

Japan extends Tk 24m grant to three NGOs

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Japan has extended a grant amounting to approximately Tk 24 million to three Bangladeshi NGOs -- Thengamara Mohila Sabuj Sangha (TMSS), Prism Bangladesh Foundation (PRISM) and Trust for the Rehabilitation of the Paralyzed (TRP).

TMSS has been awarded approximately Tk 7 million to enhance coronary and trauma services at TMSS Medical College and Rafatullah Community Hospital in Bogura. At least 1,600 patients will be benefited from C-Arm and ETT machines annually, while 360 people will be annually trained with the trauma manikin, said a statement of Japan embassy in Dhaka.

PRISM has been awarded approximately Tk 7 million for "The Project for Installation of the Equipment for Medical Waste Management in Rajshahi District".

Under this project, PRISM will install an autoclave, a boiler and organise two collection vehicles in their medical waste management plant. Rajshahi City Corporation signed an MoU with PRISM to support this project.

TRP has been awarded approximately Tk 10 million for "The Project for Construction of the Rehabilitation Centre for Persons with Disabilities in Moulvibazar District". Through this project, TRP will construct the ground floor of a new rehabilitation centre for poor people with disabilities in Moulvibazar.



An N95 respirator left in the sun on the roof of Bangladesh Institute of Tropical and Infectious Diseases (BITID) -- the only lab for coronavirus testing in Chattogram. According to Mamunur Rashid, an assistant professor at BITID, these respirators are expensive and scarce, and can be reused in a cycle after drying them out for a certain period after each use. The photo was taken on Saturday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Crisis or not, Atiq looks to stand by Dhaka residents

MATHEWS CHIRAN

Mayor-elect Atiqul Islam of Dhaka North City Corporation hasn't taken over office yet, and the city is already undergoing a huge challenge in the form of a coronavirus outbreak. The Daily Star spoke to Atiqul recently about his work during the Covid-19 crisis, as well as plans for the city.

Reports say you've begun relief work for those in need on your own. How did you start this initiative?

Atiq: While DNCC is doing its part as an organisation, I thought I should also come forward individually. I called my 11 siblings and asked them to collaborate with me on the initiative.

Just the family's initiative would not be enough. Many individuals and organisations came forward to help us out. BDClean helped us package and distribute relief materials while maintaining social distancing and hygiene directives.

How many people have you reached so far?

Atiq: To start the work, I contacted people who were previously involved with ride-sharing apps. They are using their bikes to deliver relief.

We are distributing 5kg rice, 1kg lentil, two bars of soap, and 2kg potato. I am planning to distribute among 40,000 extreme poor people.

Our volunteers are reaching people in slums and other urban poor communities. There is an overwhelming demand for more relief goods. Until yesterday we delivered to 40,000 families in need, and this endeavor will continue as long as we have the resources available.

We have distributed relief among the Hijra community. Most recently we handed over 250 relief packages to Garo families in Dhaka.

How are you preparing the list of beneficiaries?

Atiq: BDClean along with some volunteers are preparing the list. Besides, we are getting requests for relief through Facebook, email and phone as well.

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Finding new livelihood in these difficult times

Low-income women in Barishal slums make paper bags to make up for lost jobs

SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barishal

The economic hardships due to the countrywide shutdown are pushing many towards extreme poverty. As unemployment mounts, many are being forced to innovate to find a way to sustain their lives.

Layli Begum (42) is such an example. A resident of Barishal city's Alekanda Refugee slum area, Layli used to work as a domestic help. Her husband died two years ago, and all she has left now is Poly, her 16-year-old daughter. During the lockdown, both of them lost their jobs.

Unable to cover the family's daily expenditures they thought they could pass the days on relief aid. However, they didn't receive any.

The duo have now resorted to making paper bags or "thongas" to try to live through the crisis.

"After my employer fired me I was pushed into great trouble. I looked for jobs everywhere, but the neighbourhood, including shops, markets, and factories had shut down, so there was no way to get any work," she told this correspondent.

"At this point, we started collecting old paper -- khata (notebooks), books, discarded newspaper -- and started

making thongas," she continued.

"We are able to make around 40 kg of thongas per week. We sell them to wholesalers for Tk 34 per kg."

Kanchan Howlader, a wholesaler of old paper packets at Bazar road area of the city said he is buying one mound of the produce per day during the lockdown period. However, this is only half of what he bought during regular times.

Atahar Ali Howlader, another wholesaler, said as number of jobless people increase, many are now trying to get into the trade. Over five hundred people are now making thongas out of discarded paper, he said.

While it's great that Layli and Poly are finding a way to navigate the crisis through this vocation, it's clear from the traders' statement that this isn't sustainable in the long term, and that relief aid must reach the poor as soon as possible.

Contacted, Md Moazzem Hossain, administration officer of Barishal City Corporation, said they have already distributed 45 thousand packets of relief material for the 45 thousand poor people who live across 19 slums of the city. If any one is yet to receive their package, they will get it soon, he added.

SCBA to give loans to 3,000 members

Lawyers in need to get up to Tk 75,000 interest-free for 3yrs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) will provide Tk 30,000 to maximum Tk 75,000 as loans without any interest for three years to its lawyers in need, in order to tackle the ongoing crisis due to the coronavirus outbreak.

Around SCBA 3,000 members who have applied for the loans will be given the money through their bank accounts by this week, said SCBA President Advocate AM Amin Uddin.

The lawyers who have become SCBA members before 2000 will be given Tk 75,000 each; those between 2000-2007 will be given Tk 50,000 each; and those between 2008 and 2013 will be given Tk 40,000 each, the SCBA president further said.

He said lawyers who will be given the loan have been asked to refund the money to SCBA fund in five installments by December 2022.

Otherwise, they will have to refund the money with interest, he said.

Drug peddlers active in Ctg amid shutdown

They use pretence of delivering essentials, say law enforcers

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN, Ctg

While the entire country works to contain the spread of coronavirus, drug peddlers are finding ways to dodge law enforcers to continue their business in the port city, even during the lockdown.

In the last three weeks, members of Chattogram Metropolitan Police (CMP), Rapid Action Battalion (Rab-7) and Department of Narcotics Control (DNC) arrested seven alleged drug peddlers with yaba pills, Phensedyl and hemp.

As traffic movement remains suspended to ensure the lockdown, peddlers are using pickups and covered vans in the name of emergency delivery services to keep up their trade, police and Rab officials said.

On April 27, Rab arrested a man with 93 bottles of Phensedyl and 2.9kg of hemp at Sitakunda upazila. He was coming to the city from Cumilla on a covered van and hid the contraband under the driving seat.

Mahmulul Hasan, assistant director of Rab-7 media wing, said the driver told officials that he was going to Chattogram from Cumilla carrying essential goods. However, after challenging his

suspicious behaviour, Rab recovered the drugs and arrested him.

The arrestee runs an aluminum shop, which acted as a cover for his drug trade, the official said.

Police said special check posts have been set up at five entry points across the city to ensure lockdown. Only vehicles and personnel carrying emergency goods, such as food and medicine, are allowed to enter or exit the city. This is why drug traders are active under the guise of carrying emergency goods.

Members of Rab-7 also arrested a man with 40,000 yaba pills from Mirzapur area under Panchlaish Police Station on April 27.

Two days prior, Rab arrested two others from Feni with 10kg of hemp. The same month, members of the Department of Narcotics Control (DNC) arrested a man with 7000 yaba pills from the city's Lalkhan Bazar area.

On April 22, a pickup van was seized and 10,000 yaba pills were recovered. On April 8, two youths were arrested with 6,000 yaba pills from Kazir Dewri area by Kotwali police. The duo told police they were out to buy medicine.

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TELEVISED CLASSES FOR SCHOOLGOERS

One month on, a lot left unfulfilled

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Over one month after the introduction of televised classroom lectures for school students, guardians are still not happy about the quality of the lessons.

Many said although it is a positive step for continuation of education under the circumstances, they are still finding problems to find old lectures due to the lack of organised archiving, while there was at least one incident of a silly mistake in a lecture.

Gendaria Girls Government Primary School teacher Deeba Saha appeared to have a slip of mind while writing an addition equation on a live TV class, aired at Sangsad Bangladesh Television in mid-April, a clip of which drew some flak on social media.

Contacted, Gendaria Girls Government Primary School headteacher Rina Rani Saha failed to

provide the phone number of Deeba Saha, and said it was human error. "She has good track record as teacher," Rina said.

Directorate of Primary Education Director General Md Fasiullah said they were aware of the incident. "We are looking into the matter and will talk with the content validator and teacher," he added.

The government on March 29 started TV education through Sangsad TV for secondary students, on April 7 for primary students and on April 19 for technical and madrasa students, so that students can make up for some of the losses due to closure of schools.

All educational institutions have been closed since March 17, and the government has now extended the closure till May 16, in a bid to stem the further spread of Covid-19.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina

on April 27 said all educational institutions may remain closed till September if the situation caused by the coronavirus outbreak does not improve.

Selim Reza, parent of a schoolgoer from Sirajganj, said people of their locality cannot see the Sangsad TV clearly due to some technical problems. "Class activities were not interactive," he further alleged.

A guardian from the capital's Dhanmondi said the videos of classes are not uploaded in an organised way. He said he looked for over an hour to find a lecture that were aired earlier.

He looked for the lecture on the Facebook pages of a2i, and "Amar ghore amar school", and the Youtube channels of Robi 10-min School and other places where they were uploaded in a scattered manner.

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Hasan Foez reappointed BJSC chairman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

President Md Abdul Hamid has reappointed Justice Hasan Foez Siddique,

a sitting judge of the Appellate Division, as the chairman of Bangladesh Judicial Service Commission (BJSC). The law ministry issued a gazette to this effect on Sunday.

The BJSC is tasked with selecting candidates for the posts of lower court judges through holding necessary tastes and examinations.

Hasan Foez Siddique was appointed BJSC chairman first on April 30, 2015.



PHOTO: TITU DAS

Out of job and out of luck, Layli Begum and her daughter Poly have found an alternative avenue to earn some cash, by selling paper "thongas" for Tk 34 a kg.

Ensure that tuition fees are not collected for period of closure

Rights body urges govt to take steps in seven days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A rights organisation yesterday sent an application to the government requesting it to take necessary steps so that the academic institutions don't collect the monthly tuition fees from the students for the period of closure caused due to ongoing coronavirus outbreak.

Barrister Humayun Kabir Pallab and Barrister Mohammad Kawser forwarded the application on behalf of the "Law and Life Foundation" to the principal secretary at the Prime Minister's Office and the education secretary through emails.

In the application, the rights body urged the two government high officials to take necessary measures in seven days in this regard.

It said in the application that the teaching and classes are now remaining halted and the guardians of most of the students are facing financial crisis due to the coronavirus outbreak.

The organisation also said in the applications that the academic institutions of several countries of the world have already waived the tuition fees of students during the coronavirus spread.

Cop found dead in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A policeman -- who recently tested negative for Covid-19 -- was found dead in front of his house in the capital's Khilgaon yesterday.

The body of Tofazzal Hosen (40), a constable at Special Branch of police, was recovered from Tilpa Para at 8:30am, said Aniruddha Roy, an SI of Khilgaon Police Station.

His stomach was upset for a few days, following which he got tested for Covid-19, said Nurul Amin, additional deputy commissioner of Khilgaon.

Tofazzal's test report came negative on April 28, but he was anxious about his health and did not trust the result, the ADC claimed.

The body was sent to Dhaka Medical College morgue for autopsy, SI Aniruddha Roy said, adding that the reason behind his death will be known after autopsy.



One of the joys of young imagination is the ability to turn any object into a tool for adventure. In this photo, a merry band of youth swim, play, and jump around a tree submerged under Barishal's Kalabadar river. The photo was taken from Barishal Sadar's Tungibari area on Wednesday.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

Edge organises online charity art exhibition

CITY DESK

Edge, The Foundation, a platform for creative talent, is holding an online charity art exhibition, which started on May 1 and will continue till May 15.

Proceeds from the initiative will be donated to fund young artists, charities and the homeless.

Contributing artists for the exhibition include Anisuzzaman, Anukul Chandra Mojumder, Hamiduzzaman Khan, Ivy Zaman, Jamal Ahmed, Kanak Chanpa Chakma, Maksuda Iqbal Nipa, Mohammad Eunus, Mohammad Iqbal, Ranjit Das, Rokeya Sultana, Shahid Kabir, Tajuddin Ahmed and Tejosh Halder Josh.

The artworks can be viewed on EDGE's website: edgethefoundation.com and fb.com/EdgeTheFoundation/.