

'Gonoshasthaya won't apply for approval again'

Says Dr Zafrullah about their Covid-19 antigen test kits

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Gonoshasthaya Kendra founder Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury yesterday harshly criticised the government for permitting import of rapid testing kit for Covid-19 instead of giving nod to the kit developed by his organisation.

"This government is the government of businessmen. So the government has approved the import of kits instead of approving our antibody and antigen kits, even though those were ready. This was done for commercial motives," he said while addressing an event in honour of the frontliners of Covid-19 in Dhaka.

The event was organised at 30 branches of Gonoshasthaya Kendra across the country.

Zafrullah said they had to count a loss of Tk 10 crore to develop the kits, but the government did not approve it. "Gonoshasthaya will not apply for kit approval again. However, we will supply kits if the government approves it by itself."

Criticising the government's policy on vaccine trial, he said, "The government is



Doctors and staffers of Gonoshasthaya Kendra Hospital in Dhanmondi applaud for a minute to show appreciation for all health workers on the frontline of the Covid-19 crisis. Gonoshasthaya organised the programme yesterday at its 30 centres across the country.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

'Increase flights or help extend our work visas'

Migrant workers block major thoroughfare in capital for tickets to Saudi Arabia, as their visas expire Sept 30

RASHIDUL HASAN

For the last two days, migrant worker Jahed Hasan has been trying to confirm his return ticket to Saudi Arabia from a Saudi Airlines office in the capital.

He waited from dawn to dusk every day but could not secure one due to a severe ticket crisis.

Hailing from Bhola, Jahed said he will lose his job if he fails to go to Saudi Arabia by September 30 as his visa will expire on that date.

Like Jahed, around 10,000 expatriate workers have been gathering for the last two days at the Saudi Airlines office at Sonargaon hotel either to get a new ticket or re-issue return tickets to go to KSA.

Failing to get a ticket, they demonstrated and blockaded Sonargaon intersection yesterday morning for around an hour, halting traffic movement in the area.

Admitting severe crisis of tickets, a top official of Saudi Airlines (Dhaka office) said at least 30,000 Bangladeshi workers are waiting to return to their work places in the Kingdom.

"But the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh initially gave us permission to operate only two flights per week from Dhaka starting from tomorrow (today), which is not enough considering the huge number of passengers," the official said.

"We have already applied to CAAB to increase the number of flights so that we can accommodate more Bangladeshi workers in the flight," the official added.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

COX'S BAZAR

Coal-fired power plants could cause 30,000 deaths in three decades: research

MOSTAFA YOUSUF, Cg

Coal-based power plants being constructed in Cox's Bazar could be responsible for 30,000 deaths over 30 years. The plants will be releasing hazardous elements, emitting pollutants 800 percent higher than the international average.

The figures come from a paper of Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) on "Detrimental impact on health, air-quality and environment caused by coal-based power plants in Cox's Bazar and Chattogram", presented at a webinar hosted by Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (Bapa) yesterday.

Lauri Myllyvirta, lead analyst of CREA, presented the research paper, portraying

the grave environmental disaster awaiting the country's south-east coastal region.

Lauri said emission levels adopted for Matarbari project in Cox's Bazar allows up to 25 times the legal pollution limit in China, India and the European Union.

For Matarbari, the total emission from all power plants would be 820 micrograms per metre cube, while the permitted level is 100 in India, 75 in European Union, and just 35 in China, he said.

Saying that the project aims to build the world's largest cluster of coal-plants, Lauri said lack of proper monitoring and supervision of environmental regulations would cause 30,000 deaths over 30 years in Cox's Bazar, due to heavy air pollution.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Man acquitted after 14yrs on death row

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday acquitted Md Humayun Kabir, who had been in the condemned cell for the last 14 years after being convicted and sentenced to death by the trial court, in connection with a case filed for abduction and murder of an eight-year-old in 2004.

Humayun, a truck driver from Sakera village of Laksam Poursava in Cumilla, was arrested on July 4, 2004 in connection with the case when he was 27-year-old, his lawyer ABM Bayezid told The Daily Star.

Yesterday, a four-member bench of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court, headed by Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain, delivered the acquittal verdict after allowing an appeal filed by Humayun, challenging the High Court verdict that confirmed his death sentence.

Citing the case statement, Advocate Bayezid said second-grader Zaheda Aktar Juthi of the same area went missing on June 6, 2004.

His guardian lodged a general diary with Laksam Police Station the same day.

On July 2, 2004, police filed a case under Section 7 of Nari O Shishu Nirjaton Daman Ain on charge of abducting

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



The floor underneath the tubewells at SBMCH lies completely dry, signifying the water crisis gripping the hospital. This photo was taken on Sunday. PHOTO: TITU DAS

SHER-E-BANGLA MEDICAL COLLEGE HOSPITAL

Water crisis leaves patients miserable

SUSHANTA GHOSH

An acute shortage of water at the Barishal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital (SBMCH) has persisted for close to a month, putting several thousand people in severe woes.

The crisis started sometime in August after one of the two deep tubewells in the hospital stopped working, confirmed patients and hospital authorities. The other one is also not working at full capacity.

According to hospital authorities, the 1,150-bed hospital, established in 1968, currently receives about 2,000 patients a day. The patients are accompanied by their relatives, who are nearly double in number. At any given time, there's around seven to eight thousand people crowding the hospital every day.

The shortage of usable water has created such a situation that many patients are being forced to use polluted and harmful water for sanitary and other needs. This is not just limited to patients; doctors, nurses, and other staffers are also suffering.

Attendants and relatives of patients told this correspondent on Sunday that they're struggling with toilets, bathing, and doing dishes and laundry due to the water crisis. As an alternative, they are resorting to temporary means such as carrying water from outside and purchasing bottled water.

A 42-year-old woman admitted at the gynecology department said, "We have to

bathe in the open at a tubewell outside."

A patient named Amir (55), admitted at the medicine ward, said hygiene at the hospital was in disarray especially due to the lack of water in the toilets. Not only are they finding it hard to clean themselves, the lack of water is also making it difficult to clean the toilets, and the stench produced from them are spreading into the wards.

Contacted, director of the hospital Md Bakir Hossain said the Public Works Department is responsible for the infrastructure and water management of the hospital. They have been asked to take appropriate action in this regard.

Meanwhile, temporary arrangements have been made so that patients can take water from tubewells situated outside the hospital, he added.

Oliver Guda, executive engineer of the Public Works Department, Barishal, told this correspondent, "We have already installed a two-inch tubewell for the departments that are hardest hit by the water shortage. We have sent sample of the water to Dhaka for testing around one week ago, to see if the water is safe for drinking."

"At the same time, budget allocation has been sought from the Ministry of Health for installation of new tubewells. Once this is approved, we can install new tubewells and hopefully put this crisis to bed," the official added.

Protecting Hindu women's right to inherit property

LAW DESK

Recently, the High Court Division ruled that Hindu widows will be entitled to inherit both agricultural and non-agricultural lands belonging to the husbands if they die intestate.

The court further observed that they shall have the right to sell the lands for legal necessities. This decision has been lauded by many quarters for upholding Hindu women's property rights and has gained attention across different sections.

Section 3 of the Hindu Women's Right to Property Act 1937 says when a Hindu governed by the Dayabhag school of Hindu law dies intestate (not having made a will) and when a Hindu governed by any other school of Hindu law or by customary law dies intestate, his widow or widows shall be entitled in respect of the property left, to the same share as a son.

The law merely mentions 'property' and makes no difference between different kinds of property (such as agricultural and non-agricultural). Section 3(3) provides that the widow(s) shall have limited interest in the property.

The recent decision of the HC Division is an apt application of the clear provision of the governing law in this respect.

When asked about the implication of the

decision, Dr Shahnaz Huda, a professor of law at University of Dhaka, observed, "This decision has interpreted quite correctly the law in favour of Hindu widows, thus reiterating and clarifying their rights to all types of property of their deceased husband in respect of which they die intestate. However, by and large it has done little to change the status quo -- including giving Hindu daughters greater rights."

"The Hindu Women's Right to Property Act, 1937 does have clear provisions recognising the right of widows to their husbands' property without differentiating between agricultural and non-agricultural property. The practice, however, varied across different areas in Bangladesh," she further noted.

"From the point of bringing uniformity and clarifying the position [already envisaged in law], this decision must be lauded."

However, she mentioned, "The Act of 1937 does not give women absolute right to the property inherited. The HC Division, in the same vein, has reiterated the limited nature of their rights by stating that widows can sell the property inherited during their lifetime only upon showing legal necessity. This reinforces the traditional approach and in effect does little to ease Hindu

women's plight."

"In order for women to have equal rights, more proactive decisions are necessary. For instance, we look forward to seeing women, including daughters, being recognised as absolute owners of the property they inherit," Prof Shahnaz hoped.

It will not be out of place to note that Section 14 of the Hindu Succession Act 1956 of India recognises women as absolute owners of the property they inherit from their husbands. However, in Bangladesh, no reform has been brought to truly uphold Hindu women's equal rights in private matters, including inheritance.

The Constitution of Bangladesh provides for equality between men and women in all spheres of state and public life. This has been interpreted to give immunity to discriminatory personal laws that govern private spheres. Legal scholars however have also suggested that this provision can be creatively interpreted to imply that equality in public life can only be realised when there is equality in private life. Bangladesh is party to the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979, with certain reservations that further underpin the perpetuation of discrimination in private life, including in the sphere of inheritance.

No assessed grades for upcoming O/A level exams: British Council

Students continue protests

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGR

Ordinary and Advanced level examinations for the October-November session will not be assessed based on predicted grades, British Council Bangladesh has said quoting Cambridge Assessment International Education and Pearson's Edexcel examination boards.

British Council made the remarks after a group of students demanded the cancellation of exams in Bangladesh due to the coronavirus and asked for predicted grading instead. The students organised a movement online and held a human chain in front of Jatiya Press Club to push their demands yesterday and on Sunday.

"Approximately 5,200 students in Bangladesh have registered with us in July and August 2020 to sit for their exam in the upcoming October-November session," a British Council spokesperson told this correspondent.

A-level exams under Cambridge are scheduled to start from October 1, and from October 5 under Pearson. Pearson's O-level exams are set to start from November 2 and Cambridge's from November 5.

"The CAIE and Pearson exam boards have confirmed that predicted grading will not be available for the October-November series," the official added.

British Council is aware of the significant and unfortunate disruptions caused to students and their families as a result of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, the spokesperson said. This has resulted in uncertainty for those students who are due to sit for the exams in the upcoming session.

"The health and safety of our students remain our top priority. All

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



Parking rules don't seem to exist for this bus company, as two of its vehicles can be seen parked on either side of the road while ones drives through in the capital's Sadarghat-Gabtolli Road, in front of Martyred Intellectuals' Memorial. However, it's not just buses that are culprits, as pickup vans are also seen parked in front of the national monument. This photos were taken yesterday. PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Recognise them as freedom fighters

HC directs govt on those who received training in country for Liberation War

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court has directed the government to take steps to recognise those who had received training inside the country for participating in 1971 Liberation War, as freedom fighters.

The court ordered authorities to involve them in the definition of freedom fighter contained in the 2016 gazette notification.

The HC bench of Justice Zubayer Rahman Chowdhury and Justice Kazi Zinat Hoque came up with the directive on Monday following a writ petition filed.

The bench observed that those who participated in the Liberation War, have rights to be acknowledged as freedom fighters, and it is not just a courtesy.

The court directed the liberation war affairs ministry to include names of 26 petitioners as freedom fighters and to publish a gazette notification in 90 days.

Deputy Attorney General Sheikh Saifuzzaman told The Daily Star that in the definition of freedom fighters in the 2016 gazette notification, only the people, who had received training outside the country for the purpose of the Liberation War, have been included as freedom fighters.