

Bill passed at JS okaying virtual court proceedings

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The parliament yesterday passed a bill titled “Adalat Kartrik Tathya Projukti Byabohar Bill 2020” [use of information communication technology by court] in a bid to empower country’s courts in carrying out trial proceedings through videoconferences and other digital means. Law Minister Anisul Huq placed the bill which was passed by voice votes.

This law was already promulgated by President Abdul Hamid with an aim to reduce the backlog of huge number of cases in different courts due to countrywide closure since March 27 to June 30. The ordinance was approved by the cabinet on May 7.

According to the previous law, the trial proceedings were only run in physical presence of judges, counsels and witnesses in the court.

Following promulgation of the ordinance, it was possible to run the proceedings during the coronavirus situation as social distancing was necessary to contain the spread of Covid-19.

It was possible for the judges to run the trial proceedings through videoconferences and other digital means keeping the accused in jails, the lawyers in their residences and the witnesses in other places during the coronavirus crisis as per the ordinance. Several opposition MPs of Jatiya Party and BNP proposed several amendments to the bill which were rejected by voice votes. They also demanded withdrawal of the bill – the demand was also rejected by voice votes.



Workers of Dhaka South City Corporation spray insecticide in drains in the capital's Wari yesterday, which is under lockdown due to the pandemic. Both city corporations of the capital have launched drives to prevent an outbreak of dengue.

Andrew Kishore’s

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His body will be taken to Rajshahi City Church in Kazihata area at 9am on July 15 for the religious formalities.

If the institutions’ authorities permit, his body will be kept at the Shaheed Minar of Rajshahi University and later at Rajshahi Government College premises for general public and cultural activists to pay their respects.

He will be buried in the afternoon, said Dr Biswas.

Kishore’s parents and a brother were also buried in the same cemetery.

“Christians have a tradition of visiting their relatives’ graves on November 1 every year. On such a day in 2017, Kishore and I visited the cemetery together,” recalled Dr Biswas.

“At the end of our prayers, he walked around the cemetery and chose a beautiful spot. He said he wants his burial to be done at that spot,” Dr Biswas said, “And we will fulfil his wish.”

Returning to his home in Rajshahi on July 20, Andrew Kishore passed the last week of his life at Dr Biswas’ residence.

“One of his last wishes was that he was a son of Rajshahi, so he should be buried in Rajshahi,” he said.

M’singh volunteers

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“These centres have 10 beds each until now. However, we plan to scale up to 20 per centre,” said Jannatul Ferdous Swarna, one of the 100 volunteers who serve at these centres by rotation.

The foundation aims to set up a total of 500 isolation beds, including 50 in Phulpur, said volunteer Sabina Yeasmin Madhobi.

Doctors from Phulpur Upazila Health Complex will keep contact with the isolation centre round the clock, assured Dr Pranesh Chandra Pandit, residential medical officer of the hospital.

Praising the initiative, Phulpur UNO Nitesh Chndra Sarker said if such humanitarian initiatives are taken, it will reduce the damage of the virus.

Favipiravir effective in Dhaka

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Covid-19 infected patients, we have conducted a double blind placebo controlled randomised clinical trial in Bangladesh and we named it ‘Dhaka Trial,’ said Syed Gulam Mogni Mowla, associate professor of the Department of Medicine, Dhaka Medical College and Hospital.

Mowla said this during a PowerPoint presentation at a seminar styled “Study on safety and efficacy of Favipiravir (Favipira) on Covid-19 patients in selected hospitals of Bangladesh”, organised by the BSM in collaboration with Beacon Pharmaceuticals Ltd. (BPL) at The Dhaka Westin yesterday.

Favipira, the generic version of Japan’s anti-flu drug Avigan, has already been manufactured by BPL, one of the country’s leading pharmaceutical companies.

Eskayef Pharmaceuticals manufacture same drug under the brand name of Favipir and are supplying it to hospitals to treat Covid-19 patients.

Apart from around 14 pharmaceuticals companies, including Beximco, Renata, Orion Pharma, and Square are also producing this drug.

The trial protocol was approved by the Directorate General of Drug Administration (DGDA) and the Bangladesh Medical Research Council (BMRC).

It was conducted on a total of 50 Covid-19 patients, who were undergoing treatment at Kuwait Bangladesh Friendship Government Hospital, Dhaka Mahanagar General Hospital, Kurmitola General Hospital and Mugda Medical College and Hospital in Dhaka.

After using Favipira on the patients for four days, 48 percent of the results were Covid-19 negative in PCR testing report and within 10 days, it was 96 percent, said a healthcare official working with the treatment of Covid-19 patients.

The drug improved lung function three times higher than the placebo group and also shortened the longevity of the virus, Mowla said.

The results of the Dhaka trial found that patients who received Favipira had a 44 percent more viral clearance than those who received the placebo drug.

“The good thing is that Favipiravir has no significant side effects on the liver, kidneys o blood sugar and we did not find significant differences Favipira and the placebo group,” he added.

“Through the Dhaka trial, we found Favipiravir to be an effective drug with negligible side effects in treating Covid-19 patients,” he claimed.

He also suggested that the BSM start early use of the drug to avoid the fatality rate from

increasing.

Prof Billal Alam, president of the BSM said, “We are pleased to reach a clear-cut decision for treating Covid-19 patients through the Dhaka trial conducted on our own patients.”

Billal also thanked all the doctors, nurses and health workers for their tireless efforts to take care of patients infected with coronavirus.

Prof Abdur Rahman, dean of the Faculty of Medicine at DMCH, said it has been proved that Bangladesh is capable of manufacturing a quality drug.

He also requested all local drug manufacturers to go for a big volume of exportation after producing the drug to boost the country’s overall economy.

Prof ABM Abdullah, dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, said there was no specific drug for Covid-19 treatment.

So, Favipiravir is one of the hopes for treatment, as its clinical trial proved that it is effective at mild to moderate stage.

Doctors can use this drug to treat Covid-19 patients, he said, adding, “But the general public cannot use it as preventive measures.”

Prof Dr Syed Modasser Ali, chairman of Bangladesh Medical Research Council, thanked the medicine society team for excellent research work that find the right path of treating Covid-19 patients.

“We believe Favipiravir will be the game changer and will reduce the pressure on the healthcare system,” Ali added.

India, China

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appeared complete on Tuesday. Satellite images from the bend of the Galwan river as it crosses the Line of Actual Control and flows into Indian territory, showed the area cleared of Chinese troops and structures.

Sources said the Chinese are now firmly on their side of the Line of Actual Control -- the de-facto border between India and China.

The Chinese and Indian troops had started the withdrawal at four spots in Ladakh -- Galwan Valley, Hot Springs, Gogra and the Fingers region of Pangong -- leaving a buffer zone in between after Sunday’s talks.

China and India had both agreed on the need for urgent disengagement and de-escalation on the Line of Actual Control in Ladakh, where a face-off between the troops of the two nations have been on since April. In May, the troops had been involved in a brawl near Pangong Lake.

‘Where will we go?’

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at Crescent Jute Mill for around 20 years now. His wife, 60-year-old Jabeen Begum, is also a temporary worker at the same mill.

They are yet to receive their salary for the month of June as well as benefits such as Baishakhi allowance or Eid-ul-Fitr bonus.

The now laid-off workers will also not be able to stay in the mill colonies any longer. Workers said this was announced through mike in the area on Sunday.

As both Molla and Jabeen are temporary workers, they are not set to receive any benefits of the golden handshake -- meaning they have to look for work elsewhere immediately or return to their village.

But even returning to the village requires money, said Molla, and local shops are also refusing to give goods on credit to the workers anymore.

At his age, he may have to join his son in the back-breaking work of brick breaking.

Others are contemplating leaving with no work prospects or payout expected.

Eramat Ali, 57, another temporary worker, has worked at Crescent for 16 years. Despite his daughter being an honours student of economics at BL College in Khulna, Eramat is contemplating moving his family back to his village in Wazirpur upazila of Barishal in the next few days.

Some are already leaving.

This correspondent spoke to one worker of Platinum who sold his only valuable possession -- a refrigerator he had bought for Tk 22,000 a few years back. He sold it for Tk 7,500 and is using the money to move the rest of his possessions and his 7-member family back to their village in Gopalganj.

UNCERTAINTY, FEAR

The government on July 2 announced that all 25 state-owned jute mills under Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) will be shut down by providing cent percent dues of some 25,000 workers.

While visiting the Khalishpur area that day, this correspondent found police personnel with water cannons deployed on BIDD road from Notunrasta Mor to Platinum Jute Mill. The entire road seemed to be under police control.

“We are worried over the police presence,” said Parvez Akhter, a worker of Crescent Jute Mill. Several other workers echoed his views.

Kanai Lal Sarkar, spokesman of Khulna Metropolitan Police, told The Daily Star, “We want to ensure law and order. For this, we conduct our regular patrol in Khalishpur area.”

Two labour leaders of the recently closed state-owned jute mills were detained from their Khulna homes on Monday morning.

The detainees, Waliar Rahman and Nur Islam, are temporary workers of Eastern Jute Mills and Platinum Jute Mills respectively.

Waliar is the convener of Jute Industry Protection Youth Alliance and Nur is an adviser to the Alliance.

On this, Kanai Lal told The Daily Star that they were detained for interrogation.

Janardan Dutta Nantu, coordinator of Khulna unit of Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal, and Abdul Karim, general secretary of Khulna unit of Socialist Workers’ Front, condemned the “arrest” of the two labour leaders and demanded their immediate release.

In a statement issued on Monday, they said the two leaders actively took part in the recent workers’ movement demanding withdrawal of the government’s decision to close 25 state-owned jute mills.

The two have been arrested in the dark of night to suppress the movement, the statement added.

On Tuesday, Waliar and Nur were produced before the magistrate court and shown as arrested in a case filed on April 4, 2019 over vandalism of a police box at Notunrasta Mor of Daulatpur during a jute mill workers’ protests for due wages. They are now in judicial custody.

Foreign companies

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In a joint communiqué marking the end of Indian Foreign Minister Swaran Singh’s four day visit, Poland supports India’s efforts towards durable peace and good neighbourly relations in South Asian region.

PROTECTIVE DAM ERODES IN SIRAJGANJ

Erosion by the furious Jamuna has now reached the town protective embankment of Sirajganj devouring part of the sub-divisional town and six unions of Kazipur Police Station rendering thousands of people homeless and destitute. Engineers and officials of flood control department are working round the clock to check further erosion and protect the embankment breach of which would cause alarming situation threatening the entire subdivision. The people of the villages who are threatened by the erosion are also working simultaneously to tackle the situation.

SOURCES: July 10, 1972 issues of Bangladesh Observer, Dainik Bangla and Dainik Ittefaq.

Japan’s new

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first bullet trains began running on it on October 1, 1964, between Tokyo and Osaka -- and it passes the 12,400ft-high Mount Fuji.

The summit of Mt Fuji has been considered sacred since ancient times and bullet train staff have been known to bow to it as the train passes.

Govt decision

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the fees immediately and increase Covid-19 testing capacity to effectively check the pandemic.

At a time when more cases were being confirmed through increased testing, the health ministry suddenly on June 30 decided to impose fees on the coronavirus testing, said TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman.

It is not unusual to rise a question on whether the government by taking such a reckless decision during the crisis is discouraging people from undergoing testing, he said.

Iftekharuzzaman said although the testing fees of Tk 200 might seem insignificant to those who made the decision, the amount was still a huge burden for those who could not arrange one meal a day regularly.

“Such a discriminatory and inhuman decision is unacceptable,” he added.

The precondition for success of the government steps to fight the pandemic is that those have to be taken based on reliable data, said The TIB executive director.

Sadly, Bangladesh is one of the top countries infected with Covid-19 where fewer number of testing are taking place, he said, adding that the number of testing has decreased as fees has been imposed.

Flood-hit people

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upazila, said, “We stayed at a temporary flood shelter for around 10 days. After coming back home, we found our vegetable garden, cowshed, and fences around our house have been damaged.”

In Gaibandha, water of the Brahmaputra and Ghaghat rivers is now flowing below the danger level after 12 days, raising people’s hope of improving the flood situation.

But the situation may worsen again next week as there may be heavy rainfall in the upstream, said Mokhlesur Rahman, WDB executive engineer in Gaibandha.

Water of the Jamuna started flowing below the danger level after 10 days at Mathurapara point in Bogura’s Sariakandi.

According to the flood forecast, there will be another flooding in the area within next 10 days, said Humayan Kabir, WDB assistant engineer in Bogura.

In Jamalpur, the flood situation in the district improved further as water is going down fast from the inundating areas.

The flood affected people, who took shelter at flood centres, relatives’ houses, on roads and high grounds, are returning homes.

But many of them are facing crisis of drinking water and difficulties in maintaining hygiene as 355 tube wells and 381 latrines have been damaged, said sources at the local administration.

In Sirajganj, water has started receding from houses in Kazipur upazila.

“Although floodwater has gone down from my home, I have no scope to return home because flood may hit again. I will have to search for shelter again,” said Jahanara Begum of Shuvogachha.

Contacted, KM Rafiqul Islam, WDB sub-divisional engineer in Sirajganj, said it would take time to get rid of waterlogging.

Many people are still waterlogged and passing hard days due to shortage of food and drinking water in Faridpur.

“I had to sell one of my cattle seven days ago. Now I am running my family with the money as I have no work for a month due to the flood,” said Arman Sheikh of Char Gopalpur village in Charbhadrassan upazila.

Like him, at least 120 families of the village have been suffering for 15 days.

Moreover, poisonous snakes are being spotted in the areas, villagers said.

Salma Begum, 27, of Char Gopalpur village, said, “One of her relatives died from snakebite 14 days ago in Munshirchar village.”

Abdus Sobhan, district relief and rehabilitation officer, said 53,200 people in the district had already been affected by flood. They got 200 tonnes of rice and Tk 3 lakh for the flood affected people. They would distribute those soon.

[Our correspondents from Lalmonirhat, Bogura, Pabna, Jamalpur, and Faridpur contributed to this report]

Veteran journo DP Barua

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Memorial Award.

DP Barua, also a language movement veteran, authored “Culture and Tradition of Bengali Bouddha”, “Bangladesh–China Relationship from a Buddhist Perspective” and “His Holiness Sangaraj Shilalankar, eighth highest religious leader of the Buddhist – a short biography”.

Born on April 10, 1930 at Mohamuni village of Raojan upazila of Chattogram, Barua had his academic background in English literature. He secured his honours and master’s degrees from the University of

Dhaka (DU).

Barua was the first Buddhist student who became General Secretary of DU’s Jagannat Hall dormitory Students Union.

He became the chief editor and managing director of state-owned news agency BSS in 1991 and he served the post for six years.

Information Minister Dr Hasan Mahmud expressed deep shock and sorrow at the death of the veteran journalist.

Jatiya Press Club President Saiful Alam and General Secretary Farida Yasmin also expressed profound shock at his death.



WE MOURN

We are deeply shocked and grieved at the sad demise of **Mr. D P Barua**, the founding Trustee of ESTCDT, the founding trust of Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) who passed away on July 8, 2020. **Mr. Barua** was a language movement hero who also held the position of the Managing Director and Chief Editor of Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS) until 1996.

On behalf of the Education, Science, Technology & Cultural Development Trust (ESTCDT) and the IUB Board of Trustees, Members of the Faculty and Management, Students and Alumni, we express our heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family and pray to the Almighty to grant eternal peace to his departed soul.


Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB)



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স্বাধীনতা সড়ক
গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ

No. BMDF/D-36/2019/672

Date: 8th July 2020

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Tender ID No.	Package No.	Description of the goods	Last selling date & time	Closing date & time	Opening date & time
478265	BMDF G-10	Supply of 4WD Double Cabin Pickup	10-Aug-2020 12:30	10-Aug-2020 14:30	10-Aug-2020 14:30

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