



Amid the pandemic crisis, mismanagement of non-Covid-19 patients at Chattogram Medical College Hospital has reached a whole new level in the last few weeks, according to many who brought patients to the hospital. During a two-hour visit to the premises on Sunday, our photographer found attendants struggling with their patients. (1) A hapless Moriom Akhter sits on a road divider in front of the hospital, clutching onto her 10-month-old daughter Rafa. Moriom has already lost two children to liver complications, and she is worried that she's about to lose her youngest the same way, as CMCH denied to admit the infant. (2) Didar carries his injured father Ramjan Ali inside the hospital, failing to find a gurney or wheelchair on the premises. They came all the way from Fatikchhari, only to face more trouble at the hospital. (3) Md Yusuf from the port city's Sagarika area faced the same issue, even after his family completed all formalities for admission at the hospital. They gave up after trying for an hour to find a wheelchair, and decided to take the injured patient to a private hospital instead. (4) Family members of Md Saber, who suffered a stroke and was brought in from Cox's Bazar, said they wandered for hours from ward to ward as no one gave them the correct information for admission.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

RURAL ROAD NETWORK EXPANSION

ADB grants \$100m loan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a USD 100 million loan to expand coverage of an ongoing rural road network improvement project in Bangladesh. This network will connect the rural population to agricultural development zones.

The additional financing will scale up current road network development, under Rural Connectivity Improvement Project, from 1,700 km to 2,630 km of rural roads.

It will build on the USD 200 million financial package approved in 2018, aimed at upgrading rural roads in 34 districts to all-weather standards with climate resilience and safety features, says a press release.

The impact and outcome of the overall project are expected to be further enhanced with coverage of additional geographic areas and increase in beneficiaries. The expanded project will benefit 40.2 million inhabitants.

The increased support brings more rural communities closer and faster to economic development activities, which accelerates the delivery of produce and services from

agricultural lands to markets," said ADB Senior Water Resources Specialist Olivier Drieu.

"Women and children will have easier and safer access to education, employment, health, and other essential social services in any weather condition," he said.

Inadequate rural transport and poor market infrastructure remain a challenge to Bangladesh's rural development. The situation is further worsened by recurrent flooding and disasters that paralyse agricultural value chains. Less than half of the rural population has access to all-weather roads, which make up less than a third of the total length of rural roads in the country.

The Rural Connectivity Improvement Project supports the government's Seventh Five Year Plan, aiming to increase the percentage of the country's rural roads from 43 percent in 2016 to 80 percent in 2020.

The total cost of the project, expected to be completed by 2024, is USD 449.23 million, with the Bangladesh government contributing USD 149.23 million.

4 held for selling doctored Covid-19 certificates in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion yesterday raided a photocopy shop in the capital's Mudda area and recovered a huge number of fake Covid-19 certificates.

They also arrested four people on charges of being involved in making and selling illegal certificates. Rab-3 Commanding Officer Lt Col Rakibul Hasan told The Daily Star. They are: Fajal (40), Sharif (32), Jamshed (30), and Liakat (43).

Since the beginning of the shutdown, the gang had been collecting certificates of coronavirus positive patients, scanning and selling those by putting people's name there.

For those who need a negative report, they have been making fake Covid-19

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A literary hub pushed to closure

NILIMA JAHAN

In just three years of its launch, Dipanpur -- a book store in Dhaka's New Elephant Road -- became a hub for literature aficionados.

"Dipanpur was a place where many literary events would take place. People would come to read books, but also to chit-chat while sipping on their coffee. The space accommodated children too, who would come to learn painting and read books," said Razia Rahman Jolly, one of the owners of Dipanpur.

"But all of it had to be stopped for the past three months," Jolly said, speaking of the Covid-19 induced nationwide shutdown.

Jolly is the wife of Faisal Arefin Dipan, the publisher of Jagriti Prokashoni who was killed by militants in October of 2015. It was in his memory that Jolly and some friends launched Dipanpur on July 12, 2017, on the eve of his 45th birthday. The café sought to carry his legacy and dream of enlightening people.

Alas, after three years of successful existence, Jolly and the partners have decided to put an end

to their endeavour. As revenues kept falling during the lockdown, there was no way that the owners could keep the café afloat.

"Our income had come down to zero. Yet, we had to bear rent, utilities, staff salaries -- it all added up to a pretty big amount. The rent was being paid from the advanced we paid when we first rented the place. But this month, the landlord notified us to vacate the space within 15 days," Jolly told this correspondent.

This is a difficult task, Jolly admits. Along with the sentiments that come from closing down one's own business, Dipanpur was always an emotional venture to the core, and forsaking its trajectory comes with a lot of pain.

But the current situation has proven to be too uncertain, leaving little room for the emotions behind this business. No one really knows when or if everything will be alright. "This uncertainty has forced us to make this difficult decision," she said.

What added to the woe was how the business had been running low on profits even prior to the

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These secondhand tires, kept for sale on a low-lying roadside at Shonir Akhra, have become the perfect mosquito breeding hotspot after the past few days rain and an algae proliferation. As monsoon promises to bring more showers, the fear of mosquito-borne diseases remains ever so real. The photo was taken on Sunday.

52 held in cases over Libya killings

SAYS POLICE HEADQUARTERS

Bangladesh Police have so far arrested around 52 people in 26 cases filed across the country over the killing of 26 Bangladeshis in Libya on May 28. Police Headquarters (PHQ) said in a statement yesterday.

Under strict guidelines of Inspector General of Police Benazir Ahmed, all police units including Rapid Action Battalion, Criminal Investigation Department, Police Bureau of Investigation and Dhaka Metropolitan Police started the drive to arrest those responsible behind the trafficking and made the arrests, reads the statement.

Earlier, in an emergency video conference with all police unit chiefs and higher officials, the police chief expressed his firm determination to take strict action against perpetrators of human trafficking.

The IGP directed commanders of concerned units of Bangladesh Police to take strict and exemplary legal action in this regard.

According to the PHQ statement, Bangladesh Police is always vigilant for the interests, welfare and protection of the country and the people, the statement added.

COVID-19 RESPONSE EFFORTS

US declares \$173m fund

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The US has announced \$173 million in new funding to support Bangladesh's Covid-19 response efforts and the development and economic recovery plan in the aftermath of the pandemic.

US Ambassador to Bangladesh Earl R Miller made the announcement at a virtual press conference following a ceremony to recognise the completion of 1,000 doctors' training on Covid-19 prevention and control yesterday.

The \$173 million US funding to Bangladesh, through USAID, is in addition to the nearly \$37 million already provided to Bangladesh's Covid-19 response efforts.

"I am especially pleased our new USAID funding will provide life-saving food assistance to thousands of urban under-privileged people in Dhaka," said Miller.

It will support a new programme to provide cash-based transfers for food to thousands of urban poor, living in low-income areas of Kalyanpur and Sattala Bosti, and help re-establish linkages between markets and farmers, by improving supply chains affected by this pandemic, he said.

USAID has recently partnered with Save the Children to support case management in Covid-19 hospitals in Bangladesh. USAID also developed an online reporting system for Covid-19 commodity management, Miller added.

Six hundred and thirty-nine health facilities out of 658 -- 97% of health facilities in the country -- are now using this online system for managing supplies used to treat Covid-19 patients. DGHS is also using this data management system to help ensure rational distribution of personal protective equipment and other Covid-19 response items, he added.

"I wish the doctors joining us today every success in this training program. And, I wish all the doctors who have participated in this program since its inception and all the frontline medical care workers who will receive training from them, my best wishes and heartfelt thanks."

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Goods worth Tk 200cr locked as warehouse owner goes missing

MOHAMMAD SUMAN, Ctg

An owner of around 60 warehouses in Chattogram has been missing since Thursday, worrying importers and traders as they said goods worth Tk 200 crore remained stocked there.

Traders said Abdul Malek was last seen at his office in the city's Khatunganj, one of the largest wholesale markets in the country, where 35 importers stored 1.2 lakh tonnes of rice, wheat, flour, bitumen, cardamom, cumin and other spices and essential commodities.

All 60 warehouses situated at Khatunganj, Asadganj and Sadarghat are locked, said importers and businesspersons. Several traders fear this situation may create instability in the market as they cannot access the goods.

Ali Ahmed, general secretary of Chattogram Warehouse Commission Agents Association, said the association had been searching for Abdul Malek since Saturday.

Two of his employees, who used to handle the keys of the depots, are also missing, he said.

Seeing the warehouses closed, the workers are also not coming to work, the general secretary said. He mentioned that Malek had around 200 workers handling his operations at the warehouses.

"More than 35 importers and traders of spice, essential commodities and bitumen are in trouble due to the warehouse owner's sudden disappearance," he added.

About breaking open the doors, he said it may create untoward situations as traders keep variety of goods inside the depots, and the quantity of products continue to change as they keep on taking them out or adding more to the inventory. "We have informed the Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry regarding the matter," Ahmed said.

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From retired educator to auto-rickshaw driver

A teacher's story of survival amid pandemic

AMINUL ISLAM, Mymensingh

As a 65-year-old retired school teacher, Md Abul Kalam Azad was looking forward to a relatively comfortable ride into the horizon. While he wasn't expecting a life of grandeur and indulgence, he wished to see out his last days finally free from the grips of poverty.

But then the Covid-19 pandemic hit, and now Azad has to work back into life like the previous 39 years did not even take place.

"As an assistant teacher in English, I joined Julikuri High School in Sarishabari upazila of Jamalpur in 1981. I taught there for 29 years, retiring in 2010," Azad said.

As luck would have it, the school became eligible for the Monthly Payment Order (MPO) after Azad's retirement. If it had happened before, he could've made slightly better salaries and a better retirement payday. Instead, after retiring, the school authorities gave him a paltry Tk 2,87,000.

"All of the money went into maintaining my family as I have no other property to live off," Azad said.

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After 29 years of serving in a high school as a teacher, Md Abul Kalam Azad has been forced to drive an auto-rickshaw in Mymensingh to provide for his family, as the coronavirus pandemic has taken away his other means of livelihood -- private tutoring.

PHOTO: COLLECTED