



A display board captures photos and records body temperatures of passengers arriving at the Kamalapur Railway Station in the capital. Two scanner archways have been set up at the station recently, inset, to make sure people leaving the capital via train do not have fever, a common symptom of Covid-19 infection. The photos were taken on Monday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



Migrants, families need help now more than ever

Says IOM on Int'l Day of Family Remittances

DIPLomatic CORRESPONDENT

UN Migration Agency, IOM, has called for supporting migrants and remittance-dependent communities affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

"Now more than ever we need to focus on supporting remittance-dependent communities who are impacted by the recession," said IOM Bangladesh Chief of Mission Giorgi Gigauri in a statement yesterday on International Day of Family Remittances.

Due to the economic and labour crisis created by the Covid-19 pandemic, hundreds of thousands of migrant workers are expected to return by the end of the year. Recession-related job losses will impact not only remittance-receiving households but their extended communities, IOM said.

The UN agency has urged communities to support the reintegration and combat stigmatisation of returning migrant workers to Bangladesh.

Fearing several lakh Bangladeshi migrants could return in the coming months, the government has announced Tk 700 crore for low interest loans to the returnees so they could start new businesses. Besides, the government also planned re-skilling of the jobseekers for overseas employment.

Activists say the amount is inadequate, and demanded that migrants and their families be incorporated in the social safety net programme for social and economic reintegration.

ECONOMIC RETURN ON MIGRATION LOWER IN BANGLADESH

Meanwhile, an IOM study finds the economic return on migration is lower in Bangladesh than the countries with a skilled-migrant workforce because the

amount that unskilled and lower-skilled workers remit is much lower than that of skilled workers.

The survey report on Migration, Family Remittances, Assets and Skills Categories in Bangladesh conducted on 1,000 remittance-dependent households in 2019 across the country found an increase in skills corroborated to an increase in the amount remitted by up to US \$255 per month between 2009 and 2019, it said.

"Migrants' skills determined how remittances were invested and saved, with skilled migrants requesting family members to invest remittances into savings accounts whereas unskilled migrants generally used remittance to pay off loans," the study said.

Higher skilled migrants were employed in better paid jobs and were more likely to send higher remittances for longer periods than lower skilled migrant workers, it added.

In 2019, \$18.32 billion was remitted to Bangladesh, the third highest recipient of remittance in South Asia, by an estimated one crore Bangladeshi migrants.

Over 73 percent of remittances were sent from Gulf Cooperation Council countries, according to the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET).

The study found Bangladeshi migrant workers were overwhelmingly men (98pc), about 12 percent of migrant workers did not attend school at all and nearly 80 percent did not continue studying after secondary school.

About 49 percent Bangladeshi migrants worked as employees for a firm and 26 percent as labourers -- daily wage (14pc), part time (12pc), and construction (15pc).

Dhaka and Chattogram divisions had the highest concentration of remittance-

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55 educators decry arrests made under Digital Security Act

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fifty-three professors and teachers from universities across the country and beyond yesterday decried the arrest of Sirajum Munira, a teacher from Begum Rokeya University Rangpur.

Munira was arrested last Sunday for posting on social media about deceased former health minister Mohammed Nasim.

"The enthusiasm of the university administration and the ruling party student group, and the proactive role of the law enforcers in arresting this teacher, was very apparent," said a joint statement, calling the arrest the latest example of shrinking democratic rights.

In addition, two students -- one from Shahjalal University of Science and Technology in Sylhet and another from Islamic University in Kustia -- were arrested and suspended for similar reasons, noted the statement.

They pointed that these arrests have been a defining feature of this pandemic -- since the pandemic started, the Digital Security Act has been used indiscriminately to target bloggers, cartoonists, journalists, teachers from schools, colleges and universities, and even relief-distributing volunteers.

"We want to make it clear that threatening, prosecuting or arresting citizens for stating their political opinions is a violation of Article 39 of the constitution, and therefore, this is not a right possessed by the state, government or the ruling party," it said.

Maintaining etiquette in cyberspaces can only be done through community management, not through the use of any "illogical, malicious criminal law," the statement observed.

The professors stated that the aim of the Digital Security Act is not to make safe cyberspaces, but rather to restrict platforms that can be used by citizens to demand their rights or critique the government.

"Arresting people for criticising the government on

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COVID-19 Two more lawmakers test positive

STAR REPORT

Two more lawmakers yesterday tested positive for Covid-19.

Sylhet-2 MP Mukabbir Khan, who was admitted to Combined Military Hospital (CMH) in Dhaka on Monday, tested positive yesterday, his personal assistant Koyes Miah told our Sylhet correspondent.

"The MP is at intensive care unit of CMH, but he is feeling better than Monday," he said yesterday afternoon.

Mukabbir, also a member of Gonoforum's central convening committee, was admitted to CMH with breathing difficulties.

Meanwhile, ruling Awami League MP and former chief whip of parliament Abdus Shahid, who was also hospitalised on Monday night, tested positive yesterday.

Ahad Md Sayed, personal secretary of Abdus Shahid, said the AL MP was admitted to a hospital on Monday night as he had fever and cough.

"Today we got report that confirmed sir is infected," he said yesterday.

100,000 trees to be planted along marine drive road

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A massive plantation drive is underway along the 50km stretch of scenic Cox's Bazar marine drive road led by Cox's Bazar Development Authority, in a bid to restore the nature of the tourist destination.

The authority, which aims to plant 100,000 trees along the stretch, began the work on June 7 from Patuarterek area to Teknaf upazila.

So far, they have planted 10,000 trees, said Lt Col (ret'd) Forkan Ahmed, chairman of Cox's Bazar Development Authority.

Among the trees being planted are Krisnochura (delonix regia), Sonalu (Golden Shower Tree), Kodom (Neolamarckia cadamba), Bokul (Mimusops Elengi), Champa (Magnolia Champaca) and Katbadam (Indian Almond).

He said Cox's Bazar is a unique beauty with forest, sea and hills, but it is also exposed to various man-made hazards. So, they will plant trees not only along the stretch, but also bring 690 square miles area which fall within Cox's Bazar Development Authority's jurisdiction, in phases.

He also emphasised engaging other stakeholders including Bangladesh Army, Forest Department and Department of Environment to ensure uninterrupted growth of the plantation.

Ibrahim Khalil Mamun, chief executive of Youth Environment Society (YES), a Cox's Bazar-based environmental organisation welcomed the initiative urging authorities to be more stringent in conserving existing nature alongside plantation.

Cox's Bazar has seen a tremendous comeback of flora and fauna, including railroad vine (Sagorlotha) and dolphin, in the last few months as tourism remains suspended.

The government ordered concerned authorities to conserve the flora and fauna of Cox's Bazar, after The Daily Star ran several reports on Cox's Bazar environment.

Cop caught red-handed selling yaba in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A police sub-inspector and his associate were caught red-handed with 11,600 pieces of yaba while selling the drugs to narcotics dealers in Mohamamdpur area of the capital yesterday.

The arrestees were identified as Atikul Islam, a sub-inspector of Bandarban District Court, and his associate Rezaul Rob, said Abdul Latif, officer-in-charge (OC) of Mohamamdpur Police Station.

Based on information that narcotics dealers are selling yaba tablets from a pickup van at Shahjahan Road of Mohamamdpur area, a police team conducted a drive there yesterday evening and made the arrest, OC Latif told The Daily Star yesterday.

Searching the arrestees' bodies and the pickup van, the police team recovered 11,600 pieces of yaba pills and seized Tk 5.25 lakh, which the arrestees had collected after selling yaba tablets, said OC Abdul Latif.

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DIGITAL SECURITY ACT Cartoonist Kishore, writer Mushtaq denied bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A virtual court in Dhaka yesterday rejected both the remand and bail petitions of four accused, including cartoonist Ahmed Kabir Kishore and writer Mushtaq Ahmed, in a case filed under the Digital Security Act.

The court, however, allowed police to interrogate the accused at jail gate for two days, within seven working days.

The two other accused are: Didarul Islam Bhuiyan, an activist of a platform called "Rastrachinta", and businessman Minhaj Mannan Emon.

On completion of the interrogation, the defence lawyers can again submit bail petitions for their clients, court sources said.

Before the hearing yesterday, Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Jasim sent a video link to the authorities of Dhaka Central Jail in Keraniganj, who are the custodians for the accused.

The conducting magistrate then witnessed the accused through videoconferencing and then held hearings on the prayers submitted on May 7.

Defence lawyers submitted two separate bail petitions along with cancellation of the remand prayers through email, and took part in the hearing through videoconferencing.

Eleven people -- including the four arrestees -- were charged with "spreading rumours and carrying out anti-government activities" on May 6.

Swedish-Bangladeshi journalist Tasneem Khalil, who runs Netra News, US-based journalist Shahed Alam and blogger Asif Mohiuddin are also among those named in the case.

Sub-inspector Md Jashedul Alam of Ramna Police Station, also the case's investigation officer, submitted the two remand prayers for interrogating the detained accused.

Ctg police station home delivering medicines

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Taking advantage of the current crisis, a section of unscrupulous port city pharmacies has created an artificial shortage of life-saving medicines for treating Covid-19. Despite repeated drives and warnings in the last few days, the medicine sellers are desperate to make a quick buck, holding the general people hostage.

In this situation, Kotwali Police Station under Chattogram Metropolitan Police has introduced a mobile medicine service titled "My Pharmacy" for city dwellers, to fight the artificial price hike.

anyone can get medicine via home delivery for a fair price, after calling the hotline and showing doctor's prescription through digital communication channels.

Officer-in-Charge Md Mohsin came up with the initiative, that started yesterday.

With help from BM Riders, a group of motor

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Bidyanondo setting up field hospital for Covid-19 patients

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Bidyanondo Foundation has started preparing a facility to turn it into a field hospital to treat increasing numbers of Covid-19 patients in Chattogram.

The hospital, which is being readied at Patenga, will accommodate 100 beds.

This would be the first hospital in Chattogram with a central oxygen system. Shortage of oxygen cylinders put hundreds in immense sufferings, even causing dozens of deaths in Chattogram.

Jamal Uddin, a volunteer of the foundation in Chattogram who is coordinating the preparations, told The Daily Star that they were given the facility by a benevolent person.

They have started readying the facility and will be able to open the hospital in the beginning of July.

"We will start with 50 beds and gradually will increase it to 100 beds. Now we are procuring necessary medical equipment to set up the central oxygen system. We want to ensure life-saving oxygen for Covid-19 patients," he said.

Chattogram Metropolitan Police has extended their all-out support in the initiative, he said.

Jamal said the facility will have 12 doctors, 18 nurses and 50 volunteers to take care of patients.

When asked what prompted the foundation to take such initiative in Chattogram, Jamal said some recent incidents of death due to the lack of oxygen drove them to come up with the initiative.

"We have seen people being turned away from hospitals -- imploring for treatment -- subsequently losing their lives. Particularly in Chattogram, such cases are rising. So, we wanted to do something. Our hospital would be able to give at least some relief to people in need of medical attention," he added.



FORAGING FOR SURVIVAL... Rizia Akhter looks for leafy vegetables amid the growth of grass along the rail lines in the capital's Tejgaon. With earning sources severely hampered, many of these low-income people have been struggling to put food on the plate. Rizia said sometimes throwaway seeds of vegetables grow on the patches. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN