

CRP WEBINAR

Raise awareness on spinal cord injury: experts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Experts at a discussion have stressed the need for raising awareness on Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) and supporting the persons with SCI.

Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralyzed (CRP) arranged the webinar on Friday, titled "Covid-19 and Spinal Cord Injury: Staying Well", marking fifth World Spinal Cord Injury Day.

Valerie Ann Taylor, founder and coordinator of CRP; Shafiq-ul Islam, executive director, CRP; Prof Dr Fazlul Haque, orthopedic and spine surgeon; Julian Francis, developmental consultant; Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star; and Asif Iqbal Chowdhury, a social worker and former patient of CRP spoke at the discussion.

In her speech, Valerie Taylor focused on the emerging necessity to raise awareness on SCI and supporting them physically and economically.

Shafiq-ul Islam described how CRP continued services in the Covid-19 pandemic and urged other hospitals and centres to continue rehabilitation services following CRP's model.

Dr Fazlul Haque termed CRP a

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Sporting activities ground to a halt and a sheer lack of maintenance during monsoon has resulted in the Chattogram outer stadium field in the city's Kazir Dewri area, just outside the MA Aziz Stadium, looking more like a paddy seedbed than a playground. Set aside the eyesore factor, this large "waterbody" appears to be a perfect breeding ground for mosquito as well. The photo was taken yesterday morning.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

A mother's prayer, gone unanswered

Heartbreaking scenes at hospital on the night of N'ganj mosque blast

MOHAMMAD AL MASUM MOLLA

The gate to the emergency unit of Sheikh Hasina National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery was packed with relatives of Narayanganj mosque blast victims, journalists and curious onlookers on Friday night.

Normally the gate remains open round the clock, but due to influx of people following the blast, Ansar members on duty restricted entry for everyone except patients and healthcare professionals.

It was around 11:20pm when this reporter managed to enter the 18-storey health facility, purpose-built for burn patients, and the first thing that struck the eye was bloodstains all over the white-tiled floor.

Attending doctors and nurses were treating three burn victims in the emergency room -- bandaging the wound and giving other primary treatment before the patients were taken to the fifth floor.

The healthcare professionals' gait -- practically running across the room -- bore testament to the urgency of the situation.

A ward attendant was seen pushing a victim on a stretcher, mobbed by relatives of the patient. Hapless wails filled the air as they tried to help the attendant push the stretcher faster.

However, the pandemonium on the ground floor was only a small sign of what was happening on the fifth floor, where all 37 burn victims of the Narayanganj mosque blast were kept in a ward.

Anxious relatives were gathered in a room -- some of them weeping, others praying for their loved ones.

Some of them had blood on their shirts or panjabis. Most were barefoot, with mud on their feet telling of the mad rush to the hospital.

The moment this reporter entered the ward, it was like being hit by a wall -- with a bone-chilling collective scream of patients in intolerable agony.

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PARTIALLY-HYDROGENATED OILS

Trans fat level in 'dalda' way too high: report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

About 92 percent of Partially-Hydrogenated Oils (PHO) sampled in Dhaka city contained trans-fatty acid (TFA) levels above the 2 percent limit set by the World Health Organization, said a new research report.

PHO is popularly known as dalda or banaspati ghee in Bangladesh.

The research found some samples even showed high concentration of TFA -- 20.9g per 100 grammes -- which is more than 10 times the WHO-set threshold.

Researchers from the National Heart Foundation Hospital and Research Institute (NHFHRI) have found such concerning results after analysing samples from leading PHO brands.

Consumption of excessive TFA is strongly associated with increased risk of severe coronary heart disease, death from

heart disease, dementia and cognitive impairment, said a press release.

Findings of the report "Assessment of Trans Fat in PHOs in Bangladesh" were shared at a press conference jointly organised by NHFHRI, Consumers Association of Bangladesh and Progress for Knowledge (Progga) at Jatiya Press Club yesterday, the release said.

Researchers urged the government for taking effective steps to limit TFA levels recommended by WHO.

They suggested that the government consider some measures like mandating TFA levels to be listed on prepackaged items' nutrition facts panels.

The research demonstrates there are products in Bangladesh that contain "dangerous levels" of TFA and poses increased risks of heart disease and deaths

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INT'L ROBOTICS COMPETITION

Bangladeshi youths shine the brightest

Hold pole position among 174 countries for five weeks

RASHIDUL HASAN

Bangladesh has ranked number one among 174 participating countries over the last 5 weeks at FIRST Global Challenge (FGC), an international robotics competition, held annually for high school students.

Team Bangladesh has to hold on to the position for five more weeks to become the winner of FGC 2020.

FGC is the largest robotics competition for high schoolers. It aims to inspire the youth of the world to pursue STEM education and facilitate learning. Every year, youths from around the world come together to FGC to express their ignited passion for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

Last year in Dubai, Bangladesh ranked number seven in the competition. This year however, due to the global Covid-19 pandemic, the competition is being held online.

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Sushanta Kumal Paul's family members contribute to creating and painting these traditional pots. Theirs is one of the few families still working to keep this art alive.

PHOTO COURTESY: PASHE ACHHI INITIATIVE

Too much of a good thing?

With hilsa flooding Barishal markets, traders demand storage facilities, export opportunities as price too low

SUSHANTA GHOSH

This was supposed to be a good year for hilsa traders and anglers of Barishal. Ever since the beginning of the season, a record number of the fish are being netted. Now that it's time for the peak season, much to everyone's delight, large sized hilsas are also flooding the local markets.

There is, however, one downside -- the price is much lower compared to previous years. While this is good news for buyers, who have never had the opportunity to buy such large hilsas at such a low price, but it's slowly becoming a cause for concern for traders.

To get themselves out of this pickle, they're now demanding they be allowed to export the fish.

Nirab Hossain Tutul, president of Barishal Aratdar Samitee, said around 3,000 maunds of hilsa are coming to the market every day. This is greater than the demand



A trader sprinkles ice chips on a heap of hilsa to keep them fresh, at Barishal city's Port Road wholesale market.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

in the domestic market, which is causing prices to fall, resulting in traders not getting to sell at fair margins.

What adds to their woes is that there is no system or facilities, such

as cold storage, to preserve the fish. In such circumstances, Tutul thinks exporting, even if on a limited scale, could be the way to go.

Last year, around 350 tonnes of hilsa was exported from here, he

told this correspondent.

After visiting the Port Road hilsa wholesale market yesterday -- one of the biggest hilsa hubs in the division -- this correspondent found an average hilsa weighing around 900 to 1500 grammes.

This is a stark increase from previous years. Anglers said most of the bigger hilsa are being caught from the south side of the Bay of Bengal.

At the Port Road market, the fish are priced according to size. For a hilsa over one kilogramme, the price is set at Tk 1,000 per kg. For a 600-900 gramme fish, it's Tk 800 per kg, while the price is Tk 300 per kg for hilsa below 500 grammes.

"This is at least a 30 percent decline on previous years' prices," said Ujjal, a trader at the market.

Hilsa trader Ajit Kumar Das said the supply of fish has suddenly increased three to four times.

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'Matir Gaan' stands by folk artistes amid pandemic

TOGGLE DESK

The corona pandemic has taken a toll on the livelihoods of people from all spheres. Artists are no exception to this, especially those based in remote, rural areas of the country. Many folk artists and musicians were left with no income sources after the lockdown was imposed, as a major portion of their income would come from local gigs and programmes.

To address this issue and support the artists, Pashe Achhi Initiative, a relief and aid programme, launched Matir Gaan. This new fundraiser campaign aims to support folk artists in remote areas during the pandemic.

The works of the contemporary rural folk-artists are not quite known in the urban scene. This initiative can not only support rural artists in need but can also leave an impact on the bigger cause of spreading folk music among the urban audience.

"The idea was to connect these artists with folk music lovers in urban areas. We plan to raise funds for singers individually and upload one performance video of each artist that we work with. We want

to introduce people in city areas to folk music and encourage them to patron rural artistes' works through donations," said Rafiul Mahmud Chowdhury, co-founder of Pashe Achhi Initiative.

"Logistical and technical challenges in reaching out to artists and recording their performances remains a big challenge. It's difficult to access even average quality recording equipment sometimes, but we are trying our best to come up with solutions. For now, we are using our own resources to reach the artistes and record their performances," Rafiul explained.

"If people continue to donate, then we want to make a call for volunteers across the country to reach the artistes," he added.

The initiative has already released one performance video of folk artiste Humayun Kabir from Narsingdi on their Facebook page "Matir Gaan".

"The response has been great so far. If a donor wants to keep the music as a memento, we will send them the file via email. We don't want to term this as charity work -- the aim is to connect the artistes with folk music lovers," said Rafiul.

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Ban veterinary drugs harmful to vultures

Urge speakers at webinar marking International Vulture Awareness Day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government should immediately ban veterinary drugs such as ketoprofen as they are killing these scavenging birds of prey, which play a critical role in maintaining the ecosystem, said speakers at a webinar yesterday.

The event was organised on the occasion of "International Vulture Awareness Day", observed worldwide yesterday.

The forest department and IUCN Bangladesh jointly organised the webinar, which was broadcast live from IUCN Asia Facebook page.

The speakers said vultures play a critical role in maintaining the ecosystem's health by controlling spread of diseases.

Vultures eat rapidly and feed in large groups which allows them to consume carrion (decaying flesh of dead animals) quickly. This reduces the risk of disease spread from flies or bacteria, they added.

Unfortunately, over 99.9 percent of vultures of South Asia have disappeared over the past couple of decades. Bangladesh's vulture population has been similarly affected with only 260 resident vultures left.

According to IUCN, recent surveys have showed that Ketoprofen, a veterinary painkiller, is present in significant amount in the market. Any vulture feeding on a cattle carcass containing it is bound to die. Veterinary painkilling drugs have been the sole reason for the unprecedented vulture tragedy of South Asia.

Speaking as the chief guest, Environment, Forest and Climate Change Minister Shahab Uddin said vultures are vanishing due to the use of harmful drugs (diclofenac and ketoprofen).

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With the sweltering heat and suffocating humidity that the Bangla month of Bhadra brings, it would be almost instinctive for anyone with access to a fairly clean waterbody to jump in and cool off. Thankfully, the Buriganga seems to have regained some of its past life, possibly due to the pandemic-induced industrial shutdown for a few months. The photo was taken yesterday from Kamrangir Char in the capital.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

FEMALE MIGRANT WORKERS
10,430 returnees to get assistance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some 10,430 returnee female migrant workers -- many of whom came home after their jobs abroad amid the coronavirus pandemic -- are going to receive various supports to get their lives back on track, including emergency food, health and hygiene products, and skill training in 10 districts.

UN Women, Expatriates' Welfare Ministry, and Unilever jointly launched the project at the capital's Bangladesh-Korea Technical Training Centre conference room yesterday, said a press release. About 50,000 people are expected to benefit from the project.

Bangladesh Nari Sramik Kendra and Badabon Sangho will implement the project in Dhaka, Manikganj, Narsingdi, Rajbari, Jashore, Bagerhat, Sylhet, Habiganj, Patuakhali and Jamalpur, said the document.

The project will be funded by UN Women, the Government of Japan and Unilever Bangladesh.

Women migrant workers who have lost their jobs due to the pandemic are facing a variety of challenges while starting over in their home country. Lack of food and

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