

Take steps to clearly label flammable ingredients in hand sanitiser: HC to govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed the government to take necessary steps to print or label clear and proper warning and cautions in the stickers of various hand sanitiser and disinfectant spray that contain flammable ingredients.

The director general of directorates of health services, drug administration and national consumers protection have been ordered to take steps in this regard within two weeks so that people can remain careful about the flammable ingredients.

The HC also directed the government to take steps so that no hand sanitiser and disinfectant spray is sold without the warning labels.

The bench of Justice Tariq ul Hakim came up with the order after virtually hearing a writ petition filed seeking necessary directives on the authorities concerned of the government to this effect.

Rights organisation Justice Watch Foundation represented by its executive director Barrister Md Mahfuzur Rahman submitted the writ petition as a public interest litigation to the HC through email on July 27.

The organisation included a report published in The Daily Star about Dr Rajib

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This statue of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, named "Bojrokontho" was unveiled in Chattogram city's Halishahar Boro Pole area, by Mayor AJM Nasir Uddin yesterday. The 26-foot (including base), 30-tonne statue is made of reinforced cement concrete and took four months to complete.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Homebound rush for Eid yet to peak

Buses see low ticket demand; ferry services slow journey to the south

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Although Eid-ul-Azha is knocking at the door, not a lot of people are leaving Dhaka this time, ahead of one of the largest religious festivals of Muslims -- to be celebrated on August 1.

Apart from the growing cases of Covid-19, flood in more than 30 districts, the government's directive for public servants to stay at workstations during Eid vacation and people's poor economic condition are the reasons behind the poor number of holidaymakers, transport operators and officials said.

However, the number may increase from today, as the three-day Eid vacation starts from Friday, they said.

Meanwhile, people heading for southwestern district are suffering severely at both the ferry terminals, as flood and strong current in the Padma River continues to disrupt ferry services.

Unlike other years, bus and launch operators did not sell advance tickets. The usual crowd at bus and launch terminals and railway stations ahead of the Eid is also missing this time, while fewer number of bus, launch and trains are leaving Dhaka.

Khondaker Enayet Ullah, secretary general of Bangladesh Road Transport Owners' Association, said the number of holidaymakers is much lower than other years, especially towards the greater Sylhet region.

"Although the number of passengers has increased a little centering Eid, but it is still very low. We are operating only 100 buses out of 300," Enayet, also the owner of Ena Enterprise, told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said transport owners are incurring losses of Tk 300 crore daily, due to the lack of passengers and goods amid the pandemic.

Abdus Sattar, general manager of bus service Green Line Paribahan, said they are operating only 20 buses out of 150, due to low demand.

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Ensuring health rules a far cry at cattle markets

HELEMI ALAM and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Ignoring suggestions of the National Technical Advisory Committee (NTAC) on Covid-19, 18 cattle markets were set up in the capital with a promise to maintain health guidelines as a preventive measure against the pandemic.

Health regulations, however, are completely being flouted at most of the markets.

During a visit to at least five cattle markets -- including Gabtoli, Kachukhet, Sadeque Hossain Khoka playground -- in the last couple of days, it was seen that most buyers, sellers, and visitors completely ignored the rules. Rather than maintaining distance, people were seen huddling and moving in groups.

Though the two city mayors directed all the lessees of 17 cattle markets (one was set up by the cantonment board) to follow the guidelines -- wearing masks, maintaining physical distance, spraying disinfectants and facilities to wash hands, among others -- strictly, they hardly seemed to pay any heed.

According to public health experts, the

country may face an acceleration in the already growing number of Covid-19 cases if the government failed to ensure the maintenance of health guidelines in cattle markets ahead of Eid-ul-Azha.

Visiting the market near Sadeque Hossain Khoka playground yesterday afternoon, these correspondents saw that many traders were selling cattle on roads, that too without maintaining any mandatory distancing.

Inside the market, 90 percent traders did not wear masks. There was no announcement through loudspeakers to maintain distance or wear masks -- a major health rule to follow at the markets. There was no setup for washing hands either.

The same situation prevailed at Gabtoli, Meradia and Kachukhet cattle markets.

Shah Alam, a cattle trader from Kushtia who brought 16 bulls at Gabtoli, tried to evade the question when this newspaper asked him why he was not wearing a mask. "We are aware of the health guidelines but we are not used to wearing masks all the time, that too, in this weather," he said.

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PROCUREMENT OF 150 CARRIAGES Railway inks deal with S Korean firm

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Railway yesterday signed a contract with a South Korean joint-venture firm to procure 150 meter-gauge passenger carriages to replace the old one and increase the number of trains.

Under the contract, the firm -- Sung Shin RST and Posco International -- will supply the carriages within 18 to 30 months of the contract signing at the cost of Tk 658.31 crore.

Financed by the EXIM Bank of South Korea, the carriages are being procured under the project titled "Procurement of 20 nos meter gauge diesel electric locomotives and 150 nos meter gauge passenger carriages for Bangladesh railway".

The Tk 1,799.10 crore project is being implemented between July 2017 and June 2021.

In March last year, the BR inked a deal with Hyundai Rotem Company, a Korean firm, to buy 20 new MG locomotives for Tk 674.09 crore, under the same project, Project Director Mohammad Hassan Mansur said.

"As per the contract, the company has to deliver the engines within 22-28 months and we are hopeful about getting the locomotives on time," he told The Daily Star.

Yesterday, Hassan Mansur and Jong Bum Lee, country manager of Posco International, signed the contract on behalf of their respective sides at Railway Bhaban in presence of Railways Minister Nurul Islam Sujon.

Rights-based approach must to combat trafficking

Says UN network marking day against trafficking

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh United Nations Network on Migration (BDUNNM) and members of the Counter-Trafficking in Persons Technical Working Group (CTIP TWG) yesterday urged the government, civil society actors, and private sector partners to collectively support a rights-based approach to combat human trafficking.

About 40 million people globally are victims of trafficking. Over 70 percent of these people are women and girls, many of whom are trapped in sexual exploitation, the platforms said in a statement issued on the occasion of World Day against Trafficking in Persons.

In Bangladesh, a country of origin and destination for victims of trafficking, the UN estimates that thousands are trafficked every year. Recently published reports from ILO, Unicef and UNODC present evidence on how the Covid-19 pandemic may have a detrimental effect on the trafficking situation in general, reads the statement.

The activation of the newly established anti-trafficking tribunals is key to strengthen the capacity of and coordination among law enforcing agencies, border security actors, immigration authority, social welfare services and the judiciary, it said.

For better community engagement, the network calls for activation of counter-trafficking committees in collaboration with the NGOs and organisations supporting survivors of trafficking.

"In these exceptional times, we must commend the work of the first responders to human trafficking -- people who identify, support, provide counselling and seek justice for survivors of trafficking simultaneously challenging the impunity of the traffickers," said Mia Seppo, the UN resident coordinator in Bangladesh.

Abu Bakr Siddique, additional secretary to the home ministry, said the government will continue working to follow up on the National Plan of Action for Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking 2018-2022.

DNCC ELECTION Tabith asks for polls documents from RO

COURT CORRESPONDENT

BNP candidate in February's Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) Mayor election Tabith Awal yesterday filed an application with an election tribunal of Dhaka seeking its direction for the returning officer to provide all necessary documents related to the election including EVM records.

Judge Utpal Bhattacharjee of the tribunal (First Joint District Judge's Court) received the application but did not pass any order.

On March 2, Awal filed a suit with the same tribunal, demanding cancellation of DNCC polls held on February 1.

The following day, the tribunal issued summons upon defendants asking their explanation against the suit. The chief election commissioner, commission's secretary, winning candidate Atiqul Islam and five others were made defendants to contest the suit.

In the suit, Tabith claimed that the February 1 election was held amid irregularities and corruption, adding that on the day, the number of voters was not satisfactory either.

Sikder brothers seek SC nod to contest HC order

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sikder Group Managing Director Ron Haque Sikder and his brother Dipu Haque Sikder have sought permission from the Supreme Court to challenge the High Court order that fined them for seeking anticipatory bail from abroad in a case filed for allegedly abducting, torturing and opening fire at two top Exim Bank officials over a loan permission.

Ron Sikder and Dipu Sikder, currently in Thailand, on Tuesday virtually filed a petition with the Appellate Division of the SC through their lawyers in this regard.

Chamber judge of the Appellate Division Justice Md Nuruzzaman on Tuesday sent the permission-petition to its full bench for hearing on August 9, Advocate Muhammad Saifullah Mamun, a lawyer for the petitioners, told The Daily Star.

He said his clients sought permission from the SC for filing a petition challenging the HC order of fine as the HC is yet to release the written order.

Deputy Attorney General Bishwajit Debnath told this newspaper that if the full bench of the apex court on August 9 gives permission to the brothers they can move an appeal before it against the HC order.

Barrister Ajmalul Hossain QC appeared for the petitioners while Attorney General Mahbubey Alam represented the state during yesterday's virtual court proceedings.

On July 20, the HC ordered the brothers to give 5,000 personal protective equipment (PPE) each as fine to the Prime Minister's Relief and Welfare Fund in two weeks in order to contain the Covid-19 pandemic.



A number of labour rights organisations, including Ovivashi Karmi Unnayan Program (OKUP), Bangladesh Labor Rights Forum and Bangladesh Nari Samik Kendra, yesterday formed a human chain in front of the Jatiya Press Club in the capital, demanding unconditional release of Bangladeshi Rayhan Kabir from Malaysian prison. Rayhan was arrested for giving an interview to an international media outlet about plight of immigrants in the country.



Shopkeepers in the capital's Rajdhani Super Market wait in vain for customers, as even the usually-festive residents of Old Dhaka steer clear of clothes shopping ahead of Eid. Whether it is due to a financial crunch or the fear of coronavirus contraction, the volume of shopping seems to have declined, much to the dismay of business owners. The photo was taken on Tuesday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Cattle markets finally get going in Barishal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

After a period of low to no trade, sales at cattle markets in Barishal finally picked up around noon yesterday.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, only six permanent cattle markets and four makeshift markets are operating across the city this year.

Barishal district administration sources said they allowed 35 markets to operate in the 10 upazilas of the district this year. Last year, this number was 66 in the district (except Barishal City Corporation).

Even though prices are low this year, farmers and traders struggled to sell until yesterday. Sabuj Howlader, a cattle trader who came to the city all the way from Kushtia, said he was yet to make satisfactory sales until Tuesday.

Cattle trader Khalil Payada said he brought six bulls to the market, but could only sell two as of Sunday. According to another trader Shamsur Rahman, customers were only visiting the markets, sometimes without even bargaining.

To add to their woes, Eid coinciding with monsoon seasons means transport costs are higher and cattle fodder is costlier. There is also a shortage of workers due to the pandemic.

Due to heavy rainfall over the last few days, the supply could not increase as there was an acute shortage of space as well as a crisis of fodder, said BCC market inspector Abdur Razzak.

Shahabuddin Ahmed, commissioner of Barishal Metropolitan Police, said they have increased patrolling in both uniform and plain clothes at entrance points and on roads and highways to prevent extortion, mugging and pick-pocketing. Police have also installed fake currency detection booths at the markets, said Saiful Islam, district police superintendent.

HEALTH REGULATIONS FALL FLAT AT MARKETS

Even though cattle markets in the city are up and running, traders and

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SACRIFICIAL ANIMALS IN RANGPUR Farmers worried of loss amid low price

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Cattle farmers of Rangpur division are worried about getting fair prices for their animals days before Eid-ul-Azha, although the authorities said they have taken steps to ensure profit.

The farmers said customers are offering less than the expected price, probably due to the economic impacts of Covid-19.

According to the Divisional Livestock Department in Rangpur, 1.56 lakh farmers of all eight districts have prepared at least nine lakh sacrificial animals this year, including around five lakh cows, bulls and buffaloes.

Around two lakh animals are in surplus in the districts, and 400 cattle markets are being set up.

For the first time, the local livestock department and deputy commissioner's office have taken steps to sell cattle online. Through the service, potential buyers will be able to get information about the cattle and farmers' contacts.

Additionally, this year, cattle will be transported on both railways and roads.

Officials in Rangpur said all eight districts have a surplus of sacrificial animals.

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