

1,500 journalists to receive Tk 10,000 grant: info minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is giving Tk 10,000 as grant to 1,500 journalists each at the primary stage during the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. Information Minister Hasan Mahmud told parliament yesterday.

"Process of disbursement of this grant through the Journalist Welfare Trust has been almost completed," the minister said this in reply to a query from Awami League MP Shahiduzzaman Sarkar.

Hasan Mahmud also said such grants will be provided to more journalists in the next stage.

The question-answer session of today's parliament session was tabled.

Hasan Mahmud said amid the coronavirus pandemic the country's journalists are collecting and publishing news despite the risk.

He also said various measures have been taken so that journalists get priority in Covid-19 testing and medical services.

The information minister said the government has also taken measures to provide a grant of Tk 3.10 crore to the ill, insolvent and injured journalists and families of deceased journalists through the trust in 2019-20 fiscal.

He also said from 2011-12 fiscal till now, around Tk 10.79 crore has been provided to journalists as grants.



Marjina Begum and her husband join forces to pump air into the wheels of a bicycle. She was a housemaid before the pandemic. Now, she and her husband work together at the latter's cycle repair and servicing stall in the capital's Bashabo, since Marjina lost her job.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Untrained contact tracers add to risk

Safety measures a far cry at Rajshahi's lone Covid-19 sample collection centre

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

When offices reopened at the end of May, novel coronavirus was still spreading in Rajshahi city and Ariful Amin was unwilling to join work to save his family from getting infected through him.

Amin, a tax assessor of Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC), had to attend office for at least three days a week.

"I had no choice, all my colleagues were attending office regularly. But the problem was that none hardly cared about physical distancing. Only wearing mask was made compulsory," said the 42-year-old.

Amin had reasons to worry as the health department has been converted to the Covid-19 sample collection centre in the city since April and there were allegations that safety measures were not being maintained there properly.

Soon his fears became true and his colleagues in the health and other departments started getting infected. Eventually, Amin started to feel feverish. He was then suggested to take a test and the result came out Covid-19 positive on June 18.

Four of his eight-member family -- his mother, wife, six-year son, brother -- became Covid-19 positive too. Amin and his family members are in home quarantine and asymptomatic, according to doctors.

The risk, however, persists at the health department's lone sample collection centre. In the last one week, 16 RCC officials and employees became sick and of them, 10 are health department staffers.

The corporation officials found out the department was the centre for spreading coronavirus among its staff members due to a lack of protective measures and untrained contact tracers.

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Livestock dept comes to farmers' rescue

Helps them transport and sell products

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA and MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

When the daily activities came to a halt during the shutdown across the country to prevent the spread of coronavirus, some initiatives from the Department of Livestock (DLS) saved farmers from financial distress.

Under its National Agricultural Technology Program (NATP-2) and through its direct mechanism, the DLS provided battery-run rickshaw-vans to livestock farmers to help them reach out to big buyers, officials said.

According to the DLS' sales report, due to their initiatives livestock farmers had become able to sell dairy products, poultry, eggs and meat worth about Tk 2,478 crore in two months.

Over 13 crore litres of milk, 59.35 crore eggs, seven crore poultry, 12.43 crore kilograms of meat, butter, ghee and sweets were sold between April 25 and June 23, shows the report signed by Dr Md Jasim Uddin, deputy director of DLS.

Talking to The Daily Star, Jasim said they have managed the whole process through their control room. "Wherever farmers informed us about their problem in selling by van due to movement restriction, we helped them through local administration," he said.

The government imposed the shutdown on March 26 and the closure was stretched up to May 30. Due to the enforcement, economic activities

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Compensate victim families: HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed the United Hospital authorities to provide compensation through amicable settlement to families of the victims who were killed in a fire at its isolation unit on May 27.

The court said it will pass an order on July 13 if the hospital authorities and family members of the victims fail to reach a settlement over compensation.

The HC bench of Justice M Enayetur Rahim came up with the directive after hearing virtually three writ petitions filed on behalf of the victim families, seeking compensation from the hospital authorities.

Advocate Niaz Mohammad Mahboob who moved one of the petitions, said the victim families will now apply to the hospital authorities for compensation in line with the HC directive. Then, a settlement will take place between them.

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Ten die with symptoms of Covid-19 in 4 dists

STAR REPORT

At least ten people died after showing Covid-19-like symptoms in four districts between Sunday and yesterday morning.

Among the deceased, six died within 24 hours until 8am yesterday at Cumilla Medical College Hospital (CuMCH).

All of them were aged between 40 and 70 years old, and were admitted to CuMCH with fever, chest pain and shortness of breath, hospital officials said.

In Jhenidah's Kaliganj upazila, an elderly man died around 9:30pm on Sunday, after suffering from fever and breathing complications for four days.

He was diabetic, and a cloth trader by profession.

Dr Sultan Ahmed, residential medical officer of the upazila health complex, said the 50-year-old came to the complex on Sunday morning. He was told to give samples and take oxygen, but he refused and went back home.

Some local youths buried him at his family graveyard around 10am yesterday. His family members were directed not to roam about, he said.

In Rajbari's Goalanda upazila, an elderly fish trader died at his house after suffering from fever, cold and cough on Sunday.

Quoting family members, Ashif Mahamud, Goalanda upazila health and family planning officer, said the man had been suffering for the past one week.

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Prof Shamsuzzaman Khan new president of Bangla Academy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former Bangla Academy Director General Prof Shamsuzzaman Khan yesterday returned to his old workplace, but at a new capacity.

Prof Shamsuzzaman joined office as president of the organisation through a small programme, attended by the Academy's Director General Habibullah Siraji and other staffers.

In his speech, Prof Shamsuzzaman expressed hopes of working together to build the institution as a symbol of nation's intellectual and cultural hope.

Prof Shamsuzzaman, who will hold the office for a three-year term, succeeds National Professor Anisuzzaman, who served as President of Bangla Academy since 2012 till his demise last month. He was re-appointed for a three-year term from January 29 this year to January 26, 2023.

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Columnist Khondaker Mozammel Huq no more

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Khondaker Mozammel Huq, famous for his column Gedu Chachar Khola Chithi in the nineties and chief editor of online platform ajkersurjaday24.com, passed away in Dhaka at the age of 71.

He was undergoing treatment for Covid-19, his former colleague and current editor of Daily Bangladesh Pratidin Naem Nizam said in a Facebook status yesterday.

Mozammel, a freedom fighter, started out as a journalist in late 1960s. His famous column comprised open letters addressed to the head of state.

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Nearly 1m cubic feet hill razed in Satkania

Four to be summoned by DoE

MOSTAFA YOUSUF, Ctg

Large-scale hill razing is underway to fill up land to construct a building for a proposed college in Chattogram's Satkania upazila.

Such razing has been going on with excavators for the last two months in Puranghor area under union-14.

A total of 9,00,000 cubic feet of hill has been flattened, said Zamir Hossen, deputy director of Department of Environment (DoE), Chattogram.

Anyone will be distraught by the extent of the hill cutting, he said, adding that they found four people involved in the razing after visiting the spot.

"We are readying the damage assessment. Then we will serve them with a notice," he said.

The four accused owned the hill but cannot raze those without the prior permission of the DoE. They damaged the ecological balance there, he added.

Mohammad Nur-E-Alam, upazila nirbahi officer of Satkania, told The Daily Star that assistant commissioner (land) of his upazila, first came across the hill razing. On June 25, he seized an excavator after labourers, who were engaged in hill cutting, fled the scene.

Rased Hossen Shikdar, former chairman of Puranghor Union Parishad and one of the accused in a DoE report, told this newspaper that union parishad chairman Mahbubur Rahman Sikdar asked them to donate their land for the college and they did so.

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'Free food for poor' initiative closes at DU after 100 days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An initiative by Dhaka University students to feed the poor every day on campus is set to end today, after a 100-day run.

Led by former Ducus member Tanbir Hasan Shaikat, the group has been distributing meals from TSC premises since March 26.

They announced an end to the project yesterday, as the nationwide general holiday has been lifted. They vowed to continue their activities, providing free hand sanitisers and running awareness campaign for those engaged in outdoor work.

Marking the occasion, a programme was organised at TSC, that was attended via videoconference by Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader.



Though it has been raining non-stop in Sylhet, resulting in overflowing of rivers and raising the risk of flash floods, not all is doom and gloom. With excessive rainfall, not just the water level in hoars are rising, it is also ushering in variety of fishes. As a result, fishing has become the new favourite pastime for young and old alike. This photo was taken from Jilkar Haor in Sadar upazila on Sunday.

PHOTO: SHEKHAR NASIR



Citizens form large queues in front of Wasa zonal office in the capital's Lalmatia to pay their bills yesterday, as Wasa had extended the payment deadline without fines till June 30. At a time when social distancing is paramount, they had to go to different offices and banks because they could not avail the fine exemption through online payment, they told this newspaper.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

ADMISSION TEST AMID SCHOOL CLOSURE

South Point School admits mistake

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

South Point School and College authorities admitted that they have made a mistake by holding admission test, disregarding the government's directives on keeping all educational institutions shut to contain the spread of coronavirus.

The education board authorities on Sunday evening served the show-cause notice asking why there should not be action against them, as they held the admission test ignoring government directive.

"We have given our reply," Hamida Ali, principal of the institution said. They in their answer said the whole admission process was held online but some guardians requested traditional admission process as they were not experienced in online system.

"So branch authorities held the admission test," she added.

"But it was foolish to hold an exam in this situation. We have admitted our fault. All human beings make mistakes. It was a not a deliberate move," she added.

South Point School and College in Dhaka held its admission tests for first and second grades on Saturday, exposing students to the risk of contracting coronavirus, alleged several guardians.

Dhaka Education Board's Inspector of Schools, Mohammad Abul Mansur Bhuiyan said that they have received the answer. "Next course of action will be determined after holding discussion with higher-ups of the board," he said.



Mr. Muhammad Faizur Rahman

Chairman of Asian Surveyors Ltd, former Chairman of Union Capital Ltd, former Director of Pubali Bank and Credit Rating Agency of Bangladesh, passed away at Evercare Hospital in the early morning of 28th June, 2020. He had humble beginnings at Baharmordan village in Moulvibazar where he lost his father at the age of 2 and thereafter was raised by his uncle Mohammad Sofi. In his illustrious 85 years of life, he had touched the lives of countless many with his uncompromising integrity, generosity and affection as a father, grandfather, brother, uncle, son, friend, colleague and philanthropist.

His family requests his relatives, friends and well-wishers to pray for his departed soul.