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SHAH CEMENT

## Their days pass without work

Daily wage earners in the capital hit hard in pandemic

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

The continuous spread of Covid-19 and the consequent shutdown have made jobs rare and life harder for many daily wage earners of the capital.

Day labourers usually gather at certain spots of the city and wait to be hired mostly for contractual jobs. Since the pandemic began, their waiting time has become excruciatingly long.

Visiting one of these spots in Mirpur-11 near Purobi cinema hall one recent morning, some 300 men and women were seen waiting for work. Most had a shovel and a basket with them.

Before the pandemic, most labourers would get hired by noon. Now, days pass by without any work, they said.

"During the first two months of the shutdown, I did not get a single contract. Since last month, I started to get work once or twice a week. But, that too is uncertain," said Shariul Islam, a 35-year-old mason.

"For a day's work, I used to earn Tk 700 to Tk 800. But, nowadays, I never bargain. I agree to whatever wage is offered," he said.

Shariful, who lives in Mirpur in a rented quarter with his wife and 18-month-old child, said he spends the whole day at the gathering spot.

"What is the use of returning home when you cannot feed your family and pay the landlord? All of us have unpaid house rent for more than two months," he added.

Jahanara Begum, 55, sometimes works as a maid and sometimes as a construction worker on a contractual basis.

She said work at households has almost disappeared as

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Ansar members swoop on Shaon Hossain, middle, at the entrance to Mugda General Hospital around 9:00am yesterday for protesting "anomalies" in token distribution for Covid-19 testing. A resident of Dakshin Mugda, Shaon took his cancer patient mother to the city hospital to give samples. He was 36th in a long queue, but he could not collect a token despite waiting for hours. He said Ansars were supposed to give 40 tokens for the day, but they handed out only about 15.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## DIGITAL SECURITY ACT Cases filed for 'merely expressing opinion'

Says Article 19; 208 sued in 113 cases in last 6 months

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some 113 cases have been filed under the Digital Security Act in the first six months of this year in Bangladesh, UK-based rights group Article 19 said yesterday.

A total of 208 people of different classes and professions have been accused in these cases due to "mere expression of opinion". Of them, 53 are journalists, the rights group said in a press statement.

Of the accused, 114 were arrested immediately, most of whom were still awaiting bail, after the cases were lodged, it said.

On the other hand, Article 19 recorded 71 cases in 2018 filed against practitioners of freedom of expression, including journalists,

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## HONG KONG SANCTIONS BILL China warns US of counteraction

Appoints hardliner as head of city's security agency

AGENCIES

China has promised to take "all necessary countermeasures" if the United States pressed ahead with legislation penalising banks doing business with Chinese officials who implement Beijing's draconian new national security law on Hong Kong.

The warning came yesterday after the US Senate unanimously approved the Hong Kong Autonomy Act, sending it to the White House for President Donald Trump's signature.

"This US move has grossly interfered in China's internal affairs and seriously violated international law, as well as the basic norms governing international relations," the Foreign Affairs Committee of China's National People's Congress said.

"If the US side is bent on going down the wrong path, China will resolutely respond with all necessary countermeasures."

Beijing has faced a groundswell of criticism over its decision to impose a law outlawing "acts of subversion, secession, terrorism and colluding with foreign forces" in Hong Kong.

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## FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

### Foundation for freedom fighters maimed in Liberation War



Bangabandhu shaking hands with people who came to greet the prime minister when he arrived in Cumilla on July 4, 1972.

July 4, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

#### BANGABANDHU VISITS CUMILLA

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman today stresses the need to build good character with a view to establishing a new society in the free and sovereign land of Bangladesh. He urges the people to ensure that future generations are capable of providing an honest leadership and prepare themselves as ideal citizens of Bangladesh.

Addressing the biggest ever public meeting in Cumilla, the prime minister laments that while the bloodstains of the martyrs are still there, a section of people has gotten busy with fortune hunting. He lists among others the black marketers, hoarders and smugglers in

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## 6 more die with virus symptoms in Cumilla

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

At least six people died with Covid-19 symptoms in Cumilla in the last 24 hours until yesterday.

All of them died at Cumilla Medical College Hospital with symptoms like cold, fever, chest pain and breathing difficulties, CuMCH officials said.

Mukta Rani, assistant surgeon at the hospital, said, three died at the hospital's ICU while the rest died at the isolation unit.

Three of the deceased were women, she said, adding that their samples were collected for Covid-19 tests.

At least 115 patients -- 39 were Covid-19 positive and 76 were suspected -- were admitted to the Corona Unit yesterday.

## Vietnam opens world's 'first' gold-plated hotel



AFP, Hanoi

For guests at the "Dolce Hanoi Golden Lake" coffee comes in a gold cup and bath time is taken in gilded splendour.

The world's first self-proclaimed gold-plated hotel is open for business -- and the Vietnamese owners insist they have the Midas touch despite the cramping of global travel during the coronavirus pandemic.

The hotel cost \$200 million to construct with a 24-carat plating across lobbies, an infinity pool and rooms with even cutlery, cups, shower heads and toilet seats receiving the golden treatment.

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## Bangladeshi man 'shot dead by BSF'

STAR REPORT

A Bangladeshi man was shot dead allegedly by the members of Indian Border Security Force (BSF) in Jashore's Benapole early yesterday.

Some farmers of Dhannokhola village in Benapole noticed a body near the border and informed local BGB office. Later, members of Benapole Port Police Station recovered the body on information from BGB.

The dead is Reajul Islam 30, son of Katu Morol of

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#### PRAYER TIMING JULY 4

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha  
AZAN 4-10 12-45 5-00 6-55 8-17  
JAMAAT 4-45 1-15 5-15 7-00 8-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



## Wahidul Huq passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former finance minister Wahidul Huq passed away in Toronto, Canada, on Thursday. He was 87.

His family sources confirmed it to The Daily Star yesterday.

The noted economist was the minister during the regime of HM Ershad.

Wahidul completed his masters from Dhaka University in 1955 and did his PhD from Stanford University in California, US.

He taught for some time at the University of California, Berkeley, and later joined the University of Toronto and settled there.

The economist served as the country's finance minister from September 1988 to May 1990.

A highly respected and

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Gabsara area in Tangail's Bhuapur upazila is under water as six of the district's 12 upazilas are hit by flood due to rise in water level of several rivers. The local administration says the flood has affected 1.24 lakh people.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## FLOOD-HIT AREAS

# Thousands at risk of virus transmission

STAR REPORT

Exposed to highly contagious coronavirus, some people of the flood-hit areas in Bangladesh are now living in congested shelters and some on dykes.

They have very limited scope to maintain social distance as large numbers of people have to stay in small places.

Furthermore, it is very difficult for them to follow health guidelines like washing hands with soaps, wearing masks and others. In fact, they are struggling for food as well.

Government officials in the regions said they were trying to make the people aware about maintaining social distance and following health guidelines.

Our correspondents from different districts reported on the issue.

In Gaibandha, around 5,256 flood-hit people have taken shelter in 88 flood centres.

Mohtab Uddin, chairman of Uria Union Parishad in Fulchari upazila of the district, said around 700 people took shelter in one small flood centre in Kabilpur area.

"How can they maintain social distancing?" he asked.

Contacted, the district's civil surgeon ABM Abu Hanif said, "We send health workers in flood centres on a regular basis to make them [those in shelter] aware of social distance."

In Bogura, around 1,200 people have taken shelters in three flood centres of two upazilas.

Our correspondent visited those shelters and found the

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