

225 journos, media staff infected with Covid-19

Says social media-based journalist group

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 225 journalists and media employees from 76 national and regional media houses have tested coronavirus positive across the country as of yesterday.

So far, three journalists have died from Covid-19. The latest addition to the death tally is renowned TV personality Mostafa Kamal Syed, head of programmes, NTV. He died at Square Hospital around 1:30pm yesterday. Mostafa Kamal Syed earlier worked for BTV. Other than that, three media people died with Covid-19 symptoms last month, according to a social media-based journalist group “Our Media, Our Rights”.

Of the infected, 197 are based in Dhaka and 28 from other areas of the country. Most are from electronic media.

Meanwhile, some 63 journalists have made full recovery.

The infected are from 76 national and regional media houses including 38 newspapers, 22 television channels, 11 news portals, four radio stations and one news agency.

The highest number of infected is from Daily Ittefaq with 21 and the second highest NTV with 20 journalists and media workers.

Seven persons including four journalists were tested positive at Bangla daily Somoyer Alo. Humayun Kabir Khokon (46), city editor of the newspaper, died from Covid-19 on April 28, the first death of a journalist from coronavirus.

On May 6, Mahmudul Hakim Apu, senior sub-editor of the same media house, also died with coronavirus symptoms.

On May 7, another journalist named Aslam Rahman, who was a staff reporter of Bangla daily Bhorer Kagoj, died with Covid-19 symptoms including respiratory complications. However, the day before his death the result for his coronavirus test was negative.

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BACK IN BUSINESS... With stacks of clothes ready on the shelves, workers were seen busy with last-minute preparations at a store in the capital's New Market yesterday. After over two months of closure due to Covid-19, this bustling zone of hawkers, shops and people opened yesterday, but not without risks, as maintaining social distancing is still a far cry in such a setting.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

1,200 returnees sent to home quarantine

Most of them migrant workers from Middle East; experts raise concerns of Covid-19 spread

RASHIDUL HASAN

All 1,203 Bangladeshis who returned to the country in 24 hours till yesterday -- most of whom migrant workers who had remained in detention camps or prisons of Middle Eastern countries -- were allowed to stay in home quarantine, causing concerns over spread of Covid-19.

Public Health experts said the returnee Bangladeshi expatriate workers must stay in institutional quarantine instead of home quarantine, as most of them don't have facilities at their homes to ensure that the guidelines are being followed.

Sirazum Munera, a doctor at the health desk at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA), said of the 1,203 Bangladeshi returnees, around 1,000 expatriate workers who were stuck either in deportation camps or jail returned from United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Oman.

Of them, 463 returned from UAE by two separate flights, 181 returned from Oman by a charter flight and 289 returned from Kuwait by a special flight, said Munera.

A special flight of US-Bangla Airlines brought back 195 Bangladeshi nationals stranded in Chennai on May 30.

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Govt body razes 24,796sqft hill without approval

MOSTAFA YOUSUF, Cg

Bangladesh Forestry Industry Development Corporation (BFIDC), a government organisation under ministry of forest, environment and climate change, has razed 1.5-kilometre stretch of hills to make access for a proposed rubber plantation at Raozan upazila of Chattogram.

They cut the hills at Kodolpur union of the upazila without prior permission of the Department of Environment (DoE).

There used to be hills along 1.5km stretch of the 1.8km road, members of a DoE inspection team told The Daily Star recently. The team led by Zamir Uddin, deputy director of Chattogram (district) DoE and Afzarul Islam, its assistant director, visited the spot on Saturday and served a notice on the authorities concerned for cutting hills without its permission.

“The road used to be a foot trail, bordered by many small and large hills,”

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Red light for ridesharing

BRTA asks 12 companies to keep services suspended

TUHN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

While all other road transport services including buses and minibuses are about to resume operations from today, people planning on availing ridesharing services in the capital and other major cities will have to contend with bad news.

Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) has asked all ridesharing service providing companies to keep their operations suspended until further notice, citing the country's Covid-19 situation.

“We sent the letter in this regard to all [12] service providing companies yesterday,” Lokman Hossain Mollah, director (engineering) of BRTA told The Daily Star yesterday.

The letter did not mention any reason.

However, BRTA's Acting Chairman Yousub Ali Mollah said they decided to halt the operations as most vehicles under ridesharing services are motorcycles, and maintaining social distancing might be difficult for passengers and riders.

“If the situation changes, we will consider resuming this services,” he told this newspaper.

Ridesharing services, which have gained massive popularity in the capital and a few other cities, were suspended from March 26 when the government

enforced a shutdown of most public and private offices as well as public transport, to contain the spread of Covid-19.

On Thursday, the government announced the reopening of all offices and public transport on a limited scale while following necessary health safety guidelines from yesterday. Train and launch services have already resumed yesterday and bus services will resume today.

COMPANIES WANT TO RESUME OPERATIONS

Asked about the decision, Maliha M Quadir, founder and managing director of Shohoz, one of the major ride-share service providers, said the government should allow them to resume services.

“People will prefer ridesharing services to any other public transport at this time, because ridesharing is safer than buses and other public transports,” she told The Daily Star yesterday.

Asked about the safety of motorbike services, she said riders and service seekers are both wearing masks, so the chances of virus transmission are low.

She said they got the letter on Saturday night, and would talk to other service providing companies before giving their response to BRTA.

Sayedna Nabila Mahabub, director (marketing

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Fish stock under threat in haors of Sylhet

Netting and selling of fry goes rampant



Fisheries department officials release fish fry seized during a raid into a waterbody at Chhatak, Sunamganj.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, Sylhet

Indiscriminate catching of fish fry in the haors of Sylhet region, including the protected Tanguar Haor in Sunamganj, has been posing a serious threat to the area's ecosystem. Due to this illegal practice, many local breeds are becoming extinct, said fisheries experts and elderly fishers.

They said some fishermen and locals are involved in this illegal fishing, which starts in the first week of April and continues for several months.

Hashim Uddin, an elderly fisherman from Logaon village of Tahirpur upazila in Sunamganj, said, “Many, including locals, residing near Tanguar Haor catch fish fry illegally. They also use banned fishing nets.”

Prof Dr Mrityunjoy Kunda of the department of aquatic resource management of Sylhet Agriculture University said, “Local fish species like taki (spotted snakehead), shol (striped snakehead), gazar (great snakehead), ayer (long-whiskered catfish) and many others hatch eggs during April-May. However, these varieties are reducing in haors as fry catching is rampant.”

“Tanguar Haor is a protected waterbody under Ramsar Convention and fishing is prohibited at the sanctuaries there. Yet it continues unabated, affecting the haors

severely,” he said.

According to rule-7 of the “Protection and Conservation of Fish Rules 1985”, catching or destroying fry of shol, gazar and taki in any kind of waterbody is strictly prohibited from April 1 to August 31.

Padmashan Singha, senior assistant commissioner of Sunamganj, also the responsible officer for Tanguar Haor management, said, “We used to conduct drives regularly, but we are unable to do so now due to the lockdown. But we will conduct drives soon.”

Kasim Reza, president of Paribesh and Haor Unnayan Sangstha, said, “This unabated catching of fries during the hatching season will create a fish crisis in haors.”

“We demand a complete two-month ban on catching and selling fish fry. Also, those fishermen who catch fish from haors due to financial crisis, should be given incentives,” he said.

Abdul Ahad, deputy commissioner of Sunamganj, said, “I have already ordered all upazila administrations to look into the matter. As we built embankments in the haors to protect paddy, water level there is low and that gives locals an opportunity to catch fish fry.”

“We are planning to open a portion of the levee so that river water can enter the haor, which will raise the water level

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CJ readministers oath to 18 HC judges in person

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain has further administered oath to 18 High Court judges on Saturday night, hours after they were virtually sworn in.

In that process, the recently-regularised HC judges were requested to be physically present at the Supreme Court following traditional way.

Eventually, they took oath in the office room of the chief justice at 9:30pm, SC sources said.

However, judges of the Appellate Division and other judges of the High Court Division of the Supreme Court were not present on the occasion, they said.

SC Registrar General Md Ali Akbar and Spokesman Md Saifur Rahman, who attended the ceremony, could not be reached over cellphone for their comments on this issue despite several attempts.

Contacted, Law Minister Anisul Huq told The Daily Star on Saturday night that Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain had first administered the oath through virtual system as he was physically very sick.

“The chief justice was recently admitted

to Combined Military Hospital and was treated there for asthma problems. He got tested for Covid-19, and the result was negative. I have the relevant documents in my hand. Later on, the chief justice felt better and decided to administer the oath in traditional way so that no question can be raised over the oath of the High Court judges,” he said.

The law minister also said, “There was no illegality in such virtual administration of oath considering the present situation.”

Attorney General Mahbubey Alam told this correspondent that there is a rule under Article 148 of the constitution for the persons -- who will administer oath and who will take it -- of remaining present at a same place on the occasion.

Now, there is no scope for raising any question about the issue, he said.

Virtual oath was administered to the HC judges due to the ongoing coronavirus situation, the attorney general replied.

Earlier at 3pm on Saturday, Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain administered oath to the 18 High Court judges through video conference.

MCCI remembers Niloufer Manzur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Trade body Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) on Friday organised a remembrance and doa mahfil to pay tribute to late Niloufer Manzur, renowned educationist and founding principal of Sunbeams School.

Niloufer Manzur -- also the wife of former MCCI president Syed Manzur Elahi and mother of former president and present committee member Syed Nasim Manzur -- breathed her last on Tuesday, May 26.

The programme was arranged virtually using the Zoom software, said an MCCI statement.

A large section of MCCI members, former presidents, business leaders, friends, colleagues, well-wishers, and family members joined the session.

MCCI President Nihad Kabir heralded Niloufer Manzur as a great nation-builder, whose legacy will be carried forth by the innumerable students imbued with her teachings of humility and dedication to service, the statement said.

The event was also addressed by Tofail Ahmed, former commerce minister; Salman F Rahman, PM's adviser and former president of MCCI; Mahbubur Rahman, president of the International Chamber of Commerce, Bangladesh; Tapan Chowdhury, MD of Square Pharmaceutical Limited and former president of MCCI; and Anis A Khan, vice president of MCCI.

Syed Nasim Manzur recalled his mother's devotion to family, education, patriotism and dutifulness. He thanked all for their participation and sought prayers for the departed.

ROLE IN ANTI-TOBACCO CAMPAIGN

Ahsania Mission gets WHO regional award

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) has received World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Director's Special Recognition Award for excellent contributions to tobacco control in Bangladesh.

The WHO published the name of DAM along with two other regional awardees on its website recently.

Other awardees are -- Dr Biman Natung, chief of Voluntary Health Association of Arunachal Pradesh of India, and the Consumer Protection Board of Thailand.

This was announced on the occasion of World No Tobacco Day-2020 (May 31), said a press release from the DAM office in Dhaka.

“We have been notified via e-mail from WHO Bangladesh office about the award. Due to the Covid-19 emergency, this year's award giving ceremony has been cancelled,” Sharmeen Rahman, senior programme officer of DAM, told The Daily Star.

DAM was awarded for its long-term efforts and commitment to control tobacco consumption in the country. This charity organisation has been implementing various tobacco control activities successfully since 1990.

The organisation played a pivotal role in law formulation and amendment in 2005 and 2013, and implementation of tobacco control law.

Globally, tobacco is a major risk factor for all the main noncommunicable diseases including cancers, cardiovascular diseases, chronic lung diseases and diabetes mellitus.



PHOTO: TITU DAS

A girl feeds sweets to her baby brother, all smiles after finding out her SSC exam results came out as expected. Celebrations were underway in homes across the country, as results were delivered via SMS and Facebook Live amid the coronavirus outbreak. The photo was taken at Barishal city's Kaunia Branch road yesterday.

Ensure justice for minorities attacked during shutdown

Demand 16 noted citizens

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sixteen noted citizens yesterday demanded justice for the attacks on minority communities, violence against women, land grabbing, harassment of common people, and torture of journalists, all of which took place during the coronavirus outbreak in the country.

In particular, they demanded stern legal action against the perpetrators involved in the torture, harassment and violation of human rights of the country's minority communities.

Protesting the incidents and demanding prevention, the noted citizens, who represent different national-level civil society and human rights platforms, sent separate letters of memorandum to the home minister and law minister yesterday, said a press release.

The noted citizens are: Sultana Kamal, Justice Nizamul Huq, Hameeda Hossain, Iftekharuzzaman, Khushi Kabir, Prof Abul Barkat, Advocate Rana Dasgupta, Meghna Guhathakurta, Sara Hossain, Advocate ZI Khan Panna, Syeda Rizwana Hasan, Sanjeeb Drong, Advocate Tobarak Hossain, Advocate Subrata Chowdhury, Kajal Debnath and Shamsul Huda.

They said hundreds of people died from Covid-19 while

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