

Double trouble for the poor

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food budget, yet I fail to ensure adequate food for my family. Even buying eggs and potatoes have now become difficult for many of us," she said.

Like Salma and Forkan, hundreds of daily wage earners, including day labourers, hawkers, rickshaw-pullers, roadside vendors, and small business owners, are facing double the crisis -- a dwindling income and rising food prices, shrinking their access to adequate and sufficient food.

According to World Hunger Index (GHI) 2020, published on October 12, Bangladesh has reduced hunger by a significant margin, but the severity of the crisis still remains serious. The country has moved 13 notches up to the 75th position among 107 countries in the index.

Arif Hossain, chief executive officer and executive director of Farming Future Bangladesh (FFB), thinks the country may not face the worst adversity of pandemic in the food and nutrition sector as it is self-sufficient in food production due to the government's various measures.

"But a coordinated and long term multi-sectoral strategic approach will be vital to ensure nutrition and food security for the future of Bangladesh," he said.

"We need science and advanced agricultural innovations for healthier and nutritious food. We also need nation-wide awareness through evidence-based information to ensure equal access to nutritious food for the poor and ultra-poor people," said Arif, also a visiting scientist at Cornell University.

Experts said the availability of food must be increased along with the food production to ensure sufficient access to food for marginalised people. Besides, a proper distribution channel along with a smooth supply chain has to be ensured, they added.

According to finance ministry sources, some 2.54 crore families in 496 upazilas and municipalities had received rice and cash handovers in April, May and June.

Food Secretary Mosammat Nazmanara Khanum said although the food assistance programmes and open market sales are going on, no fresh programmes would be launched any time soon targeting the new poor.

Under the food assistance programmes, a total of 155,813 tonnes of rice was sold at Tk 10 in September and around 1.5 lakh tonnes rice was allocated for the month of October, she said.

"We are thinking of the new poor but no programme has yet been initiated," she said.

Agriculture Minister Abdur Razzaque said, "Even after the success in food production, we need to be aware of food and nutrition security in post-Covid-19 Bangladesh."

"We must continue our initiative," he said at a press briefing at the secretariat office yesterday.

Against this backdrop, the country

commemorates World Food Day today with the theme "Grow, nourish, sustain together - Our actions are our future".

The day comes as Bangladesh and the rest of the world continue to fight the pandemic, which has caused unprecedented economic and social disruption, leaving thousands out of work or working for less pay, making new poor.

According to the government's estimate, the pandemic has doubled poverty in Bangladesh, raising the number of the country's ultra-poor from 10.5 percent of the population to 20.5 percent as of June.

The planning ministry in August estimated that poverty increased from 20.5 percent to 29.4 percent as a considerable number of people lost their income due to the Covid-19 fallout.

A Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) survey on the impacts of the pandemic on livelihood released last month said 46.22 percent households wiped out savings and 11.26 percent had either sold property or kept mortgaged them.

The survey styled "Perception Survey on the Impacts of Livelihood", said some 43.11 percent had to rely on handouts from relatives and 17.93 percent on private borrowing in order to survive.

It further said 68.39 percent of the families went through financial problems from April to July with rickshaw/van-pullers and day labourers taking the worst hit.

In this situation, the ongoing price hike of food and essential items is adding salt to the injuries to hundreds of urban poor households, leading to a decrease in food consumption.

This has become a major concern for food and nutrition safety, experts fear.

"A huge number of people are at risk of nutrition insecurity as they had to compromise with nutrition intake," said noted economist Hossain Zillur Rahman.

He said the price hikes of essential commodities have already hit the urban poor harder than the rural ones.

Zillur, also the chairperson of Brac, said, "We are fortunate that our boro production was good. The government has to keep an eye on aman production and food pricing. If any of these two falters, the situation will be grave."

He suggested that the government should continue the special food assistance package for the poor.

The nutrition status of the country had improved due to a diversity in diet as the per capita consumption of meat, eggs, fish, fruits, vegetables and milk had increased.

But the Covid-19 pandemic has put that status under threat.

The BBS survey said some 63.42 percent of households had to cut consumption of quality foods during the April to July period.

Similarly, a World Bank study published last month said that 69 percent of households reduced their overall food consumption.

Parishad. "The aims and objectives of these organisations are still unknown to us."

Asked about the split, Nur said Suhel was expelled from the organisation. "And this [the split] might have been done to put pressure on us under the patronage or persuasion of the government However, everyone has the democratic right to form a new organisation. People will know which is real and which is fake."

Leaders of the new committee claimed that the expulsion of Suhel was the decision of a "DU syndicate" of Chhatra Adhikar Parishad, led by Nur.

Chhatra Adhikar Parishad

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University student.

Ismail Samrat, member secretary of the committee, said, "In February, Bangladesh Sadharan Chhatra Adhikar Sangrakkhan Parishad, which led the quota reforms movement, was renamed Chhatra Adhikar Parishad. With the change in name, principles and norms of the organisation was also changed. The organisation is now being run arbitrarily."

He said Chhatra Adhikar Parishad had initiated the formation of three affiliated organisations -- Bangladesh Jubo Adhikar Parishad, Sharimik Adhikar Parishad and Prabasi Adhikar

Thais defy protest ban

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a country where the constitution says he must be revered.

"The people who came know that there is a ban against public gathering of five or more," said police spokesman Kissan Phathanacharoen. "We will take things step by step."

Three months of protests in the country of 70 million have been largely peaceful, as was a march by tens of thousands of people on Wednesday. But in one incident, police pushed jeering protesters away from a motorcade carrying Queen Suthida.

Overnight the government banned political gatherings of five or more people and the publication of news and online information that could threaten national security. Riot police swiftly cleared a protest camp outside Prayuth's office.

"The measures were necessary to ensure peace and order and to prevent further incidents after protesters affected the royal motorcade and violated the monarchy with provocative language," government spokesman Anucha Burapachaisri said in a statement.

He rejected accusations from some government critics that the motorcade incident was an excuse to crack down. Thai media reported that arrest warrants had been issued against two people for injuring the queen - which can carry a life sentence, whereas the maximum penalty for insulting the monarch under lese majeste laws is 15 years in jail.

Police said they had arrested protest leaders Parit "Penguin" Chivarak and rights lawyer Arnon Nampa overnight. Student leader Panusaya "Rung" Sithijirawattanakul was taken away in a wheelchair.

Arnon said on Facebook he was

4 of a family

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house, he added.

The initial investigation shows that it was a planned murder, Haran Pal said. Shahinur's younger brother Raihanul Islam said he was sleeping in the next room when he heard groans from his brother's room.

He opened the door, which was locked from outside, and found the four in a pool of blood.

One of the children was still alive when he opened the door but died moments later, Raihanul said.

He added that they were in dispute with some neighbours over land, but he was not sure about who committed the murder.



French health workers gather in front of a post office to send postcards to the French President with their grievances, in Nice yesterday as part of a nationwide day of actions to urge the government to increase staff as hospitals fill once again with Covid-19 patients.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Decision soon on whether to hold

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how they would arrange the admission tests.

UGC member Muhammed Alamgir said it was decided that VCs will discuss the first-year admission test process at the Bishwabidyalaya Parishad meeting.

"They will discuss a range of issues, including the use of HSC exam GPAs in the university admission tests... and after that we will analyse the matter," Alamgir said.

Debate about the weightage of HSC GPAs in the university admission process for the upcoming academic session emerged after the government decided to award grades to candidates of HSC and equivalent exams without holding the public exams amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Instead of the exams, candidates' evaluation would be based on their results in the Junior School Certificate

and equivalent tests.

HSC and equivalent exams were cancelled out of fear that they would increase risk of coronavirus transmission. More than 13.65 lakh students were expected to sit for the exams.

The government postponed the exams following the closure of all educational institutions on March 17. They are to stay closed until at least October 30.

Usually, universities took the GPA of SSC and HSC exams into account, alongside admission tests, while holding the entry exams at public universities.

Alamgir said that at yesterday's meeting they also urged all public universities to strengthen their online education process and take steps so that students can continue their education in that manner.

He said UGC informed the VCs that they are keeping contact with the government, seeking grants or soft loans for students who would need to buy digital devices to attend online classes.

UGC in a statement after the meeting said that Bangladesh Bishwabidyalaya Parishad, from its meeting on October 17, will make a decision in principle regarding the admission tests.

"But UGC wants that no question arises regarding the tests," the statement said.

UGC Chairman Prof Kazi Shahidullah at the meeting said that the nation wants a specific guideline from the VCs regarding the admission tests.

UGC said that it would not be wise to reopen the universities amid the pandemic as many VCs opined that it would be a suicidal decision.

Trump can't count on last-minute deciders

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voters this year, and they are just as likely to pick Biden as they are Trump.

The polling also shows Biden holding a 10-percentage-point lead nationally, with a tighter margin in the battleground states that will help to decide the election.

"The candidate who is behind - Trump - needs to win undecideds at a disproportionate rate to catch up. So, if that isn't happening, he's not really cutting into Biden's lead," said Kyle Kondik, an election analyst at the Center for Politics at the University of Virginia.

Compounding Trump's challenge has been a record rush of early voting Record early US turnout with three weeks to go: Georgians, Texans line up to vote that far outpaces the rate in 2016 - more people want to avoid Election Day crowds because of the novel coronavirus pandemic.

Almost 15 million Americans have already voted, according to the US Elections Project at the University of Florida. That compares with about 1.4

million early votes by October 16 in the 2016 election.

But the opinion polls suggest more voters have settled on their choice, reducing the opportunity for large, late swings.

The Reuters/Ipsos national poll found that only about 8% of likely voters appear to be undecided, saying either that they do not know whom to support or that they are thinking about backing a third-party candidate.

Four years ago at this stage of the campaign, more than twice as many people were similarly wavering between Trump and his Democratic opponent Hillary Clinton, injecting a volatile element late into a race that Clinton had been expected to win.

Among those voters who made up their minds in the final week of the 2016 campaign, 55% picked Trump while 36% picked Clinton, according to a Reuters/Ipsos poll of voters on Election Day.

They were critical for Trump's success: a majority of late deciders in the battleground states of Florida,

Michigan and Pennsylvania backed Trump over Clinton that year, tipping those tight races in his favor on election night. Trump won Michigan and Pennsylvania by less than 1 percentage point and he won Florida by less than 2 points.

One of the big questions hanging over the 2020 election has been whether there will be a repeat of 2016's 11th hour surge of support for Trump. The new Reuters/Ipsos poll indicates that is unlikely to happen - when forced to choose, undecided voters broke evenly for Trump and Biden, with each getting 4% support.

The poll also found that 9 out of 10 likely Biden voters and 9 out of 10 likely Trump voters say they have locked in their decision and will not change their mind.

Nevertheless, the Trump campaign said it remains confident that undecided voters will ultimately break its way.

"Our campaign is confident in the big tent, diverse coalition of support we've built over the last six years," said Ken Farnaso, a Trump spokesman.

Govt to start rapid testing in 36 districts

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Tk 700-800 if procured in bulks, according to a health ministry document obtained by this newspaper.

Earlier last week, officials at the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) said they were validating antigen-based rapid testing kits of several companies, including those mentioned above.

Apart from the two companies, the government will also procure more kits through the World Bank and the Unicef, said DGHS officials.

On September 17, the government permitted antigen-based rapid testing at the public healthcare centres after months of bureaucratic tangles.

The decision is yet to come into force.

Initially, the government has

planned to introduce antigen testing facilities at 10 specialised and 39 district hospitals, including those designated to treat Covid-19 cases, across the country. These healthcare installations do not have coronavirus testing facilities.

Private hospitals have not been allowed to use antigen-based rapid testing yet.

Meanwhile, the World Health Organization (WHO) has delayed the supply of 10 lakh antigen kits to Bangladesh.

On September 28, the WHO announced that 120 million antigen rapid diagnostic kits for Covid-19 would be made available to low- and middle-income countries under an agreement between manufacturers

Abbott and SD Biosensor and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

"They said they will give us kits within a week. Now they are saying they will need more time. They will give 10 lakh kits. If we get those, we will not need to go for procurement," Prof Khurshid said.

The antigen-based rapid testing is a molecular test, an alternative to the sophisticated RT-PCR test, which detects the presence of the novel coronavirus.

The antigen test involves taking a saliva sample and it can usually determine whether a person is infected within 15-30 minutes.

An RT-PCR test now costs the government Tk 3,500 to Tk 4,000, said DGHS officials.

KL agrees

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sending workers, arranging next joint working group meeting, and stranded Bangladeshi workers' return to Malaysia amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Both ministers agreed that Bangladesh will send a list of all licensed recruiting agents and Malaysia will select a required number of agents from the list to ensure safe labour migration, said the release.

The whole recruitment process, including workers' selection from database and due payment through banking channels, will be monitored using an integrated online system, it said.

Both ministers further agreed to enhance monitoring on the recruitment process.

The ministers agreed to hold the next joint working group meeting soon, while Malaysia in principle agreed to take effective steps to ensure return of stranded Bangladeshi workers to Malaysia.

Bangladesh will be informed later about this, the release said.

During the virtual meeting, Imran Ahmad sought Saravanan's intervention in regularisation of Bangladeshi migrant workers who still remained undocumented in Malaysia.

High-placed officials from both countries also attended the meeting, the release said.

They won't

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being. The decision came from the ministry's regular inter-ministerial meeting.

"We have also invited applications for registration of YouTube channels or IP TVs. They are under investigation. We will start registering them after completion of the preliminary investigation," he said.

The minister said YouTube channels and IP TVs won't be able to provide regular news. "That's why when a television channel gets permission, they are not allowed to broadcast news at the beginning. They need to fulfill some parametres and need to re-apply for the permission. They are then allowed to present news. For now, IP TVs won't be able to provide news."

Asked about the stage of registration of online portals, he said the registration process was underway.

"Many online news portals have already been registered. The rest will be given. The registration process will take several months because we are able to register only after the investigation agency reports. But I hope we will be able to complete most of the registrations this year," Hasan added.

Problems

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A cabinet sub-committee on food and other essential commodities also holds a meeting today. They discuss how to improve the supply position of rice, wheat and other essential commodities.

FORD FOUNDATION EXECUTIVE CALLS ON PM

Ford Foundation Executive President David E Bell, now on a five-day tour in Bangladesh, calls on the Bangabandhu. He informs the prime minister about the ongoing schemes of Ford Foundation. He says the Ford Foundation is exploring the future possibilities of helping the development of Bangladesh in its economy, education and health sectors.

SOURCES: October 17, 1972 issues of Bangladesh Observer, Dainik Bangla and Dainik Ittefaq.

Shakespeare First

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English language.

It was published after the death of the Bard, who lived from 1564 until 1616, and was compiled by two of his friends, John Heminge and Henry Condell.

It contains major works which would probably have been lost were it not the collection, including "Macbeth" and "Twelfth Night."

Several books have brought in higher prices, such as the Codex Leicester of Leonardo De Vinci, which Bill Gates bought for \$30.8 million in 1994.

But none is a literary work of fiction.

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Tender Notice (OTM)

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of given tenders:

Sl. No.	Description of item	Tender ID No.	Tender document last selling date and time	Tender closing date and time
1	Construction of Boundary wall Road Drain and site Development works of Mirsharai Farmers Training Center under the Project titled Farmers Training at the Upazila Level for Transfer of Technology	504440	28/10/2020 17:00	29/10/2020 11:05
2	Construction of 6-Storeyed Simulator Building under the Project titled Procurement of Simulator for National Maritime Institute Chattogram.	505712	15/11/2020 11:00	15/11/2020 11:15

This is online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

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