

COVID-19

211 judges, court staffers infected so far: ministry

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 211 lower court judges and court staffers across the country have been infected with Covid-19 till 10pm on Sunday.

Among them, 44 are judges of subordinate courts and 167 are court employees, a law ministry press release said on Tuesday.

Of the infected, 20 have recovered, while Lalmonirhat Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal Judge Md Ferdous Ahmed died.

Magura District and Sessions Judge Kamrul Hasan is receiving treatment at a hospital, and other infected judges and employees are being treated at home, it said.

Meanwhile, two court staffers have died from Covid-19, according to the press release.

Law Minister Anisul Huq has been observing and giving necessary directives to the ministry's monitoring desk, which assists infected judges and staffers by facilitating proper treatment.

Law Secretary Md Golam Sarwar reports to the minister periodically regarding this matter, the release added.



Writer Mushtaq Ahmed, journalist Shafiqul Islam Kajol, Rashtra Chinta organiser Didarul Islam Bhuiyan and cartoonist Ahmed Kabir Kishore are four of the many people arrested under the Digital Security Act in the past few months. With their faces graffitied on a wall at Palashi, Chhatra Federation demands repeal of this highly-criticised law and release of all who were arrested. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Coordinated Covid-19 response imperative

Speakers at dialogue urge govt

UNB, Dhaka

A strong coordination among the government institutions and NGOs is needed to tackle the challenges created by the Covid-19 pandemic in the country, speakers said at a virtual dialogue yesterday.

They came up with the suggestion in a webinar on "Experiences from the current situation at the grassroots level: Achievements and Challenges", organised by the Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh.

Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya, convener of the platform and distinguished fellow of Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), moderated the event while Badiul Alam Majumdar, secretary of civil society platform Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik (Shujan), presided over it.

Badiul Alam said different organisations have taken vast programmes to tackle the pandemic but it should be done in a coordinated manner.

"We have to emphasise three issues -- communication, coordination and community engagement -- to tackle the Covid-19 situation. There is lack of resources and absence of coordination in the country. Data scarcity is also a big problem here," he said.

"Everyone should be more conscious to prevent the pandemic. The government should utilise NGOs and volunteers in this regard," he added.

Rasheda K Choudhury, executive director of Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) and former adviser to a caretaker government, said there is a lack of coordination among the NGOs. "Data scarcity should also be addressed," she further said.

Prof Mustafizur Rahman, distinguished fellow of CPD, said natural disasters, including the recent Amphan, posed a challenge amid the pandemic in the country.

"Our country's problems should be resolved at local level through good coordination. Accurate data is significant to resolve these properly," he added.

Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya suggested that the government take proper policy strategy to implement the SDGs, overcoming the existing situation.

CONTAINING COVID-19 TRANSMISSION

Quader urges all to avoid gatherings during Eid

BSS, Dhaka

Avoid gatherings and follow health guidelines during the upcoming Eid-ul-Azha in order to contain Covid-19 transmission, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader said yesterday.

"Everyone has to be aware to prevent the spread of coronavirus during the upcoming Eid," he told a virtual press conference from his official residence in Dhaka.

Safety zones have to be created everywhere, including cattle markets, bus and launch terminals, ferry ghats, shopping malls and kitchen markets, he said. This has to be done by maintaining social distancing and following health guidelines.

Quader, also Awami League general secretary, said, "We have to remain alert so that the joyous journey of Eid with family members does not turn into a sad voyage."

The minister said a section of dishonest people are cheating citizens over the coronavirus crisis -- by fraudulent sampling, issuing fake certificates, and erroneous plasma donation, adding that the government has taken a strong stance against such scams and irregularities.

The minister also called out people who are moving freely hiding Covid-19 symptoms and infections, alongside those who are going abroad with false Covid-19 negative certificates. Calling upon people to take treatment from isolation once they are found with symptoms, he said if they conceal this information, the country's image will be tarnished and the fate of millions of expatriates will become uncertain.

He also announced AL advisory council member Amir Hossain Amu as the new spokesperson and coordinator of the central 14-party alliance.

ENGLISH-MEDIUM SCHOOLS

Guardians demand 50pc tuition waiver

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A section of guardians demanded 50 percent tuition waiver from all English-medium schools, as authorities are only conducting online classes.

Bangladesh English Medium School Parents Forum, in a press conference at National Press Club, said many parents are going through financial hardship, so authorities should take the situation into consideration.

The forum convener AKM Ashrafur Haque and member secretary AZM Salahuddin made the six-point demand.

They said students should not be barred from classes due to delay or non-payment of fees, and an autonomous regulatory body should be formed to oversee school activities.

Other points include ensuring quality education at all English-medium schools by formulating an acceptable policy; formation of school managing committee with representation from guardians; and keeping tuition and other fees at an acceptable level.

"We want the prime minister's intervention to meet our demand," Ashrafur told this newspaper.

Earlier in June, Obhibhabok Oikya Forum, a platform of guardians, demanded full tuition waiver from all non-government schools and colleges due to the financial crisis.

Barishal city streets in sorry condition

Monsoon takes toll as repair work remains halted

SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barishal

A large number of paved roads in Barishal city are in poor shape, with the monsoon season bringing out the worst in these.

The situation has particularly deteriorated in the last two months, as many of the roads have got submerged following rain and commuting along them have become a headache, said locals.

Most streets in the city have developed potholes, some of which become formidable-sized puddles after rain.

This correspondent found nearly 50 roads in the city -- including Bhatikhana Road, Kawnia Road, Bogura Road, Bandh Road, Lakutia Road, BM College Road and Public School Road -- in such a dilapidated condition.

Only Sadar Road, Hospital Road and Chawkbazar Road were found to be comparatively better situation.

According to Barishal City Corporation, 267km out of total 593km city roads in 30 wards are paved with bitumen. About 20-22 bituminous roads stretching around only 40km are in good condition, an official of Barishal City Corporation (BCC) admitted, seeking anonymity.

Nazrul Biswas, a resident of Taltali Road area, said, "We've been suffering due

to these unrepaired roads. The situation turns horrible during the monsoon."

Rickshaw-puller Kanchan Mia said he has to struggle to pull rickshaw along waterlogged roads riddled with craters.

During rainy season, Port Road, Steamer Ghat Road, BSCIC Road, Lakutia Road, Taltali Road and Rupatoli Road often get inundated, much to dismay of commuters.

Gobesh, Dutta, a vegetable trader of the area, said, "We have no alternative but to use roads clogged with dirt."

Shah Sajeda, convener of citizen's platform Conscious Citizen Committee, said, "We demand that BCC authorities resolve the problem immediately."

Contacted, BCC Chief Engineer Nurul Islam said the Covid-19 situation is delaying repair work. "We will fix some roads after the monsoon ends," he added.

Sources at the city corporation said authorities sent a proposal of a Tk 1,100 crore project to the LGRD ministry to mend damaged roads and construct new ones six months ago. The ministry replied two months ago with some corrections, said a BCC official, preferring anonymity.

The BCC chief engineer said, "We also have a plan to start repairing the roads soon with our own revenue."

Andrew Kishore's funeral on July 15

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Legendary playback singer Andrew Kishore's funeral will be held on July 15, his brother-in-law Dr Patrick Bipul Biswas said yesterday.

He will be buried at the cemetery of the Church of Bangladesh near Rajshahi Circuit House on the same day, he said.

He said it has been slightly delayed so that Kishore's son and daughter, who live in Australia, have enough time to reach Rajshahi to attend their father's funeral.

Kishore's son Joy Andrew Soptok is likely to land in Bangladesh tonight and reach Rajshahi tomorrow. But his daughter Minim Andrew Songya is unable to return before July 14 night, he said.

"If all goes well, his funeral will be carried out according to plan," Dr Biswas told The Daily Star.

Andrew Kishore breathed his last at his elder sister Dr Shikha Biswas and her husband Dr Patrick Biswas' house in Mahishabathan area of Rajshahi on Monday evening.

His body was kept in the mortuary of Rajshahi Medical College Hospital.

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M'singh volunteers step up for Covid-19 patients

Set up isolation centres, provides free oxygen service

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

At a time when the country's healthcare sector is feeling the heat of the coronavirus crisis, volunteering organisations and individuals are stepping up to fill gaps in the system left open by the deadly virus.

In Mymensingh, HELDS Foundation, a Phulpur-based volunteering organisation, is one such collective that's helping locals resist the virus.

Though its regular projects are limited to health, environment, and literacy sectors in Phulpur upazila, during the pandemic, the organisation has taken the initiative to run a 20-bed isolation centre at Mymensingh, set up three more in surrounding areas, and is now set to start a free oxygen service for critical Covid-19 patients of the district.

Tasfique Haque Nafew (22), secretary of the foundation, said they have received four cylinders from donors will soon get another 18.

To avail the service, patients can contact the foundation on one of their two phone numbers.

"If a doctor recommends oxygen support, our volunteers will take the cylinders to the referred hospital," Nafew added.

The foundation set up its three-room isolation centre, called "Shanti Nagar", on June 22 at Phulpur Degree College for patients who cannot afford self-quarantine.

Mahmudul Hasan Shuvo, a factory worker, came to the facility on July fourth, a day after testing positive.

"I came here as I live in a one-room residence with my wife. The volunteers support me with necessary food and medicines," he said.

"We run the centre from contributions of our own administration. We have spent Tk 74,000 to arrange the 20-bed facility with bedding and four oxygen cylinders," said foundation president Abdullah Al Sayeem Lithu.

The organisation has extended its service to centres at Bhaluka Degree College in Mymensingh as well as Muktijuddha Complex in Mohanganj of Netrakona and at a school in Jamalpur sadar.

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PHOTO: TITU DAS

A raft of ducks play on a puddle in the city's Rupatoli Kheyaghat area, while a motorbiker swerves to evade water. The photo was taken on Tuesday.

Lighter vessel capsizes in Karnaphuli

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A lighter vessel, carrying some 1,400 tonnes of scrap iron capsized in the Karnaphuli river yesterday morning.

All 12 crew members of the vessel -- Borni Prince-2 -- were rescued by staff of another lighter vessel crossing the river, said Ataul Karim, general secretary of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA).

The vessel was loaded with 1,400 tonnes of scrap iron from a mother vessel at the outer anchorage in the bay on Tuesday evening.

After loading, the vessel reached the river bank for unloading, Ataul further said.

It mistakenly hit a port buoy and capsized at the spot, he added.

Navy and coast guard members are now trying to salvage the vessel.



A capsized lighter vessel in the Karnaphuli river yesterday morning. Carrying 1,400 tonnes of scrap iron, the vessel hit a port buoy and overturned. All 12 crew members were rescued. Members of Navy and BGB are conducting the salvage operation.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Quick, safe, sustainable Rohingya repatriation to benefit all: India

External affairs minister writes to Bangladesh counterpart

UNB, Dhaka

Repatriation of Rohingyas in a quick, safe and sustainable manner will be beneficial for all, India has said.

Indian External Affairs Minister Dr Subrahmanyam Jaishankar conveyed to his Bangladesh counterpart Dr AK Abdul Momen that his country feels the necessity of quick repatriation of Rohingyas to Myanmar.

The Indian minister mentioned this in a letter written to the Bangladesh foreign minister, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Jaishankar appreciated Bangladesh for sheltering Rohingyas. He reaffirmed his government's commitment to stay beside Bangladesh and its people to overcome the challenges of Covid-19.

The Indian minister also said the partnership between the two countries will continue towards the goal of mutual development.

Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen recently said almost three years have passed and although Myanmar agreed to take Rohingyas back, not one of them went back home yet.

Bangladesh is now hosting over 1.1 million Rohingyas in Cox's Bazar district and most of them entered Bangladesh since August 25, 2017 amid military crackdowns in Rakhine State of Myanmar.

Biman resumes flights to UAE from today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Biman Bangladesh Airlines is going to resume flights to the Dubai and Abu Dhabi route from today, paving way for stranded Bangladeshi workers to return to workplaces in UAE.

The carrier was originally set to resume regular flights to the two destinations on July 6. However, on July 5, the national airliner decided against it.

Sources at Biman said the airliner was forced to take the decision after the foreign ministry asked them to not carry any passengers from UAE to Bangladesh.

In response, Biman argued that flying one-way from Dhaka to UAE will cause huge losses for it.

Mohibul Haque, senior secretary, civil aviation ministry told this newspaper on Monday, "After talking to the foreign ministry, we have decided to resume regular commercial flights on Dubai and Abu Dhabi routes."