



The Daily Star

SECOND EDITION



REGD. NO. DA 781 | Vol. XXX No. 332 | Poush 9, 1427 BS | **Your Right to Know** | JAMADIUL AWAL 8, 1442 HJRI | 16 PAGES PLUS SHOUT PRICE : Tk12.00



The unlucky 7

Uncertainty grips students of DU-affiliated seven colleges as their education thrown into disarray once again following pandemic

ASIFUR RAHMAN

Hazrat Ali is more worried than ever. A master's student of chemistry at Dhaka College who was planning to finish post-graduation a while ago, he is now waiting impatiently for his remaining exams to be over so that he can shoulder some of the family responsibilities that his father bears alone.

"At this age, does it feel good to take money from my father who earns meagre pay by weaving handlooms back home? I used to give tuitions, but that also got suspended due to the pandemic. I need a job immediately to support my family," said a frustrated Hazrat, who hails from Sirajganj.

After a delay of two and a half years, his final examinations began in March. But he could appear in only two out of the four exams, before the country was hit by the coronavirus outbreak, suspending exams indefinitely.

"We don't know when our master's exams will resume. Even after they start, it will take at least four to five months more for the results to come out. I will be 27 in January and am really worried about how many BCS exams I can avail," he said.

Hazrat added he cannot even apply for chemist jobs in many private companies as these require a master's degree.

"We contacted our teachers time and again -- they only said the Dhaka University authorities will take all the decisions as our college is being supervised by DU now. We are the unlucky ones, no one cares for us," Hazrat said, all in one breath.

Students of the seven colleges recently affiliated with DU are worried about their future as the pandemic threw their already delayed education into further disarray.

These seven colleges are: Dhaka College, Eden Mohila College, Government Shaheed Suhrawardy College, Kabi Nazrul Government College, Begum Badrunnesa Government Mohila College, Mirpur Government Bangla College, and Government Titumir College.

PROTEST ANNOUNCED, THEN POSTPONED

The students of these colleges had announced a plan to hold a protest in the capital's Nilkhet area yesterday but it was postponed. A number of policemen were seen to be present in the Nilkhet area since morning.

Shahriar Mahmud, one of the protesters, told The Daily Star that they didn't receive the necessary police permission to hold the protest. The college principals also called them the night before requesting them not to hold the protest and asked for a week's time to resolve their issues, he added.

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Sixty-five-year-old Abdul Kuddus, right, and his son-in-law had been suffering from fever for nearly a week. They went to Mugda General Hospital from their home in Rampura yesterday morning to give samples for Covid-19 tests. They, however, had to wait in lines for nearly three hours as the number of people seeking to get tested there has increased in the last couple of days. In this photo taken around 10:00am, both are seen tired inside the hospital compound.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

ILL-GOTTEN WEALTH Freeze 613 bank accounts of MP Papul, his family

ACC asks central bank, moves to confiscate their 30.27 acres of land, flats

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission yesterday requested the Bangladesh Bank to instruct eight commercial banks to freeze 613 bank accounts of independent lawmaker Mohammad Shahid Islam Papul, his wife, daughter, and sister-in-law.

The graft watchdog has also decided to seize 30.27 acres of land in different parts of the country and flats in the capital's Gulshan owned by them, sources said.

Papul, now behind bars in Kuwait, was arrested in the Gulf country in early June. He faces trial on charges of human trafficking and money laundering.

He was accused of taking up to 3,000 Kuwaiti dinars (around Tk 8 lakh) from each migrant workers, mostly Bangladeshis, for sending them to Kuwait.

Meanwhile, the Criminal Investigation

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UK RETURNNEES 7-day quarantine mandatory

Says health minister; experts urge strict measures to fight new coronavirus strain

MOUJID AHMED SUJAN and RASHIDUL HASAN

Air travellers from the UK without Covid-19 negative certificates would be quarantined for seven days.

Health Minister Zahid Maleque said this yesterday after a new variant of the coronavirus emerged in the kingdom and more countries shut their borders with the UK in an effort to keep the new strain out.

He said discussion on whether to suspend flights to and from the UK was going on. "The decision will be announced soon."

Experts have warned that the new variant, which appears to be more transmissible, could turn the situation in Bangladesh severe if the planned measures were not imposed strictly.

Officials concerned said those without a Covid-19 negative certificate from the UK will be sent to Ashkona or Diabari quarantine camps in Dhaka where they would be tested on the sixth day. They will be released if they test negative.

Passengers landing in Chattogram and Sylhet would go through the same process.

The minister yesterday inaugurated a mobile laboratory for Covid-19 testing at the Ashkona Hajj Camp in Dhaka. There will be Covid-19 testing, RT-PCR and rapid antigen-based, facilities in the lab for the incoming passengers.

Another mobile lab will be taken there soon, the minister said.

At another event in the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport, State Minister for Civil Aviation M Mahub Ali said the government was observing the situation closely.

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Formulate another stimulus package

PM directs ministries concerned, asks them to keep in mind 2nd Covid wave



UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked the finance ministry and other related ministries and divisions to formulate another financial stimulus package plan keeping a possible second wave of Covid-19 in consideration.

The premier gave the order at a meeting at the Gono Bhaban. The meeting was held to finalise the 8th Fifth Year Plan (2021-2025).

PM's Deputy Press Secretary Hasan Jahid Tusher briefed reporters after the meeting.

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CURBING ROAD CRASHES Govt steps confined to talks, committees

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Government steps for curbing road crashes and bringing discipline in the road transport sector continue to remain confined to holding meetings and forming committees and sub-committees.

The committees make similar recommendations time and again, but those are hardly implemented.

In the meantime, road crashes continue to take a heavy toll on lives and properties.

Experts made the observation while talking to The Daily Star yesterday after a taskforce, formed for the government cause, held a closed-door meeting to discuss recommendations by four sub-committees.

After the meeting, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan told reporters, "The four sub-committees made recommendations on implementing 111 recommendations [given by a committee] on curbing road crashes and bringing discipline in the transport sector. We have discussed those. We will hold more discussions in the next meeting."

"We are implementing those recommendations slowly," he said, referring to the Covid-19 pandemic as a reason.

The committee, led by transport leader and former shipping minister Shajahan Khan, had submitted its report to the prime minister in April last year along with the 111-point recommendation.

Later in October last year, the government issued a gazette, forming the 33-member taskforce, led by the home minister, to implement the recommendations.

Among others, secretaries of 11 ministries and divisions were made ex-officio members of the taskforce.

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ABRAR DEATH CASE SC upholds HC order staying trial of Matur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court yesterday upheld a High Court order that stayed the trial proceedings of a case filed against Prothom Alo Editor and Publisher Matur Rahman over the death of Dhaka Residential Model College student Naimul Abrar Rahat.

Chamber Judge of the Appellate Division Justice Hasan Foez Siddique passed "no order" on a petition filed by the state seeking stay on the HC order.

The HC stay order on the trial proceedings of the case will now remain in force, Matur's lawyer Mustafizur Rahman Khan told The Daily Star.

Assistant Attorney General Md Saiful Islam appeared for the state at the hearing.

On December 13, the HC stayed for six months the trial proceedings of the case filed against the Prothom Alo editor.

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A section of lawyers of Dhaka Bar Association demonstrates outside the Dhaka Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Court building yesterday, demanding immediate withdrawal of an additional chief metropolitan magistrate for keeping a lawyer on the dock for two hours. The lawyers staged the demo for around two-and-a-half hours from 9:30am, disrupting judicial activities.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Pornography spreads amid futile govt ban

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

The government initiative to block pornography websites has proved a futile exercise due to lack of technological knowhow and concerted efforts from the state agencies.

On January 1, 2017, the government launched an anti-porn campaign to create safe and secure internet space for all. In the process, it has blocked 22,000 porn sites in the last three years.

But statistics show only blocking websites has had little effect on Bangladeshi internet users as they are increasingly visiting pornographic websites. Besides, such videos can be easily downloaded and circulated.

The country has a very rigid law titled Pornography Control Act-2012, which says preservation, distribution, selling, displaying, advertising of pornographic contents is a punishable offence.

The offender can be sanctioned with two years of rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Tk 100,000.

Production of pornography, forcing people to act in pornography, sexual harassment through pornography, displaying and distributing pornography through internet and electronic devices come with more severe punishments.

However, the government agencies are at a loss how to enforce the law.

Mustafa Jabbar, minister of post, telecommunication and ICT declared war against pornography soon after he was appointed to this position in January 2018.

"We have been facing a lot of challenges to tackle pornography. We have blocked 22,000 major porn sites but every day new sites are being launched," he told this correspondent in October this year.

"Pornographic and semi-pornographic contents are being spread also on social media. Again, people are accessing the blocked sites using VPN. We don't have sufficient manpower

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