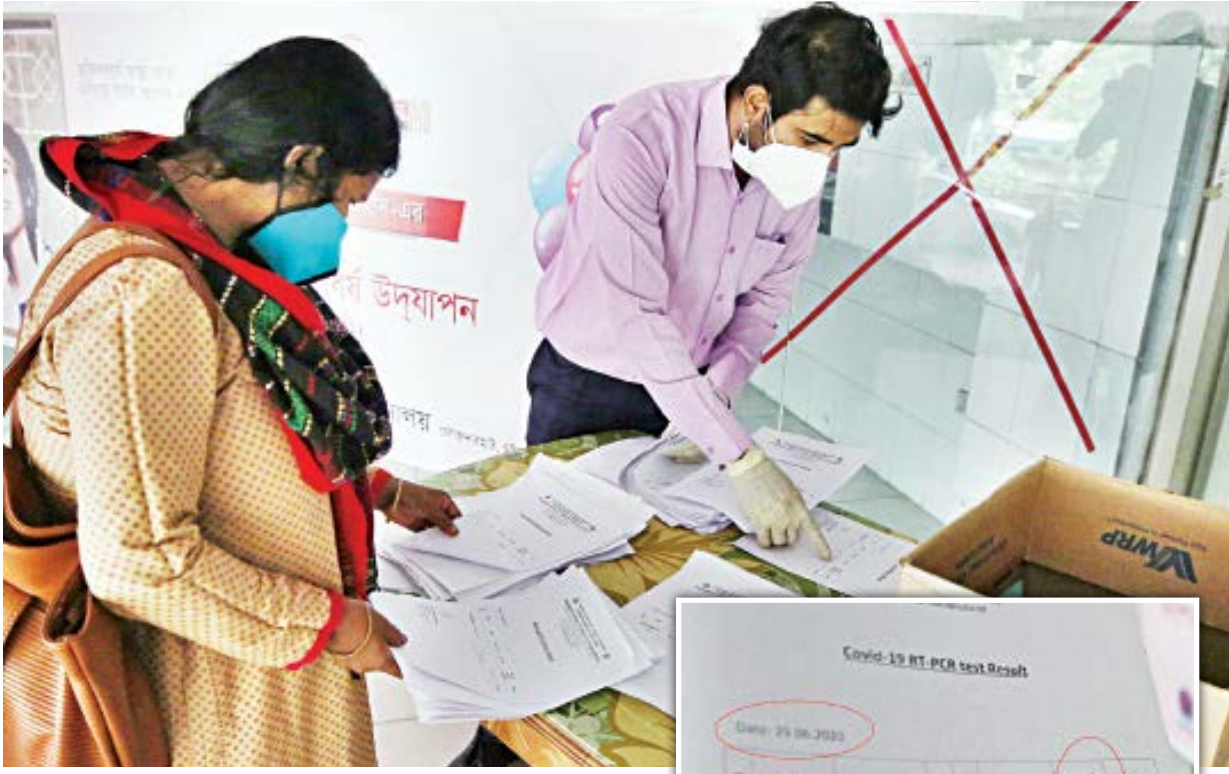
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Supreme Court lawyer yesterday filed a writ petition with the High Court seeking its directive on the health secretary and director general of the Directorate General of Health Services to take necessary steps so that reports of Covid-19 tests are handed to patients quickly.

Advocate Moniruzzaman Lincon submitted it as public interest litigation through email to the HC, saying most Covid-19 test reports are being provided seven to 10 days after collection of samples.

Coronavirus-positive patients showing no symptoms mix with others freely, and can affect them, he said in the petition.

Moniruzzaman told The Daily Star that the HC may hold hearing on the writ petition today.



Two people rummage through an unattended stack of test reports at BITID. Inset, the photo, taken on June 27, shows June 29 as date of delivery, with date of sample collection is noted June 28. This photographer took photos of at least two certificates with wrong dates, which one should not be able to do in the first place, as these are confidential documents.

'Self-serve' report pickup and time-travelling tests

Mistakes, mismanagement of Covid-19 testing at port city's BITID raise eyebrows; authorities say they are short-staffed

ARUN BIKASH DEY, CIG

Allegations of mistakes and mismanagement in Covid-19 test results have been growing at the Bangladesh Institute of Tropical and Infectious Diseases (BITID) in Chattogram city, as the centre continues to work through the health crisis with limited resources.

Russel Chowdhury (not his real name) from Sitakunda upazila said his report had June 28 as the date of sample collection, while he had collected the report itself on June 27 (Saturday). The report also said the intended date for its collection was June 29.

"I gave my sample in late May; since then, I have come here at least five times to collect my report, but to no avail," he added.

"I came to know through the BITID hotline in mid-June that I tested positive for Covid-19."

"Now I have the report, but with the

anomalies in it, I am having trouble trusting its accuracy," he said, adding that a stack of reports were left in a basket at the corridor of BITID when he went to pick it up, and no responsible staff was present to take care of those.

This correspondent visited the spot yesterday, and found truth in the claim. Test reports -- that are of paramount importance to patients -- were found left in a basket on a table at the corridor of BITID.

Kumkum Biswas from Sitakunda also expressed her concerns over the matter. "Patients and their attendants are rummaging through for their reports in the basket. Some get it, some do not. Any report can go missing in this ruckus," she said. "Moreover, as the reports are left open, privacy of patients is violated."

Contacted, Prof Dr Shakil Ahmed, in-charge of BITID laboratory, said the date of delivery of Russell's report would actually be on May 29. "It was a printing mistake."

PHOTO: RAJIB RAHMAN

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An integrated South Asia the key: analysts

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

International relations analysts have called for a new move to strengthen South Asian integration for the sake of improving the lives of its huge population, a lot of who are poor, human rights and environment.

They said as China-US rivalry continues to grow, these powers will continue to have their influence in the region that has been least integrated so far because of trust deficit. China has lucrative economic offers to the smaller South Asian countries but they run risks of debt trap and authoritarian rule.

As coronavirus pandemic is re-exposing the fragility amid non-cooperation, it is high time the regional countries come together, remove their distrust and cooperate each other in economic, social, environmental development, analysts added.

India, as a major economy of the region, has even a greater role to play here, they observed at a webinar titled "In the shadow of Dragon: Globalization and Fractured Future of South Asia", organised by the Centre for Governance Studies (CGS) yesterday.

Ali Riaz, a distinguished professor of political science at Illinois State University, said the rise of China and its influence on South Asia has put India in a difficult situation as smaller countries of the region are being drawn towards China because of its lucrative economic offers under the Belt and Road Initiative.

India, the major regional power, had to play an important role for the regional economic integration, but it has not done so -- a situation that facilitated China's entry in a big way.

For example, Saarc has been almost made into a dysfunctional regional body despite its immense potential, he added.

Ali Riaz said while Delhi has been focusing on political relations with its neighbours, China is doing the same. It is not the fact that the countries like Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bangladesh are very happily embracing China, they are balancing between China and India.

However, these countries need to keep in mind China's authoritarian approach in governance and economy, risks of debt trap as well as human rights issues, he said.

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FITNESS DOCS OUTDATED FOR 10YRS
11,000 vehicles to be 'written off' tomorrow

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Over 11,000 vehicles, including 1,572 belonging to different government agencies, have not had their fitness certificates renewed for more than a decade in breach of rules, and authorities are going to declare those "write-offs" after tomorrow, officials said.

Most of such government vehicles belong to different projects and have not had their fitness certificates updated after the expiry of project tenure, they said.

Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) doesn't have any data on how many of these vehicles are in operation now. However, several BRTA officials said many of these vehicles might be running on roads, especially outside Dhaka, as "a significant number" of vehicles have updated fitness after a recent notice was circulated in this regard.

As per law, it is mandatory for a vehicle to go through fitness check-up every year and have its fitness certificate renewed to ply the roads.

The authority recently asked owners to renew fitness certificates of vehicles by June 30. Otherwise, they would be declared "write-offs", meaning their registration will be cancelled, it said.

"This is our routine work. We will cancel registration of vehicles which have not had their fitness certificates renewed in last 10 years after June 30," BRTA Director (operations) Sitangshu Shekhar Biswas told The Daily Star yesterday.

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ACC sues govt officer, 2 UP members for stealing relief

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has filed a case against a government officer, two union parishad (UP) members and three others for misappropriating about 39.3 thousand kg rice from Food for Work project.

ACC deputy assistant director Nilkamal Pal filed the case with its Integrated District Office in Khulna on June 27, confirmed Pranab Kumar Bhattacharya, ACC's public relations officer (PRO).

The accused are Miraj Hossain Khan, Food for Work project implementation officer; Shahidul Islam, UP member of Tarali; Abdul Gani, UP member of Champaphul; Liakat Hossain Sardar from

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Phone theft racket active in city: CID

Five held from Gulistan

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

They mostly worked in small groups -- around three to four persons in each one.

The first group stole cellphones from public places and transports. The second one changed the International Mobile Equipment Identity (IMEI) of the phones so that law enforcers could not trace those while the third group sold the phones at markets.

To change the IMEI it cost Tk 200 to Tk 600, depending on the phone's model.

Over a 100 members of the syndicate are active in Dhaka and other divisional cities. Some are also involved with smuggling handsets from neighbouring country and supplying those in shopping malls.

Law enforcers came up with the findings while investigating a case of cellphone theft.

On Saturday, a Criminal Investigation Department team, in a special drive, arrested five persons from the capital's Gulistan area for their involvement in selling stolen cellphones, Kaniz Fatema, special superintendent (Dhaka metro east) of CID, told The Daily Star yesterday.

The arrestees are Khorshed Khan (30), Shamim Mollah (21), Miraz Uddin (20), Abdul Aziz (32), and Kabir Hossain (40). CID also seized 92 cellphones from their possession.

She said Khorshed used to smuggle in cellphones,

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STATE-OWNED MILLS' SHUTDOWN
Jute workers in Khulna prepare for movement

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

Workers of the nine state-owned jute mills in the Khulna region are preparing for an organised movement to protest the decision to hand all state-owned jute mills over to public private partnership.

As part of the movement, they will stage demonstrations, rallies and even fast-unto-death programme, said the workers.

They were speaking at a press conference at Jute Institute in Khulna city's Chitrali area yesterday.

On Thursday and Saturday, a workers' meeting was held at the respective mill gate where everyone was asked to get ready for movements.

Their leaders alleged that a section of corrupt officials at Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) created such a precarious situation in jute sector. If those are removed and necessary allocation for the sector is ensured, jute will get its golden days again, they said.

At the press conference, jute leaders said the mills will be profitable only when they are modernised. Although the demand

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POLICE BRUTALITY ON JASHORE STUDENT
3 cops took 'unethical benefits' to release Imran, SP tells HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Superintendent of Jashore Police Muhammad Ashraf Hossain yesterday submitted a probe report to the High Court, saying that three police personnel of Kotwali Police Station had taken "unethical benefits" from the father of college student Imran Hossain for releasing him from their custody.

The police personnel are: assistant sub-inspectors of Sajjali Police Box under Kotwali Police Station Sumaresh Kumar Saha and Sajdar Rahman, and constable Md Faruk Hossain.

Imran Hossain, a second-year student of Kazi Nazrul Islam Degree College under Jashore Sadar upazila, was reportedly tortured by police on June 3 without any specific allegations. The torture left Imran with damaged kidneys, his family claims.

The SP also said in the report that departmental action has been taken against the three for taking "unethical benefits", Humayun Kabir Pallob, a petitioner and a Supreme Court lawyer, said citing the SP's report.

He submitted the probe report to the HC through Deputy Attorney General Samarendranath Biswas during a virtual hearing on a writ petition in line with its June 23 order.

Jashore Civil Surgeon Dr Sheikh Abu Shahin submitted a separate report to the HC through DAG Biswas, saying Imran was "drugged" when he was admitted to Queens Hospital. Now, he is doing well, he said.

After examining the reports, the HC yesterday sought a dope test report and relevant documents regarding his treatment. The court asked the civil surgeon to submit them by July 5.

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Residents of Kamalapur TT Para slum were already spending difficult days, as many of them had lost their jobs during the pandemic. In a cruel twist of fate, many of them lost their last belongings when at least 30 shanties of the slum were gutted in a blaze on Saturday. The hapless dwellers have been living under the open sky since, as they have received little to no aid to cover their losses. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



Leaders of Left Democratic Alliance, a coalition of left-leaning political parties, formed a human chain in front of the capital's Jatiya Press Club yesterday, protesting the "conspiracy to shut down" state-owned jute mills across the country.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

আমরা গভীরভাবে শোকাহত

পূবালী ব্যাংক লিমিটেড পরিচালনা পর্ষদের প্রাক্কন পরিচালক, সনামন্ডনা ব্যবসায়ী ও বিশিষ্ট সমাজসেবক

এম. ফয়জুর রহমান

২৮ জুন ২০২০ রবিবার সকাল ৬.২০ মিনিটে এভারকেয়ার হাসপাতালে (গ্র্যাপোলো হাসপাতাল) চিকিৎসাসহীন অবস্থায় ইন্তেকাল করেন (ইন্না লিল্লাহি ওয়া ইন্না ইলাইহি রাজিউন)। তাঁর মৃত্যুতে পূবালী ব্যাংক লিমিটেড এর পরিচালনা পর্ষদ এবং সকল স্তরের নির্বাহী, কর্মকর্তা ও কর্মচারী গভীরভাবে মর্মান্বিত ও শোকাহত।

আমরা মহান আল্লাহতায়ালায় কাছে মরহুমের বিদেহী আত্মার মাগফেরাত কামনা করছি এবং মরহুমের শোক সন্তুষ্ট পরিবার পরিজনদের প্রতি সমবেদনা জ্ঞাপন করছি।

মহান আল্লাহতায়ালা যেন তাঁর পরিবার পরিজনকে এই অপূরণীয় ক্ষতি সহ্য করার ক্ষমতা দান করেন।

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