

DGHS orders

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drive for the second straight day.
Magistrate Sarwoer said the hospital authorities issued more than 10,000 Covid-19 test results. Around 4,200 samples were tested at different government labs, but they threw away the rest of the samples, prepared fake reports and handed those to people, he told The Daily Star.

During a drive on Monday, Rab detained eight staffers of Regent Hospital, including a director and its manager, on charges of issuing fake Covid-19 test certificates and collecting money from patients.

The hospital authorities took Tk 3,500 for each test, meaning they embezzled more than Tk 3.5 crore, despite having an agreement with the government on conducting tests and providing free treatment, Sarwoer said.

While talking to reporters during a briefing last evening, he said, "We decided to seal off the head office from where the misdeeds were being carried out. Samples, collected from different areas, used to be taken to the head office and thrown away."

"The licence of the hospital expired in 2014. The ICU of the hospital is not up to standard, it was like a ward. We found surgical items, which expired five to six months ago, at the hospital's medicine store," he said.

"We first received complaints about 14 fake reports provided by the hospital. We carried out the raid after the Institute of Public Health certified that those were fake," Sarwoer said, adding they seized 45 fake reports during Monday's drive.

The chairman and managing director of the hospital went into hiding. A case will be filed soon against 17 people, including the duo, he said.

"As the hospital authorities came to know that some people made

complaints, they held a press conference a couple of days ago and filed a general diary against some staffers to pass the blame on them and avoid legal action," he said.

Rab officials said the hospital authorities were supposed to treat patients free of cost as per the agreement with the government, but they charged patients and submitted a bill to the government.

Earlier, the hospital's Managing Director Mizanur Rahman filed a general diary with Uttara West Police Station on July 3, claiming that a vested quarter was taking money and collecting samples for Covid-19 test from suspected patients by identifying themselves as Regent Hospital staffers.

"Such activities are tarnishing the reputation of the hospital's dedication in providing medical services to patients," he added in the GD, requesting law enforcers to look into the matter.

Govt to import rice to keep market stable

UNB, Dhaka

The government has planned to import rice, if needed, by reducing import duty to keep the local market stable and prevent price manipulation.

There has been a bumper production of crops this year and farmers are getting fair prices, said a food ministry handout yesterday.

If the rice market is destabilised despite this and millers make delay in supplying rice to government warehouses defying deals with them, the government will import rice, if necessary, by reducing import duty, the handout added.

Six shot dead

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Raton's wife Mini Marma said her husband and Bimol were gossiping sitting in the yard while the others were preparing food before she heard several gunshots.

"Moments later I rushed to the spot and found them dead," she said.

Md Reza Sarwar, additional superintendent of police in Bandarban Sadar circle, said they had recovered the bodies and that members of police and Bangladesh Army were deployed in the area.

He said it was not possible to comment immediately on who were behind this attack.

KS Mong Marma, a central leader of PCJSS said, "PCJSS never believes in the politics of killing and we strongly protest such killings."

PCJSS leaders said since the 11th parliamentary elections, some AL men, assisted by some law enforcers, have been sheltering criminals and formed the Mogh Party to ruin the harmony in this region.

They said Mogh Bahini men later joined the newly formed MN Larma faction in Bandarban and have been spoiling the harmony of Bandarban.

On May 7, 2019, a member of PCJSS was shot dead in Rajbila union under Sadar upazila while another PCJSS man was abducted from the same area on the same day.

Two days later, another PCJSS supporter was allegedly shot dead by the Mogh Party at Bakichhara rubber garden area in the same upazila.

On May 19, brother of a local Awami League leader was shot dead in Rajbila while a local Jubo League leader killed inside his home in Rajasthali upazila of

neighbouring Rangamati.

On May 25, body of former vice-president of AL Bandarban unit Chaw Thowai Mong Marma, 53, was recovered from a remote hilly zone of Kuhlalong union in Bandarban Sadar.

Chaw Thowai, also a former commissioner of ward 5 in Bandarban, was allegedly abducted from his farmhouse on the night of May 22, 2019.

On June 25, a supporter of PCJSS was shot dead in Bandarban's Rowangchhari upazila.

On February 22 this year, a local AL leader was shot dead in Jamchhari area of the district and five others were critically injured.

On April 17, a member of Mogh Party was shot dead in the remote Kenaiju Para area under Rowangchhari upazila of the district.

On June 15, a UP member of Bandarban's Kuhlalong union was shot dead.

PCJSS-MN Larma came into being after Santu Larma-led PCJSS, which had signed the peace accord with the government, split during the caretaker government in 2007-08.

The JSS was formed to establish the rights of the hill people in 1972.

General Secretary of Bangladesh Adivasi Forum Sanjeeb Drong yesterday told The Daily Star, "On the one hand, the peace accord has not been implemented -- on the other, a vested quarter has been created in the CHT."

It is really unfortunate that killings were still taking place in the region, he said, adding that such unexpected incidents would have come to an end had the peace accord been fully implemented.

Outbreak may prolong

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According to the World Health Organization (WHO) website, France reported no new cases in the last three days.

This success was possible by tackling the pandemic through "stringent programmes" -- rigorous tests, contact tracing, isolation and proper treatment of the infected patients, Prof Mozaherul said.

But such measures are absent in Bangladesh, he added.

He disagreed with a government health official's recent prediction that Covid-19 transmission might start to decrease by the end of July, if all controlling systems remain effective.

"He said 'if all controlling systems remain effective', but the question is: Is there such a system in the country?" Mozaherul questioned.

The public health expert also warned the government in March and April about the situation turning worse if rigorous measures are not taken.

Then government officials held that Covid-19 will not cause problems in the country as it did in Europe and America.

Government officials on the Covid-19 situation
On Sunday, ASM Alamgir, principal scientific officer of the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR), told the media, "The transmission may decrease by the end of this month if all controlling systems remain effective."

He said they had closely observed the transmission trend after reopening [from June 1] and found the transmission rate stable during the previous two weeks.

"The reproduction rate of the virus, which is called R-naught, has come down below one in the last two weeks [and] it is a positive sign," Alamgir said. However, he could not be reached

for an explanation after repeated phone call attempts by this newspaper.

Similar predictions were made by him and Prof Abul Kalam Azad, Director General of Health Services (DGHS) on June 13 and June 16, respectively, about the virus's transmission coming down by June. None came true.

DAILY UPDATE

Yesterday, Prof Nasima Sultana, additional director general of DGHS, relayed the latest Covid-19 situation in the country, as usual.

The total number of Covid-19 cases has risen to 1,68,645 in the country while the death toll rose to 2,151 as of yesterday.

Out of a total of 13,173 samples tested in the 24 hours between 6th and 7th July, 22.98 percent came out positive.

During the same time, 1,953 Covid-19 patients recovered, taking the total number of recoveries at 78,102, which is 46.31 percent of all cases.

Of the yesterday's deceased, 46 were male and nine female, while 27 were from Dhaka, 12 from Chattogram, seven from Khulna, two from Rajshahi, one from Mymensingh, two from Sylhet, two from Rangpur and two from Barishal division.

One of the deceased was aged between 11 and 20 years, two between 31 and 40, six between 41 and 50, 18 between 51 and 60, 21 between 61 and 70, six between 71 and 80 and one was between 81 and 90-years-old.

In the same 24 hours, new 495 patients were admitted to the Covid-19 hospitals.

The number of Covid-19 patients in the general beds of these hospitals was 4,156 while 210 patients were in ICUs yesterday.

A total of 802 people were put under isolation in the 24 hours, between 6th and 7th July.



A patient steps on to a wheelchair from a three-wheeler on a submerged road in front of Maa-O-Shishu Hospital in Chattogram city yesterday. The road went under water for about an hour during high tide. Such water logging is seen in parts of the city for a few days every year.

PHOTO: RAJIB RATHAN

In stores, but not in testing centres

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Contacted, Toma Construction officials declined to comment as the matter is still pending with the CMSD.

There are other firms that also ran into trouble over supplying kits.

Sterling Multi Technologies Ltd got a work order for supplying 100,000 testing kits in April. It imported the kits from Turkey the following month.

On June 16, the CMSD wrote to the company, asking it to immediately supply 25,000 kits. The CMSD, however, suspended the previous work order for 100,000 kits.

"We got a work order for supplying 100,000 kits. But later we were asked to supply 25,000 kits. We have already imported 100,000 kits. I don't know why the CMSD made such a decision," Jahirul Islam, executive director of Sterling Multi Technologies Ltd, told this correspondent.

Another supplier, Unimed Limited, struck a deal with the CMSD for

supplying 100,000 kits on May 19.

"We wrote to the CMSD on June 16, requesting it to receive the kits. The CMSD asked us to get the samples of the kits validated by the IEDCR," said Jamal Uddin, director of Unimed Limited.

"On June 21, we sent a letter to the IEDCR, requesting it to test the samples as per the CMSD's request. More than a week later, the IEDCR informed us that it cannot conduct such tests unless the CMSD writes to it.

"We are now stuck in limbo," he said.

Md Shofiqul Islam, proprietor of SB Solution, said they got a work order for 100,000 kits and imported those on May 23.

"The CMSD officials asked us to supply 50,000 kits a few days ago and we obliged. The rest of the kits are with us. We don't know why the CMSD is not receiving those," he said.

Asked why the CMSD is dillydallying over the process, CMSD Director Abu Hena Morshed Zaman in a WhatsApp message said, "Please talk to the DG Health or the press wing of the [health] ministry or my predecessor. I am a newcomer here. Allow me time to check the things and take initiatives to solve problems, if any, from my end."

He refused to comment further. Contacted, Abul Kalam Azad, director of the DGHS, in a text message wrote, "Please talk to our media cell."

Asked, Dr Ayesha Akther, spokesperson for the DGHS, claimed there is no testing kit crisis in the country as 1.88 lakh kits are now at the DGHS's disposal.

Enquired about the stocks of kits lying with several local companies, she said, "So far, I know those kits were in the process of validation, and if the kits get approval, those will be received."

20pc roads in sorry state

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deteriorates the situation.

THE SURVEY
According to the RHD, there are 22,096km of national and regional highways and district roads under the department across the country.

The RHD carries out the survey every year to project the total maintenance costs for its road network and also to prioritise on roads for maintenance.

The latest survey was done between November 2019 and March this year. The report was released on the RHD website on Monday.

The department surveyed 19,282km roads. Ongoing projects and roads in some remote areas were not taken into account, according to the report.

The survey found some 3,590kms (18.61 percent) of the roads in "poor, bad or very bad" condition.

The rest are in "good" or "fair" condition, according to the survey.

Those in fair condition (4,482kms), especially the national highways, will also need repair to upgrade them to good category; otherwise they would downgrade to poor category, RHD engineers said.

Roads with huge cracks and potholes that need immediate repair are treated as "very bad" roads, they said.

The previous survey report in May last year found 4,247kms (24.34 percent) of roads and highways in "poor, bad or very bad" condition.

Among 10 zones of the RHD, highest 572km of poor to very bad roads are in Cumilla zone. Chattogram

comes second, with 556km of such roads, according to the report.

Rajshahi zone has 175.93kms of poor to very bad roads, the lowest. Gopalganj zone has the second lowest share of bad roads with 184.09km roads.

In the last fiscal year, the RHD got Tk 2,550 crore for maintenance of roads and bridges, up slightly from Tk 2,350 crore the previous fiscal year.

This year, the RHD needs Tk 727.4 crore for routine maintenance, Tk 5,855.2 crore for periodic maintenance, Tk 3,277 crore for partial reconstruction and Tk 4,762.6 crore for full reconstruction, according to the Maintenance and Rehabilitation Needs Report.

Amir Hossain, executive engineer (HDM database division) of the RHD, said the latest survey gave a positive picture of the country's road maintenance situation, compared to the previous year's.

He said 20 percent more district roads, 14 percent more regional highways and 6 percent more national highways fall under "good" category compared to last year. But more focused should be given on improving maintenance work of national highways as it is difficult to do so due to the rush of traffic, he added.

Replying to a question, Amir said, "If you don't give adequate allocation to maintenance, good roads would turn into poor and poor roads into bad or very bad roads."

He also told The Daily Star, "In our country, there are huge investments in development projects, but the authorities should also give

importance on road maintenance and should increase allocation in this regard."

Mohammed Abul Kalam Azad, superintendent engineer (maintenance circle) of the RHD, said there is some limitation when it comes to allocating money for road maintenance. "But if the allocated money can be used in a planned way, it's possible to maintain roads with that fund," he said.

"We are trying our best to use the money properly," he said.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The survey report came up with seven recommendations on carrying out the maintenance work properly. Those include regular field visits and design verification by the authorities before finalising any repair work.

The report said the full or partial reconstruction works should be addressed from the annual development programme (ADP). Besides, works should be accelerated to change the condition of national highways to "good" from "fair".

"Routine maintenance has to be done properly and should be the first budget priority," it said, adding that small contracts (up to Tk 30 million) should be avoided to ensure quality work.

The RHD has been using the Highway Development and Management Model (HDM-4 Software), an economic tool, since 1999-2000 for optimisation of the fund disbursement. Since then, it has been publishing the survey report every year.

EU gives Tk 90.6 lakh to help flood victims

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The European Union is providing Tk 90.6 lakh (€100,000) to Bangladesh for an early anticipatory action to reduce the negative impacts of severe flooding on the most affected communities.

The aid will benefit over 3,300 families in some of the hardest hit areas in Kurigram, Gaibandha and Jamalpur districts, said a statement of the Asia and the Pacific chapter of the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations yesterday.

The funding is provided in response to severe flooding that submerged many parts of Bangladesh late last month.

The EU funding supports the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society in using reliable scientific forecast information and risk analysis to foresee the potential impact of the floods and to conduct early actions aimed at reducing human suffering, losses and damage.

"The aid includes evacuating the most vulnerable communities to safe shelters with their assets and livestock, providing unconditional cash grants, as well as providing first aid treatment," the statement said.

Heavy monsoon rainfall triggered extensive floods in northern and eastern areas of Bangladesh, causing extensive damage to homes and farmlands across the nation's vast northern regions.

Thousands of people have found themselves marooned or displaced. The flooding could affect up to a million households over the first days of July, the statement says.

2 killed in 'gunfight' with police

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Two men, including an alleged robber, were killed in a "gunfight" with police in Teknaf upazila of Cox's Bazar early yesterday.

Of the duo, Saddam Hossain, 22, of Moulvi Bazar in Teknaf's Hnila union was a fugitive accused in 17 cases, and Abdul Jalil, 32, was a resident of Pashchim Maheshkhali para in Howaikong union, said police.

Three policemen -- sub-inspector Moshirur Rahman, in-charge of Howaikong police, and constables Abhijit Das and Imran Hossain -- also suffered bullet wounds during the reported "gunfight" that took place in Howaikong area around 3:00am, police said.

A team of the police outpost conducted a raid in Moulvi Bazar area on Monday night and arrested Saddam, said Pradip Kumar Das, officer-in-charge of Teknaf Model Police Station.

During interrogation, Saddam admitted that he dealt with yaba, firearms and ammunition and also revealed the names of some of his cohorts, the OC said.

Later, a police team took Saddam at the banks of Combo Borchhora canal where his cohorts opened fire at the law enforcers, leaving the three policemen injured. Police also fired in self-defence, triggering the "gunfight", the police official said.

After the criminals left the place, police found two persons, including Saddam, with bullet wounds and sent them to Teknaf Upazila Health Complex. They were later referred to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital.

The duo were declared dead after being taken to Sadar Hospital around 6:00am, the OC said.

Two LGs, 13 cartridges, 10,000 yaba tablets and Tk 1.05 lakh cash were recovered from the spot, he said, adding that a case was filed in this regard.

Saddam's father Sultan Ahmed was also killed in a "gunfight" with law enforcers two years back, police said.

SMUGGLING OPERATION

Turkey detains 276 migrants

Bangladeshis among the arrested

AFP, Istanbul

Turkey's coast guard said yesterday it had intercepted a tanker carrying 276 migrants on their way to Greece, with video published by state media showing dozens crammed into poorly ventilated compartments.

The migrants and eight suspected people smugglers were arrested just before the vessel left a port in Turkey's western Izmir region on Monday, the coast guard said.

The migrants, including 59 children and 46 women, came from Afghanistan, Syria, Bangladesh and Iran, according to the state news agency Anadolu.

In a video published by Anadolu, dozens of people were seen in cramped, airtight compartments on the boat and some of those arrested were having difficulty breathing, the agency said.

Turkey, which hosts nearly four million Syrian refugees on its soil, is along one of the main routes used by migrants and refugees trying to reach Europe from the Middle East, Asia and Africa.

Ankara and the European Union signed a controversial agreement in 2016 under which the Turkish authorities have committed themselves to combating the smuggling of migrants in exchange for financial assistance.