

Justice in

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death references to the HC from the lower court within seven days after the latter delivers the verdict as per the relevant rules of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

Former DAG Moniruzzaman Rubel said another case filed under the Explosive Substances Act in connection with the 2001 Ramna Batamul bomb blast is still pending with a Dhaka court.

The HC bench led by Justice M Enayetur Rahim had started hearing the death references and appeals of the Ramna case on January 8, 2017, and after hearing for several days, adjourned the hearing on February 22 of the same year.

This bench dropped the matter from its cause-list on August 8, 2017, as the state side did not officially inform it about the execution of Mufti Hannan.

Later, the CJ assigned the HC bench led by Justice Md Ruhul Quddus to finish the hearing of the death references and appeals. But, this bench could not hear the case as it's hearing jurisdiction was reconstituted.

A Dhaka court on June 23, 2014 handed down death penalty to eight militants of Harkat-ul-Jihad (Huji), including its chief Mufti Abdul Hannan, for killing 10 people in the attack on a Chhayanaut event during the Pahela Baishakh celebrations at Ramna Batamul on April 14 in 2001.

Six other militants of the banned Islamist outfit were sentenced to life in prison for involvement in the blasts.



An on-duty policeman buys disposable personal protective equipment from a street hawker. Many small traders have adapted to the changing times to stock up and sell the in-demand product. The photo was taken on Saturday from Karwan Bazar.

PHOTO:
AMARN HOSSAIN

Kitchen market

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"We tried out different ways (to ensure social distancing).. but failed," the official said.

He told this newspaper of two different ways police tried to ensure this. "First we marked circles to help customers maintain distance, but most would not pay heed," the official recounted.

Additionally, they even made the road one-way to relieve some of the pressure, but that also did not work out, he said.

This is why police along with the armed forces jointly shifted the whole market to the adjacent playground, as it has a huge amount of space available.

"If we did not do this, there was a high chance of coronavirus infection

in the area, even to the police personnel who were deployed there," OC Shaju said.

"This is only a temporary solution. The market will return to its original place once the crisis is over," he assured.

Tanvir Ahmed, a resident of Gendaria's Distilary Road, applauded the initiative for facilitating social distancing.

"I have always tried to maintain at least three feet of distance whenever I visited the market since the coronavirus outbreak began. But others weren't as conscious, and sometimes my body would inevitably come in contact with theirs," he said.

Shafiul Alam, another resident of the area, said army personnel, police officials and volunteers would

frequently visit the market and request everyone to stay apart, but to little consequence.

The new setup of the market keeps the shops separated in four rows and makes it easier for customers to maintain distance between one shop and another, he said.

Shafiul reminded everyone that, "It is not only the law enforcement agencies' duty to enforce social distancing. It's a matter of co-operation, and people should voluntarily keep themselves in check and maintain distance."

It is worth noting that the setup of the kitchen market will not disrupt operations of the shops built around the playground by Dhaka City Corporation, officials told The Daily Star.

Mosquito menace

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pandemic, the number of mosquitoes is likely to increase.

"It is the season of dengue. If dengue outbreak starts amid this coronavirus situation, we will have to face very difficult circumstances," said Dr Manzoorul Kibria, professor of zoology department of Chittagong University. He urged CCC to strengthen their anti-mosquito drives by manifolds this year.

Contacted, Mohammad Shumsuddauha, chief executive officer of CCC, said anti-mosquito medicine is being sprayed in every ward of CCC every day.

"Two workers in each ward have been

engaged to spray larviside daily. However, currently we are not spraying the smoke, which may give people the impression that we are not conducting the drives. A total of 82 teams are working across the city," he said.

Asked why residents are still suffering, he said the city dwellers also have a responsibility to keep their surroundings clean and destroy mosquito breeding grounds.

"We will strengthen our drive but the residents will also have to step up in this regard. They must keep their yards and surroundings clean," the CEO said.

No cheer

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growers are counting huge losses as this year's Pahela Baishakh celebrations have been cancelled.

Kamrul Islam, a flower grower at Mahasthangarh in Shibganj upazila, said, "Every year before Pahela Baishakh, traders from various districts use to contact me for flowers. This time no one did. The roses in my 30-decimal land bloomed fully a few days ago, and now it's rotting."

"I never thought my flowers would remain unsold. I have spent around Tk 40,000, and was hoping to make a good

profit. But I won't even get my investment back."

Abdul Mannan, owner of the Mahasthangarh Shabuj Nursery, echoed him.

Abul Kasem Azad, deputy director of Bogura Department of Agricultural Extension, said, "There are at least 300 commercial flower farmers who produce flowers worth Tk 1.5 crore on the occasion of Pahela Baishakh. Due to the coronavirus situation, they are losing all the money they had invested. We are trying to come up with something for them."

A bleak Baishakh

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Banani, Baridhara and Uttara, where about 40 staffers work. But since March 20, when the situation gradually began deteriorating, these outlets were shut. They are now struggling to pay their employees' salaries and rent.

On March 31, the prime minister directed all to celebrate this year's Pahela Baishakh digitally, without creating any mass gatherings, in line with the government's "stay-at-home" guideline.

To bring back a little bit of Baishakhi celebration, the association is planning to introduce some special food items, but they will only be available for take-away.

"We don't need any donation, but we need low-interest loans. If the government takes steps to provide support and facilitate loans through the association, then we and our staff will be able to get through this crisis," he added.

On April 5, the prime minister unveiled a stimulus package of Tk 30,000 crore, which will be provided to affected industries and service sector organisations as working capital through banks as low-interest loans.

Legal notice

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materials allocated by the government for the poor and destitute people.

Such irregularities and misappropriation are punishable offence under the law and the offenders can be punished through the mobile court as per the relevant rules of the Mobile Court Act, 2009, he said.

Moniruzzaman Lincon told The Daily Star he will move a writ petition before the High Court if the respondents don't take steps in seven days in line with the requirements mentioned in the legal notice.

Where are the welfare

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Bangladesh Road Transport Workers' Federation, an umbrella organisation of 235 transport worker unions, sought rationing programmes for food and other essentials for workers.

But many transport workers alleged that they are not getting any financial assistance from their unions or the federation, despite the fact that these platforms regularly collect money from the workers for their respective welfare funds.

"There are many transport organisations to whom we pay every day from our hard-earned money. Where are these organisations now?" asked Mohammad Kamal, supervisor of A Alom Paribahan, which operates on the Dhaka-Rangpur route.

"We used to see many transport leaders speak out on various occasions. Where are they now? We are not finding any of them by our side when we are facing the toughest time of our lives."

Kamal said the bus company was providing him with Tk 150 every day, which is not enough to buy food for three meals a day. All hotels and restaurants in the area are closed, he added.

Md Billal, another transport worker, said, "Since the shutdown started on March 26, we are now taking meals twice a day instead of thrice. But not a single transport leader has asked after us."

A top leader of the federation said each basic union provides Tk 1,000 per month to the federation. Besides, worker unions at four terminals in Dhaka collect Tk 10 from each vehicle every day on behalf of the federation.

Each union collects money -- ranging from Tk 30 to Tk 120 every day from each vehicle -- to raise funds for workers'

welfare. But the amount is usually used to provide financial help to the families of deceased members and maintain offices, he added.

"So, in this situation, we have little money to give financial support to our members. Many leaders are involved in local government bodies and we are requesting them and the administration to include our members in their relief list," he said, requesting anonymity.

On Saturday, the federation directed all union leaders to prepare a list of workers and submit it to the deputy commissioner's office of their respective districts for relief. It also asked all the unions to pay relief to their members from the "workers' welfare fund".

Osman Ali, general secretary of the federation, said these are tough times for around 50 lakh transport workers in the country.

"We have called for rationing programmes for food and other essentials for the workers. But we have not yet gotten a response," he told The Daily Star on Saturday.

Osman said each union has welfare funds ranging between Tk 10 lakh and Tk 50 lakh and they are providing food assistance to their members, but this is not adequate.

Asked why the federation itself is not proving any financial support to the workers from its own welfare fund, he said, "Many unions do not provide their contribution [to the federation] regularly and the amount of our funds is minimal."

It is not possible to give financial assistance to such a large number of workers from the fund, said Osman, declining however to specify the amount of the federation's welfare fund.

Tangail

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week when several hundred buses were found parked in the terminal area. The workers said they were hoping that the services would resume soon.

Bus driver Minhaz Uddin, from Shilpur of Sadar upazila, said although many transport workers like him were struggling to survive, they considered it disgraceful to accept charity.

"While many have borrowed money from others, we are passing days in uncertainty as we don't know when the bus services will resume and bring back normalcy in our lives," he said.

Driver's assistant Suhel Miah, from Ghatail upazila, said they usually live from hand to mouth. But the suspension on vehicular movement has made their lives miserable. "I've got mouths to feed, but I am yet to get any sort of assistance from anyone."

Asked what the workers' union or the owners' association were doing in the situation, Babu Chittaranjan Das, general secretary of Tangail district bus-minibus workers' union, said the union leaders held a meeting with the owners' association on April 2 to discuss the issue.

But the meeting ended without any consensus, he added.

Contacted, Tangail Deputy Commissioner Md Shahidul Islam said the government would do everything necessary to assist the workers under the circumstances and with that objective, he already asked several leaders of the transport workers' union to hand over him a list of workers who are the worst affected for being out of work.

Dilip Kumar Das, office secretary of the union, said a list of 2,000 transport workers had been sent to the DC.

Meanwhile, the district transport workers' union decided to disburse money from their welfare fund to buy relief materials and distribute those to 6,000 workers in the district, said Golam Mawla, executive president of the union.

He said they gave 1,500 packets of relief materials -- each containing 10kg rice, 2kg potato, 1kg lentil, and 1 litre edible oil -- to the workers at the Tangail New Bus Terminal.

Cautious hope for a few states

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in three weeks.

But Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez warned his country was "far from victory", with the lockdown restrictions for the rest of the nation's 47 million people remaining in place.

"We are all keen to go back out on the streets... but our desire is even greater to win the war and prevent a relapse," he said.

Police in Madrid handed out face masks to commuters at a train station where life appeared to be creeping back to normal, as workers in protective gear wiped down turnstiles.

MACRON SPEECH

In the US -- now the world's worst-hit nation with a fifth of all deaths and more than half a million confirmed cases -- the government's top infectious disease expert added to hopes the virus may have peaked.

Anthony Fauci said parts of the country could begin easing restrictions in May, but warned that the world's biggest economy would not turn back on like a "light switch". President Donald Trump had previously wanted the US to be back to normal by Easter, but most of the country remained at a standstill.

Many of the world's more than two billion Christians celebrated Easter Sunday from the confines of their homes, while Pope Francis delivered a livestream message about an "Easter of solitude" from a hauntingly empty Vatican.

Governments in many countries continued to warn citizens to stay

indoors on public holidays as they grapple with a virus that has even infected national leaders.

In Britain, Prime Minister Boris Johnson was resting at his official country residence Chequers a day after being discharged following "a week in which the NHS has saved my life, no question", referring to the country's state-run National Health Service.

Britain's death toll passed 10,000 and it is now seeing daily fatalities to match -- and on one occasion exceed -- those previously seen in Italy and Spain.

Johnson, like Trump, had initially resisted stringent measures such as shutting down public places.

In France, Macron was set address the nation just after 8:00 pm, and sources said he would announce the lockdown in place since March 17 must be extended beyond its current April 15 expiration date until well into May.

Macron will be looking to strike a careful balance between warning France -- where the death toll stands at 14,393 -- that an early relaxation of the lockdown could be disastrous, while reassuring people that the government has a plan to get the country back to normal.

CHINA INFECTIONS RISE

In China, where authorities appeared to have the virus under control last week, officials reported 108 new symptomatic cases yesterday, the highest number of confirmed

infections in a single day in over a month.

Imported cases accounted for most of the total, the National Health Commission said, underscoring why the government has been so focused on preventing new outbreaks stemming from international arrivals.

China only recently lifted the lockdown on the city of Wuhan where the virus first emerged in December.

The quarantine measures were later emulated by Italy in early March, followed by Spain, France and other nations around the world.

Governments are under pressure to keep populations safe while preventing economic collapse, amid fears of a downturn not seen since the Great Depression.

But the World Health Organization has warned countries against lifting lockdown restrictions too early.

Meanwhile, there were also worrying signs the virus could be taking hold in new, and vulnerable, parts of the globe.

Conflict-wracked Yemen reported its first case last week, raising fears of a devastating outbreak.

Syria also faces a heavy hit from the disease after years of war that have left millions in dire conditions, with experts accusing Damascus of minimising its death toll for political motives.

"There is a disaster in the making," said Emile Hokayem, Middle East analyst at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London (IISS).

7 sent to jail

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and shared the clip with his friends.

Tanveer of Ullapara municipality area asked the girl to come to his house on September 19 last year and raped her and also videoed the incident secretly, said Mosharrar, also investigating officer of the case, quoting the case statement.

The victim's father filed two cases against Tanveer and six others with Ullapara Police Station on Saturday night, said Dipak Kumar, officer-in-charge of the station.

The two cases are: one for rape and video taping the incident and another for releasing the video on social media.

Tanveer stands accused in the two charges, while his six friends, including two girls, are accused in spreading the video clip, the OC said.

Besides Tanveer, the six other accused are: Bandhan, Rifat Hossain, Purnota and Meem, Tushar Hossain, and Sumon Hossain. They are aged between 18 and 19 and are residents of villages in Ullapara.

Medical tests of the victim were conducted at Sirajganj Sadar Hospital on Sunday.

Judicial magistrate's court in Sirajganj recorded her statements under section 22, the OC said, adding that police were investigating the incident.

Protest of the news- broadcasted on News Media

On 08 April 2020, a news was broadcasted on private channel. Afterwards it was also broadcasted on several news media- about two strategic business units of Babylon Group namely, 'Aboni Fashions Limited' and 'Babylon Casualwear Limited'; that news was completely false. Furthermore, a mixed reaction was also observed on several social media, which created a serious damage to the 34 years of goodwill of those companies.

The news report said that on 08 April 2020 the above mentioned companies remained open by disobeying government orders and about a few hundred workers were trimmed on that day. The report also said that the authorities of those companies informed the media reporters- since the orders were being cancelled from buyers' end, so they had to trim those workers.

Yet, the reality was those two companies were laid off from 06 April 2020 to 14 April 2020. The companies paid their permanent workers' salaries of March 2020 through their mobile banking on 07 April 2020. However, only the probationary workers (not more than three months) of those companies (whose mobile bank account was not opened then), were called on 08 April 2020 to collect their salaries in cash. Even though while distributing their salaries- social distancing and hygiene was maintained and according to the labor law, those workers' salaries were paid. It is to be mentioned, on that day there was no incident of forcefully collecting those workers' signature on their resignation letters. All the evidence relating to this, are preserved on company database, which can be shown if required. The information was presented in that report in such a way, the authority is doubtful whether it was to damage the long earned reputation of those companies. However, during this 34 years of journey there is not a single record of such incidents against those companies. Above all, currently the whole RMG industry is struggling for the recent COVID-19 epidemic, everybody knows about it. In these circumstances, broadcasting such fake news against those companies are not only a threat for those companies but also a threat for the whole RMG industry. Without using an evident source of the appropriate authorities of those companies, the media reporters are cordially requested to stop broadcasting of such delusional news.

Best Regards,

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