

Ferdousi Lina passes away



CITY DESK

Actor Ferdousi Ahmed Lina took her last breath on April 18 at the age of 63. She had been suffering from kidney complications for a while and was undergoing dialysis.

Lina first appeared on television in an advert in 1975. A couple of years later, she began her journey as an actor with tele-fiction Kalo Kokil, which aired on Bangladesh Television (BTV). Soon, she made her way to the film industry by playing the role of Obhoya in Bulbul Ahmed's Rajlakshmi Srikanta (1987). Her last film was Devdas (2013), directed by Chashi Nazrul Islam.

She acted in many well-received television drama series, including Gulshan Avenue, Nandini, Ghotok Pakhi Bhai and Neel Jochnoi Kalo Shaap. Alongside acting, she also served as an official at Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy until 2017.



Officials and employees of KSRM donated a portion of their salary to Chattogram's Deputy Commissioner's fund to assist those who are suffering amid the coronavirus outbreak. The cheque, amounting to Tk 30 lakh, was handed over to DC Md Elias Hossain yesterday by KSRM's General Manager of HR and administration, Syed Nazrul Islam.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Lack of ICU

FROM PAGE 3

ICU facilities to the Directorate General of Health Services but received no further instruction.

They also said they have no option but to refer positive patients in critical condition to Sylhet or Dhaka.

Dr Anisur Rahman, assistant director (disease control) of Sylhet divisional health office, said, "We are considering

using private hospitals' ICU facility if needed, but this privilege is not available for the other districts where no such facility is available."

Besides the lack of ICU beds, the region is also suffering from a lack of expertise. "We are in acute shortage of anesthesiologists in Sylhet. Without trained experts, there will be no meaning of installing ICU," he said.

Take us on board

FROM PAGE 12

ensuring that incentives reach farmers and that they can harvest Boro paddy before going for Aush is very important."

Jasim Uddin also said the micro-finance NGOs are now passing tough days, with all their money in the hands of their members who are now unable to pay the installments during the shutdown.

He sought government financing for the restart of microfinance operations to help boost rural economic activities.

Nurul Alam Masud, chief executive of Participatory Research & Action Network, said the government is considering Covid-19 only a health issue, and until now only the administration and some partisan people are being involved in tackling it.

"The government should now activate the Disaster Management Act, involve the NGOs at national and grassroots levels for strong coordination and transparency," he added.

Nayeem Gawher Wahra, member secretary of Disaster Forum, said shutdown is likely to remain in place for some more days, but the economic activities and food production need to continue under certain mechanism.

Citing the example of Kerala, he said the government could divide the geographical areas in some categories and allow certain level of economic activities in the green zone.

He said health awareness exists mostly among the urban and middle class people,

not the grassroots. He suggested using community radio as an effective tool to create mass awareness on social distancing and hygiene.

Abul Haseeb Khan of NIRAPAD said the government assistance has yet to reach many remote areas and availability of food is becoming an issue of concern. With no income, moderate poor are getting into the bracket of ultra poor.

Independent researcher Abdul Latif Khan said UN agencies and INGOs should limit their role to monitoring and providing technical assistance to the local NGOs. And they should provide direct funding to the national and local NGOs as localisation should be promoted to increase cost efficiency amid this global crisis when the developed countries too are affected.

He suggested the government involve NGOs and civil society organisations in implementing the activities at the grassroots level under the government stimulus package declared to tackle Covid-19 impacts.

"To face the post-corona crisis, the rural economy must continue with their production maintaining the social distancing and local NGOs and micro finance institutions should be allowed for operation as they are the key players in this regard," he said.

Latif suggested increased focus on stronger health system in the rural areas.

Rezaul Karim Chowdhury of COAST Trust moderated the press conference.

Pray at home

FROM PAGE 12

that Muslim prayers during Ramadan and for the subsequent Eid al-Fitr feast should be performed at home if the coronavirus outbreak continues.

Saudi Arabia has reported 8,274 cases of Covid-19, the respiratory disease caused by the new coronavirus, and 92 deaths so far, the highest among the six Gulf Arab states where the total has reached 24,374 with 156 deaths.

The Saudi government in mid-March stopped people performing their five daily prayers and the weekly Friday prayer inside mosques as part of efforts to limit the spread of the coronavirus.

Last week, the Prophet's Mosque in the holy city of Medina said it was banning events that dispense evening meals in the mosque to those in need during Ramadan to break their daily fast.

Drug dealer

FROM PAGE 12

Teknaf.

In response, people boarding the boat opened fire on the law enforcers, forcing them to retaliate that triggered a gunfight, he said.

Later, they found one bullet-injured person inside the boat while others managed to flee, the CO said, adding that they took him to Teknaf Upazila Health Complex where doctors declared him dead.

BGB recovered two lakh yaba pills worth around Tk 6 crore and a firearm from the boat, said Faysal.

The body was sent to Cox's Bazar General Hospital for autopsy, he said, adding that BGB filed a case in this regard, he added.

Bangladeshi

FROM PAGE 12

territory and asked them to leave the place. As they protested saying that they were on their land, the BSF man shot the 16-year-old in his abdomen, Paresh added.

As the villagers rushed to the spot hearing the firing, the BSF man escaped and returned to Indian territory, he further added.

The boy passed away at Rangpur Medical College Hospital around 8:30pm, confirmed Forhad Hossain, chairman of Chaklahat Union Parishad.

Contacted, Lt Col Mamunul Haque, commanding officer of 56th BGB battalion in Nilphamari, said they started investigation and would send a protest note to BSF authorities asking them to explain the incident.

From farm to

FROM PAGE 3

Hasnat, the founder.

The price for a 20kg fresh vegetable package is Tk 400, which includes tomato, eggplant, cucumber, pumpkin, bottle gourds, bitter melon and green chili, he added.

Like this organisation, a volunteer group called Moghbazar is also working to support the middle class families. "They collect information of in-need families, and then inform the local police to arrange support for them," said Hafiz Al Faruk, additional deputy commissioner of Tejgaon Division police.

An admin of the Facebook page Moghbazar, Arafat Hossain Sifat said they have given a list of 25 volunteers in their area, who will help police in this crisis period.

A simple act

FROM PAGE 3

Expressing her gratitude to Nayeema, pediatrician Mohsina A Karim, from Worcester, Massachusetts sent her a message, where she wrote "I used the mask you made, today. But most importantly it protected my N95 mask, so I can use that one longer."

Nayeema, however, remains modest about her contribution.

"Everybody is doing what they can," she said, giving examples of how a fabric shop in her city is distributing free kits to citizens with all the materials needed for making masks.

At present, Nayeema is busy sewing masks for a group named Muslim Community Knoxville, which is collecting face masks door-to-door to distribute among healthcare workers.

While cotton masks, like the ones Nayeema is making, are not a substitute for N95 masks, it is still useful for general public, and for doctors who want to prolong the longevity of the specialised masks.

We'll get you

FROM PAGE 3

between Dhaka and Kuala Lumpur.

The condition was even worse for many of those Bangladeshi students who had been involved in part-time jobs to meet their educational and living expenses, since their income opportunities had stopped because of the Malaysian government-enforced movement control order (MCO) from March 18, which has since been extended until April 28.

A top official at Bangladesh High Commission in Kuala Lumpur on April 13 said Dhaka is handling the situation of the stranded students and taking steps regarding their repatriation. "The students are desperate to return to Bangladesh but could not move in the present situation," said the official, wishing not to be named.

Talking about the students' condition, Prof Muhammad Abul Bashar, a Bangladeshi teacher at Malaysian Allied Health Sciences Academy University, said apart from concern over coronavirus infections, a significant number of Bangladeshi students are also facing financial crisis.

"Students' safety is the biggest concern. However, their financial condition is also a major worry now since many of them, especially those who study at private universities, heavily depend on their part-time income to meet their expenses," he told this newspaper over phone recently.

According to a government handout issued yesterday, in an emerging situation, the Malaysian government is providing all kinds of support to Bangladeshi nationals in the country.

They are working with the Bangladesh high commission in Kuala Lumpur in this regard, according to a letter sent by Malaysia's Foreign Minister Hishammuddin Tun Hussein to Bangladesh Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen.

LABOUR COUNSELLOR IN JEDDAH TESTED COVID-19 POSITIVE

In another development, Aminul Islam, Bangladesh labour welfare counsellor in Saudi Arabia's Jeddah, has been infected with Covid-19. Expatriates' welfare ministry made the disclosure in a release yesterday.

Expatriates' Welfare Minister Imran Ahmad has prayed for his quick recovery and urged other officials and staff members of Bangladesh missions abroad to take precautionary measures, following coronavirus-related health guidelines while doing their professional duties.

A cadre from Bangladesh Civil Service's 20th batch, Aminul recently worked closely with Saudi authorities since the pandemic emerged, to ensure that some 4,000 Bangladeshi migrants in a Madina dormitory go through Covid-19 tests, according to the press release.

Iran partially reopens capital as deaths hit one-month low

REUTERS, Dubai

Iran allowed some businesses in the capital Tehran to re-open on Saturday as the country's daily death toll from the new coronavirus fell to 73, its lowest in more than a month.

So-called low-risk businesses - including many shops, factories and workshops - resumed operations in Tehran, a week after re-opening in the rest of the country, state television said.

Television footage showed health inspectors visiting shops and reminding a baker that he was required to wear a mask despite working near a hot oven. Others inspectors were seen controlling stores where employees handed out gloves to customers.

The re-opening, announced earlier this

month, came as official figures showed daily deaths from the new coronavirus fell to 73 on Saturday, the lowest since March 12.

That brought the total death toll to 5,031, health ministry spokesman KianushJahanpour said. Saturday marked the fifth consecutive day with a death toll under 100 in Iran, one of the worst-hit countries in the Middle East.

The total number of people diagnosed with COVID-19, the disease caused by the new virus, reached 80,868 as the country recorded 1,374 new cases in the past 24 hours, the spokesman said on state TV.

Meanwhile, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said in a fatwa, or religious ruling, that believers may abstain from fasting during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan if it threatens their health.

Flash floods may deal

FROM PAGE 1

to the travel restrictions and nationwide shutdown, our correspondents in the districts said.

Thousands of people grow paddy on the low-lying wetlands of the Sylhet region just once a year. But flash floods at this time of the year are not uncommon and damage to the crop becomes severe at times.

"If the flash flood happens and damages the embankment, we will be in deep trouble," Jwati Mohon Das, a farmer of Dashmontapur village in Sunamganj's Jamalganj, told our correspondent in Sylhet. Jwati, who started harvesting on Saturday at his four-acre farm, urged authorities to take proper care of the protection embankment.

In 2017, flash floods submerged hundreds of acres of paddy fields in Sylhet, Sunamganj, Habiganj, Netrokona, Kishoreganj, Brahmanbaria and Moulvibazar, destroying and damaging the crop.

According to the government "Master Plan for Haor Area" prepared in 2012, "The total rice area of Bangladesh is 11.35 million hectares, of which 15.3percent falls in the haor areas.

Paddy harvested in the boro season accounts for over 50 percent of the country's total production, DAE officials said.

FLOOD FORECAST

Citing data from Bangladesh and Indian meteorological departments, EU-based ECMWA and US-based NOAA, the Flood Forecasting and Warning Center said Sylhet, Sunamganj, Netrokona, Habiganj and Moulvibazar may witness between 220mm and 320mm rains.

As a result, 11 rivers, including the Surma and Kushira may see sharp rise in water, it said. On April 23 and 24, the Jadukata, Sarigoain, Manu and Khoyai rivers may flow over what officials call the danger level, resulting in flash floods in all four districts of Sylhet division, it said.

In yesterday's bulletin, FFWC said water in all major rivers in the northeastern region is increasing, which may continue for 72 hours. It, however, ruled out any flash floods in the next 24 hours.

Meanwhile, Indian Meteorological Department on Friday forecasted that isolated heavy rainfall is very likely over Assam and Meghalaya on April 17, 18 and 21; Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura on April 17 and 18 and Sub-Himalayan West Bengal and Sikkim on April 19 and 21, according to its website.

Talking to The Daily Star, Arifuzzaman Bhuiyan, executive engineer at FFWC, said they are forecasting flash floods in the Northern region, especially in areas of Sylhet, Moulvibazar, Habiganj and Sunamganj by the end of this week.

He said the floods may harm the paddy

in vast haor areas if the farmers fail to harvest them beforehand.

"It's raining in these areas now-a-days as the monsoon has started. The amount of rain in this region is high this year compared to last year, which may create flash floods," he added.

Heavy rains may occur in different parts of India close to Sylhet, worsening the possible flood situation.

Arifuzzaman said they shared the flood forecast and warning information to the government departments concerned and also to field officials so that early measures to save paddy can be taken.

Saying that heavy rainfall has already started in haor areas, he said, "We have advised farmers to harvest within the next three or four days. Otherwise, they might face trouble.

"We have forecast that the intensity of heavy rainfall might increase in a day or two."

WHAT GOVERNMENT DOING

Agriculture Minister Abdur Razzaque told The Daily Star that officials have started a war-like situation to complete the harvesting in haor areas.

"After mobilising workers from different parts of the country, especially from the Northern region, we sent around 50,000 people to the haor areas to harvest paddy," the minister said, adding that people were working tirelessly.

Admitting shortage of workers, Srinibas Debnath of DAE said they have already engaged labourers of sand lifting, stone lifting and tea gardens to harvest the paddy.

"We will harvest all ripe paddy as soon as possible," he said, adding that officials of the Water Development Board are also working to strengthen embankments that keep floodwater out.

Meanwhile, Ahmad Kaikaus, principal secretary to the prime minister, held a video conference with the officials concerned in Sylhet over the harvesting and other issues of haor areas.

"He directed us to take steps for quick harvesting," Srinibas said.

Deputy Minister AKM Enamul Hoque Shameem of the Water Resources Ministry in a meeting yesterday suggested transporting workers from one district to another for harvesting paddy.

Food Minister Sadhan Chandra Majumder yesterday told this newspaper that everyone, including the prime minister, was concerned about harvesting the boro paddy, especially in haor areas.

"We asked field-level authorities to provide necessary farming tools and to ensure enough labourers to harvest the paddy while maintaining health safety measures," he said.

5 more die

FROM PAGE 12

quoting local doctors.

The youth came to his village on Saturday from Chattogram and was quarantined at the school, said Dr Purna Jiban Chakma, residential medical officer (RMO) of Khagrachhari General Hospital.

He died yesterday morning after developing fever, abdominal pain and diarrhoea, he said.

Sample collection from the body for Covid-19 test was underway, the doctor added.

Those who came in contact with the deceased have been asked to stay in quarantine, the RMO said.

In Gopalganj, an 8-year-old girl suffering from fever, cold, cough and respiratory problems died yesterday morning at her house in Tungipara upazila.

Her sample was collected and sent for coronavirus test, our Faridpur correspondent reported quoting Md Jashim Uddin, health and family planning officer of the upazila.

The girl's father had returned from Dhaka five days ago, said the doctor.

The family members of the victim have kept in home quarantine until the report of her test arrives, AFM Nasim, officer in-charge of Tungipara Police Station, said.

In Noakhali, a 55-year-old woman died early yesterday after suffering from fever and breathing problems in Chatkhill upazila, our district correspondent reported quoting doctors.

The woman, who was a diabetic patient, was suffering from fever and breathing problem for the last seven days, said Dr Shahidul Islam, RMO of Chatkhill Upazila Health Complex.

Samples of the woman, her son and daughter and a community medical officer of Mohammadpur union have been sent for tests, said the doctor.

The medical officer had provided treatment to the patient, he said.

The woman's son had recently returned after his madrasa in Dhaka was closed following the government announcement of the countrywide shutdown, the RMO said.

A d m i n i s t r a t i o n quarantined 18 families of the area after the death of the woman, said Didarul Alam, upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) of Chatkhill.

In Bogura, a 70-year-old man died, after exhibiting Covid-19-like symptoms in Shajahanpur upazila on Saturday night.

"The patient had a history of chronic lung disease. However, we have collected his samples after his death," Gaosul Azim Chowdhury, civil surgeon of Bogura, told our local correspondent.

"We have locked down some houses and shops yesterday morning after the death of the elderly man," Mahmuda Parvin, upazila nirbahi officer, said.