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Warns Save the Children
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The Daily Star

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REGD. No. DA 781

Vol. XXX No. 175

ASHAR 30, 1427 BS

ZILQAD 22, 1441 HURI

16 PAGES PLUS LIFESTYLE PRICE : Tk12.00

ADB-FUNDED DEV IN BANGLADESH

40 projects hit by pandemic

Contract awarding, fund disbursements come down significantly

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The coronavirus pandemic has slowed down the implementation of at least 40 of the 49 projects funded by the Asian Development Bank.

Initial estimate shows that awarding of contracts may fall by 20 percent this year and disbursement of funds by 30 percent if no special measures are taken.

In six months till June 30, the achievement in awarding contracts was only 13.87 percent and that in disbursing funds 21.41 percent of the targets, show ADB documents.

"Given the Covid-19, special measures will be needed to speed up the project implementation as lockdown has seriously impacted the project progress," read the documents.

Against such a backdrop, the Tripartite Portfolio Review Meeting (TPRM) for the ADB-funded projects will be held in Dhaka tomorrow. This is the first such meeting this year.

The TPRM will be co-chaired by the secretary of the Economic Relations Division and the country director of the ADB's Bangladesh Resident Mission.

Representatives of the implementing agencies for all the projects will take part in the virtual meeting.

- ▶ Bangladesh's current active portfolio with ADB \$10.81b
- ▶ Number of projects 49, most of them delayed by months
- ▶ Disbursement only 13.87pc in six months



Even in the face of adversity, two women are all smiles as they wade through over knee-deep water in inundated Nabinagar area of Sunamganj yesterday. Non-stop rain coupled with onrush of water from upstream flooded the area a few days ago. Inset, two children on a raft in a flooded area of Lalmonirhat's Jagatber village, which is adjacent to the Teesta river.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR/S DILIP ROY



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BANGLADESH UPDATE

3,099 New cases in 24hrs

1,86,894 Total cases

2,391 Deaths

98,317 Recoveries

GLOBAL UPDATE

573,179 Deaths

13,127,189 Total cases

Shahid 'bribed 2 Kuwaiti MPs Tk 20cr': report

Kuwaiti prosecution tells national assembly

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh MP Shahid Islam Papul gave 720,000 dinars (about Tk 20 crore) to two members of Kuwait's National Assembly as bribes to facilitate foreign workers' recruitment and financial transactions, according to Kuwait's Public Prosecution.

It revealed the information in a report to Kuwait's National Assembly after Papul confessed during interrogation, reported Arab Times on Sunday.

According to the Public Prosecution's memorandum, Shahid revealed that he gave MP Saadoun Hammad about 200,000 dinars, including 50,000 dinars at his residence in South Surra region, and 150,000 dinars in cheques through a Syrian national mediator, who is the deputy manager of a company.

The target of the bribes was to facilitate his transactions and complete his commercial procedures in Kuwait.

Papul further gave 370,000 dinars in cash to MP Salah Khorshid at his residence in instalments, in exchange for bringing in Bangladeshi workers, and excluding him from obtaining their job approvals from

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DGHS-MINISTRY RIFT OVER REGENT

It'll frustrate virus efforts

WASIM BIN HABIB and MOUJID AHMED SUJAN

The rift between the health ministry and the health directorate over the Regent Hospital scam will seriously hurt the government efforts to contain the Covid-19 outbreak, say experts.

The buck-passing not only demonstrates a lack of coordination between the government bodies but also exposes the shady links and corruption in the health care sector.

The government must take action against the people involved and ensure that the agencies engaged in Covid-19 response work in coordination, they added.

"This [the government deal with Regent] was the work of a team. There must be no blame game. This proves the lack of seriousness in the director general and the minister," said Rashid E Mahub, former president of Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA).

"It is the duty of the DG to point out illogical directives from the minister and the minister should also consider that. Negligence is evident on both of their parts," he told The Daily Star.

"Be it corruption or misjudgement, this has to be dug out. But for now, it is more important to work together to tackle the Covid-19 pandemic."

The Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) signed a memorandum of understanding with Regent in March, turning it into a dedicated Covid-19 hospital, in a ceremony attended by Health Minister Zahid Maleque and many high officials.

The DGHS was aware that the hospital's licence had expired six years ago.

On July 7, a Rab mobile court raided Regent Hospital's Uttara branch and sealed it off on charges of issuing fake Covid-19 test certificates and asking money from coronavirus patients illegally.

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Two arrest warrants for Shahed

Gets sued in Ctg too for embezzlement

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday issued two arrest warrants against Regent Group Chairman Shahed Karim in connection with two cases filed over embezzling Tk 3.68 crore of a businessman.

Shahed, AKA Mohammad Shahed, went into hiding after a mobile court of Rab on July 7 sealed off Regent Hospital in the capital's Uttara in connection with issuing several thousand fake Covid-19 test reports.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Md Moinul Islam yesterday passed the order after Saifullah Masud, proprietor of M/S Masud Enterprise in Karwanbazar, lodged the cases with the court.

The magistrate directed the officer-in-charge of

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Sabrina washes her hands of JKG

Evidence against her pile up; placed on a 3-day remand

MUNTAKIM SAAD

Since JKG Health Care's alleged involvement in the fake Covid-19 test report scam surfaced late last month, Dr Sabrina Arif Chaudhury has been claiming that she was never the organisation's chairman.

She also refuted her links with any forgery.

Also in court yesterday, Sabrina, a suspended registrar (cardiac surgery) at the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (NICVD), denied holding the post of chairman at any private organisation, said court sources.

Some documents, website of an event management firm connected to JKG Health Care, and Sabrina's LinkedIn profile, however, mention her as the chairman of Oval Group, which was established in 2008.

In its official documents, Oval Group says its sister concerns are JKG Health Care, Dhaka Expo, Oval ad, Vital Security Services (VSS) Limited, Oval IT, A&M Fashion, Booking BD, Moment, and ROW-DY.

Dhaka Expo's website still shows Sabrina as the chairman of the group. The firm's Facebook page also has photos where she is seen participating in its programmes.

Besides, Sabrina gave interviews to the media as a spokesperson for JKG after some of its staffers were allegedly assaulted at Titumir College on June 2, said investigators.

The investigators also said, lobbying the government high-ups, Sabrina managed to get JKG the job of collecting Covid-19 test samples after showing it a non-profit

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Jamuna Group chairman Nurul Islam passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nurul Islam, chairman of Jamuna Group, one of the biggest conglomerates in the country, died of Covid-19 at a city hospital yesterday.

He was 74.

A freedom fighter, Nurul Islam, popularly known as Nurul Islam Babul, passed away at Evercare Hospital (formerly known as Apollo Hospital) at 3:40pm, Mohammad Alamgir Alam, a director of Jamuna Group, told this correspondent.

He was also suffering from kidney damage, said Alam.

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