

Detained children at Covid-19 risk

Unicef says, welcomes virtual courts to expedite their release

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The number of children detained has increased in the country since court proceedings were postponed in March amid Covid-19 outbreak, Unicef Bangladesh said yesterday. “Their number is now almost twice the capacity of the juvenile centres,” it said in a statement, adding, more than 1,000 children awaiting trial or sentenced for petty crimes are currently held in three correction centres.

With limited staff and logistical support, and with inadequate water, sanitation and hygiene facilities, it is exceptionally difficult for children and staff at the centres to practice physical distancing or to self-isolate to minimise the risk of Covid-19 infection.

“These facilities can become hotspots of infection,” it added.

Amid this, seven children were released on Wednesday through setting up a virtual children’s court. Several hundred can

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Amid all the hype of fancy hand sanitisers, rubbing alcohol and disinfectant liquid soaps that have come to the fore with the heightened hygiene awareness that the novel coronavirus has caused, it appears that some still have faith in good old ‘Bangla Sabon’, a traditional laundry soap. The ball-shaped soap still being manufactured in large quantities, an indication that it still holds some market share. The photo was taken at Chattogram city’s Rajakhali area recently.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Dampara Police Lines turning into Covid-19 hotspot

44 test positive, 137 quarantined

FM MIZANUR RAHMAN, Ctg

Despite a number of measures taken by the authorities to stop transmission of Covid-19 among law enforcers, Chattogram Metropolitan Police (CMP) Dampara Police Lines has become a coronavirus hotspot now, said police officials.

According to officials, in most cases the infected police personnel had no major symptoms except fever before being tested positive for coronavirus.

Close contact with the public while performing field duty, congested living condition in police barrack, not maintaining personal hygiene and lack of proper safety gears have put the personnel of CMP at high risk of being infected.

Till May 13 night, a total of 44 police personnel including the assistant commissioner (force) of CMP tested Covid-19 positive while 137 were sent for isolation and quarantine in different places assigned by CMP, said police sources.

Apart from that, a civil staff and a cook of police barracks were infected while three family members of police personnel also tested positive.

On Wednesday, 13 police personnel including an OC of Sadarghat Police Station tested positive while on Saturday, six police personnel including a traffic sergeant of CMP port division, an assistant sub-inspector and four constables tested coronavirus positive. The sergeant’s wife and brother also tested positive the same day.

Meanwhile, five police personnel who were diagnosed with the virus left the hospital after their recovery.

After transmission started in Dampara Police Lines on the first week of April, authorities arranged three places including two convention centres in port city’s GEC area and a private hotel at Chawkbazar area for police personnel with an aim to maintain social distancing.

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‘Irreparable loss to the nation’

Condolences pour in for National Professor Anisuzzaman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country was left in a state of mourning after national professor, renowned academician Dr Anisuzzaman passed away at the age of 83 at Dhaka CMH yesterday.

The passing of one of the country’s foremost intellectuals and a lighthouse for the nation drew floods of messages of condolences and tributes from all quarters.

A freedom fighter and professor emeritus of Dhaka University Dr Anisuzzaman passed away around 5pm.

One of the most prolific essayists of the country, Prof Anisuzzaman was admitted to Universal Medical College Hospital after he fell seriously ill on April 27. He was shifted to Dhaka CMH on May 9, as his condition was not improving.

President Abdul Hamid, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain, ministers, distinguished personalities, top leaders of different political and socio-economic-cultural organisations, educational institutions and people from different walks of life expressed deep shock and sorrow at the demise of the intellectual giant of our times.

In his condolence message, President Abdul Hamid expressed profound shock and sorrow at the death of the eminent educationist and renowned writer.

“Prof Dr Anisuzzaman was a shining star that guided the nation. He played a very significant role in improving the quality of education in Bangladesh. His death is truly an irreparable loss...”

The president prayed for eternal peace of the departed soul and conveyed deep sympathy to the bereaved family.

In her condolence message, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina expressed deep shock and sorrow at the death of the noted educationist.

With profound respect, the premier recalled the outstanding contributions of Prof Anisuzzaman to the field of education and all democratic movements including the 1952 Language Movement, 1969 mass upsurge and 1971 Liberation War.

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An all-rounder in humanitarian causes

MD ABBAS

Beyond formal frontline workers -- healthcare workers, law enforcement personnel, retail staff -- the Covid-19 pandemic’s vanguard is also lined by many private individuals. These volunteers and relief workers do not step out of the safety of their homes due to official calls, but rather out of a sense of duty towards their people.

Dipak Shill is one such example. For the last one month or so, Dipak has been risking his own safety to bring it to others. From emergency transportation to relief work, Dipak has been everywhere during this time, and has rightfully garnered plaudits from those he’s aided.

He has been taking relief materials to the doorsteps of the needful, on his motorbike, with his own fuel money ever since the pandemic hit the country. So far, he has delivered relief packs to at least 300 families, in areas all across Dhaka, including, Demra, Tongi, Savar, Jatrabari, Wari, Madertek, Bashabo, Khilgaon, Chawkbazar, Lalbag, Kamrangirchar, Rong Market, Bosila, Art Bazar, Mohammadpur, Uttara, Rampura and Badda.

Dipak, central vice president of Bangladesh Chhatra Union, said all he wants is to stand by those who are suffering in these difficult months.

“Every day I go out on my motorbike wearing protective gears thinking that today I will help more people than yesterday,” he said of his conviction.

Dipak’s organisation Bangladesh Chhatra Union and its associate body Bangladesh Juba Union have been raising funds for the needy and distributing hand sanitisers and relief items among those who are suffering most from the outbreak of the deadly virus.



Dipak Shill

Dipak said he is delivering aid to those areas where many cannot reach due to the lack of transportation facilities.

Besides delivering relief, he also delivers grocery items, emergency medicines, children’s food and other essentials whenever anyone contacts him.

About a week ago, Dipak dropped private university student Riman Khan to his village in Tangail on his motorbike.

Riman said his family had moved to their homestead when the government first announced the shutdown. Unfortunately, he could not accompany them due to some outstanding work in the capital. And then as the shutdown became more strict, he simply remained stranded in Dhaka.

“I was stuck in Sutrapur for over a month. I was getting frustrated and growing sick, both mentally and physically,” Riman said.

He came to know about Dipak “dada” through an acquaintance. Contacted, Dipak wasted no time in picking Riman up and driving him all the way to Tangail.

“I have no words left to express my gratitude to Dipak dada,” Riman told this correspondent over the phone.

RMG workers demo for arrears, bonus in Ashulia

STAR REPORT

At least 4,000 workers at East Narshingpur area of Ashulia yesterday demonstrated inside the factory in the morning demanding arrears, annual earned leave allowance and Eid bonus.

Workers said at least four of their colleagues received minor injuries when the police sprayed water with cannon and released 15 rounds of tear gas on the agitating workers at around 11:30am.

“We rejoined the factory on the first week of May and we have been doing our duty peacefully until Wednesday,” said a worker, seeking anonymity.

“We were staging sit-in programme inside the factory as the authority is yet to pay our salary for April, and yearly earning allowance of last year. They [factory authority] are also yet to fix the date for paying Eid bonus,” she added.

“We are passing a difficult time amid this shutdown. Homeowners are not waiving rent. Even, we wanted to accept 60 per cent salary for April but factory owner yet to pay that,” said another worker, “We will starve if we don’t get paid.”

The Daily Star could not reach Arifur Rahman Sinha, managing director of Medlar Apparels Ltd. over phone despite multiple attempts. Text messages also went unreplyed.

Md Rezwan Selim, a director of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), who deals with labour unrest said they are in discussion with the factory’s management regarding the delayed payment. “The delay may be caused by international buyers delaying their payments,” Selim said.

Jane Alam Khan, additional superintendent of police of Dhaka Industrial Police-1 told The Daily Star, they had to break and enter through the main entrance of the factory and used some tear gas shells and water cannon calm the unrest.

Jane Alam said the factory authority claim they have already sent the salary for April to workers’ bank accounts, but workers say they are yet to be paid.

Flight ban in place till May 30

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh yesterday extended the ban on passenger flight operations with all countries, except China, until May 30 to contain the spread of Covid-19 in the country.

CAAB Chairman Air Vice Marshal M Mafidur Rahman made the disclosure in a video message, adding that flight operations on domestic routes will also be suspended until May 30.

Cargo flights, emergency landing, air ambulance, special flights, and relief-carrying flights will be outside its purview.

Biman Bangladesh Airlines yesterday also extended the ban on operations on its 17 international and seven domestic routes till May 30.

A number of countries, including the US, UK, Canada, Turkey, Sri Lanka, Australia, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, Bhutan and Nepal have operated special charter flights amid the suspension to take their citizens back.

The government has also facilitated charter flights to bring back its nationals from a number of countries.

Earlier this week, Mafidur Rahman told The Daily Star they were planning to resume at a limited scale after May 16 if Covid-19 situation improves or remains steady.

SBMCH gets first kidney dialysis unit

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

A kidney dialysis unit with 10 machines has been installed at Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital (SBMCH) in Barishal.

The authorities of the public hospital said the government took the initiative to support kidney patients -- especially those infected with coronavirus and in urgent need of dialysis.

The machines were procured from Japan, said Dr Manabendra Das, registrar of the Department of Nephrology at SBMCH.

Hospital Director Dr Bakir Hossain, who inaugurated the unit on Tuesday, said 10 more machines will be set up soon and then 20 patients can undergo kidney dialysis at a time.

Through the inauguration, the hospital has got the first-ever kidney dialysis unit in its 52 years of history, said the authorities.

The dialysis would be cheaper than that of private hospitals or clinics, they confirmed.

Talking about the issue, Dr Manabendra Das said a kidney patient, who needs dialysis twice a week for six months, have to spend around Tk 2.5 lakh at private healthcare centre.

However, SBMCH is offering such a package for only Tk 20,000, Dr Das told this newspaper.

Khasru Alam Sikder from Baherchar village in Patuakhali -- who is the first patient admitted to the unit -- said, “I am very happy to receive the service. Now, I need not go to Dhaka or a private clinic to get a dialysis.”



Slowly but surely, streetside shopping is coming back to Dhaka. Sellers have started to display colourful clothing items, bed sheets and luggages at their makeshift stalls in the capital’s Gulistan, as Ramadan enters the last 10 days. During regular times, this would already be underway by now. However, due to the pandemic this year, it’s only now that sales are picking up, and not without objections from conscious corners of society. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED