

# The Daily Star

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Your Right to Know

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**MESSI'S EXIT IMMINENT?**  
Spanish radio station reports Messi called off contract renewal talks with Barcelona.  
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## OXYGEN FOR BREATHING DIFFICULTIES

# Patients handed ghostly bills

*A section of pvt hospitals charging patients higher than usual*

MUNTAKIM SAAD and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Jannatul Ferdous was admitted to Max Hospital in Chattogram with breathing problems early last month.

The 45-year-old woman needed oxygen support for 10 straight days. When it was time to release her, the private hospital handed her family a bill of Tk 3.05 lakh for oxygen alone. The total bill was over Tk 6 lakh.

After haggling for about six hours over the exorbitant fees and asking every ruling party leader he knew, her husband Ishaq was able to get her released by paying about Tk 4.80 lakh on June 14.

Such allegations of private hospitals charging too much for oxygen support are not too uncommon.

Because of the rising cases of Covid-19 in the country, the number of patients needing oxygen has gone up, authorities at five government and private hospitals in the capital have said.

Some private hospitals, however, are viewing the spike in demand as an opportunity to charge unreasonably high amounts for the support, experts said.

This has been happening mostly because there is no government policy dictating what should be charged for the essential service, they added.

"The government should immediately fix the charges for oxygen support," said Prof Dr Muzaherul Huq, former regional adviser of World Health Organization, South East Asia Region.

### THE REASONABLE CHARGE

Jannatul's teenage daughter Aymon said she was traumatised by her experience at Max Hospital.

"We repeatedly asked them why they were charging so high for oxygen

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Workers look at a notice at Platinum Jute Mills in Khulna city's Khalishpur area on Thursday night. It says production at BJMC's 25 jute mills, including Platinum, will remain shut down. *Inset*, workers operating machines at Crescent Jute Mills in the same area on June 28.

PHOTO: DIPANKAR ROY

## Curtain falls on 9 Khulna jute mills

*Laid-off workers worried about their future*

DIPANKAR ROY, KHULNA

Platinum Jute Mill's worker Eratun Khatun broke down in tears when she saw the notice declaring the permanent closure of the organisation she had been with for almost three decades.

"The mill is closed. Where will I go now? What will happen to my daughter's education? How will we earn a living, when we go back to the village," wailed the 55-year-old woman, who lives at the mill colony with her son and daughter, a college student.

The sole breadwinner, Eratun joined Platinum as a temporary worker in 1994 and became a permanent worker in 2011, making Tk 11,500 a month. Her husband, who died 11 years ago, was also a permanent worker of the mill.

Like Eratun, thousands of jute workers of the nine mills in Khulna - Jashore

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**BANGLADESH UPDATE**



3,114

New cases in 24hrs



1,56,391

Total cases



1,968

Deaths



68,048

Recoveries

**GLOBAL UPDATE**



522,385

Deaths



10,920,457

Total cases

## 'GREAT WALL' for free media falls



SYED ASHEQUL HAQUE

"You know who I am?"

A glare, snarl and an intensely condescending stare typify these characters. It's the tendency of people in general to flaunt authority and pull rank with whatever power we possess or what power we wish to possess.

Humility is the rare quality that is usually sorely missing in people with power. Among hordes of influential people in our society, only a few stand apart as exceptions - bright rays of hope for society against shadowy displays of arrogance. With the

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

## Dental, eye, ENT patients suffer

*Amid Covid pandemic most pvt chambers, dental clinics shut; eye and ENT hospitals now provide only emergency services*

TUJIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY and RASHIDUL HASAN

When Rejaul Karim visited his dentist late February with problems in one of his teeth, the doctor, upon an x-ray, advised him to have the tooth extracted.

Rejaul was preparing for the dental operation when the novel coronavirus hit the country. Subsequently, the government declared a shutdown to contain the spread of the deadly virus. His dentist's chamber at the capital's Dhanmondi too was closed.

"Actually, I didn't dare go to a doctor's chamber out of fear of being infected with the virus," said the 60-year-old resident of Azimpur area.

With no option left, he consulted another dentist over the phone, who recommended an x-ray again.

"I don't know what to do," he said a few days back.

Like Rejaul, many patients are deprived of crucial treatment of diseases related to teeth, eyes and other ENT (ear, nose and throat) as most dental clinics and private chambers

have been closed for more than three months due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Many patients prefer not to go to doctor's chambers or hospitals out of fear of getting infected with the virus unless it's an emergency. The same is the case for many doctors who stopped going to their private chambers.

As a result, the number of patients at hospitals and chambers came down sharply although some doctors have resumed their services of late. Even an eye hospital in the capital had to cut the salary of their staffers by 40 to 50 percent.

Dr Md Shafi Khan, director of Lions Eye Institute and Hospital in the capital, said people get infected with Covid-19 through nose, mouth, throat and eye, and so, the doctors who are dealing with these parts are more vulnerable.

Besides, there could be asymptomatic cases too, which intensifies the doctors' exposure, he told The Daily Star on June 28.

Therefore, most eye hospitals are

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## Rejoinder, our reply

Apex Holdings Ltd has sent a rejoinder to a report headlined "Is Foul Play The New Normal?" published in The Daily Star on June 26.

Following is the full text of the rejoinder sent by the Board of Directors of Apex Holdings Limited:

We are writing to express our concerns about the article titled, "Is Foul Play The New Normal?" published in The Daily Star on June 26, 2020, (last modified online at 02:31 pm, June 26, 2020).

The article in question wrongly named our company as "Apex Spinning and Textile Mills". We have no such companies under our management. Rather, our sister concern, Apex Spinning and Knitting

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## NEWS ANALYSIS

# They don't deserve it

*Govt to lay-off around 25,000 workers, shut down 25 state-owned jute mills*

AI-AMIN

The government's decision to shut all state-run jute mills could not have come at a more inopportune time for the barely surviving workers in this sector.

With the coronavirus pandemic causing serious damage to life and livelihood in the country, Monday's announcement, of closing down the 25 state-run jute mills and laying off its 24,886 workers, by Textile and Jute Minister Golam Dastagir Gazi is also at odds with the government's stated intentions of avoiding job cuts in such desperate times.

It was learnt from top officials of BJMC, the regulating body of the country's jute mills, that the decision would be effective from July 1.

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## REMEMBRANCE

We deeply mourn the passing of a legend

### Latifur Rahman

Founder Chairman & CEO of Transcom Group

May his departed soul rest in peace. Our thoughts and prayers are with him and his family.



www.deltalife.org | www.facebook.com/deltalife.org/

## Bangladesh still lags behind in virus testing

*Conducts only 4,409 tests per million people; 3,114 infections, 42 death recorded in a day*

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Though it has been 118 days since the first Covid-19 case was detected on March 8, Bangladesh still lags behind in terms of increasing the testing facilities in comparison with the other South Asian countries.

According to the latest World Health Organization's report on the Covid-19 situation in Bangladesh, the country is carrying out 4,409 tests per million people whereas the rate is 4,727 in Sri Lanka, 6086 in India, 6,707 in Thailand, 17,902 in Nepal, 23,366 in Malaysia and 89,933 in the Maldives.

According to Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), a total of 14,650 samples were tested in 63 labs across the country in the 24 hours since Thursday and 3,114 were tested positive for the virus, said Dr Nasima Sultana, additional director general (administration) of DGHS yesterday during the regular briefing.

The total number of infected people now stands at 1,56,391.

Nasima said 42 people died from coronavirus infections on a single day in the last 24 hours, taking the death toll to 1,968.

Of the deceased, 32 were male and 10 female. Eighteen of them were from Dhaka, 10 from Chattogram, three from Khulna, three from Rajshahi, four from Rangpur, three from Sylhet and one from Barishal division.

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## OBITUARY

### Reliance Insurance Limited

*deeply mourns the sad demise of-*



(28.08.1945 - 01.07.2020)

### Latifur Rahman

Founding Chairman & Director:

Reliance Insurance Limited

Chairman: Transcom Group of Companies

Eskayef Pharmaceuticals Ltd.

National Housing Finance & Investment Ltd.

Mediastar Ltd. (Prothom Alo), Mediaworld Ltd. (The Daily Star)

Your dedication, diligence and contribution will continue to guide us. You were our source of inspiration, strength and nurturer. Your fond memories will always be cherished by us.

In reverence & remembrance

The Management and all Officials of-

**RELIANCE INSURANCE LIMITED**