



**DR ALI ASGAR**  
1940-2020

## Eminent scientist Dr Ali Asgar passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eminent scientist Professor Dr Ali Asgar passed away early yesterday at a private hospital in the capital. He was 80 years old.

Survived by his wife and two sons, Professor Asgar had been suffering from neurological complications.

He was buried at the graveyard in Uttara sector-4 of the capital following his namaz-e-janaza, said his son Arif Asgar.

Professor Asgar was head of the department of medical physics and biomedical engineering at Gono Bishwabidyalay.

He was the recipient of prestigious awards such as Doctor Moniruzzaman Gold Medal, Doctor Kudrat-e-Khuda Gold Medal, Diploma Engineers Association Gold Medal and Mercantile Bank Gold Medal for his contribution to science.

Prof Asgar joined Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) in 1962. His roles there included that of professor, head of physics department, dean of engineering faculty and member of the syndicate.

Dr Asgar developed a modern magnetism laboratory at Buet's physics department in collaboration with Sweden's Uppsala University and formed the Dhaka Material Science Group for developing experimental facilities, training people in the field and forming a network with local, regional and international cooperation.

He had published over eighty technical papers in national and international journals and authored twenty books on science, education and development.

He designed and proposed national science week programme for innovative science education and made television and radio appearances to promote scientific education.

### FAKE COVID REPORTS

## Clinic sealed off in Pabna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Rooppur Medicare, a private hospital in Pabna's Ishwardi, was sealed off on charges of issuing fake Covid-19 certificates yesterday, a week after arresting its owner.

On July 8, police raided the clinic, recovered several fake test reports, and arrested its owner Abdul Wahab Rana.

The clinic had no permission from the health department to do such tests.

A case was filed against Wahab, his partners Sujon Ahmed, and Dr Abu Sayed, chairman of Brahmanbaria Medical College, a private hospital, for running coronavirus tests at the unauthorised clinic.

"Rooppur Medicare have collected samples of workers of different sub-contracting firms of Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant without any legal permission. Without having the health department's approval, they were running the Covid-19 tests through Brahmanbaria Medical College Hospital," said Dr Asma Khan, Ishwardi upazila health officer.

After the law enforcers' drive, the clinic authorities did not stop its operations.

Yesterday, officials of Ishwardi upazila health department, along with the law enforcers, sealed off the clinic, she said.

Rooppur Medicare was running the tests illegally to make a quick buck, said Sheikh Nasir Uddin, officer-in-charge of Ishwardi Police Station.

The OC said they arrested the clinic owner and sent information of the other accused to the police stations concerned for taking actions.

## A puzzling case

FROM PAGE 1  
Tarek had no symptoms on the day he gave samples.

When asked why he tested at two sites, Tarek said it was sought by his workplace -- a petroleum company.

Experts have long mused about the incidence of false positives or false negatives when it comes to RT-PCR tests.

"The limitation of RT-PCR is that the sensitivity depends on the sample collection, the kind of sample, the kind of media being used for testing," Dr M Shawkat Hassan, director of the department of laboratory medicine at Birlens hospital said at a webinar organised by Bangladesh Health Watch earlier this month.

Meanwhile Dr Bijon Kumar Sil, head of the microbiology department at Gono Bishwabidyalay, had previously told The Daily Star that when people were recovering from Covid-19, their test results may come out positive because the PCR machine detects the dead viral RNA in their sample.

### COVID-19 TESTS

## Many labs struggling for lack of manpower

**39 deaths, 2,733 cases recorded in a day**

MOUDUD AHMED SUJAN

As the health ministry asked the health directorate on Wednesday to inform the Covid-19 test results to the patients in three days, officials of the directorate said that would be difficult due to human resource shortage.

On Wednesday, Shamima Nasreen, deputy secretary and member of the National Technical Advisory Committee (NTAC) issued two separate directives regarding Covid-19 sample collection and test results.

The directives were based on the recommendations of the NTAC's 14th meeting held on July 10.

Prof Nasima Sultan, additional director general of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) told The Daily Star: "This [publishing results] depends on the number of samples, human resources and technical issues. We will try to follow the directives."

In the 14th meeting, the NTAC stressed on "reducing the time between sample collection and result publication".

"When test results reach [certain organisations] late, isolation and [transmission] control become impossible," the NTAC said in a press release.

The NTAC also pointed out that increasing the capacity of the existing laboratories was more important than increasing the number of the laboratories.

According to the DGHS, there are 79 Covid-19 testing laboratories across the country.

Sources said, due to the shortage of human resources for collecting the samples, running the tests and generating the results, and the shortage of state-of-the-art devices, many of the labs failed to generate results on time.

One of the main causes of the delay is the manual extraction of samples instead of using an auto-extraction machine, an official of the DGHS told The Daily Star.

The NTAC recommended the appointment of skilled human resources in the labs and use of auto-

extraction machines.

In a separate letter, the ministry also directed the DGHS to collect samples from the patients over 50 years old from their homes.

During the last few days, the number of daily tests have decreased.

According to statista.com, Bangladesh tested 5,866 samples per million population while India tested 8,991 and Pakistan tested 7,365 samples.

"After the fees were imposed, fewer people are coming for tests. Besides, flood situation in many areas may be another reason," Dr Mushfiq Hussain, consultant of the IEDCR told The Daily Star recently.

Prof Nasima Sultan added, "Fear of Covid-19 has reduced among people. Our sample collection booths stay idle after 1:00pm daily."

DAILY UPDATE

In yesterday's briefing, Prof Nasima said 39 Covid-19 patients died, taking the tally to 2,496 -- around 1.27 percent of all confirmed cases.

A total of 2,733 people tested positive for coronavirus, which takes the total number of confirmed cases to 1,96,323, which is 19.76 percent of all samples tested.

Including the 12,889 samples tested yesterday, a total of 9,93,291 samples were tested since January 21.

Of all patients, a total of 1,06,963 -- around 54.48 percent -- recovered including yesterday's 1,940.

Of those reported dead yesterday, 31 were male and eight were female; 35 died in hospitals and four at home.

Around 79 percent of all deceased were male and more than 73 percent were aged over 50.

One of those who died yesterday was under 10, one between 11 and 20, two between 31 and 40, three between 41 and 50, 12 between 51 and 60, and 20 were over 60.

Eighteen were from Dhaka, six from Chattogram, one from Rajshahi, six from Khulna, two from Barishal, and three from each Sylhet and Rangpur divisions.

### Nurse the youth

FROM PAGE 1

daunting task without universal health insurance and that lack of urban infrastructure is still a deterrent to urban development.

"There is huge risk of a large number of students not coming back to school when the pandemic ends. They may fall victim to child marriage, trafficking..." said Swapan Kumar Guha, executive director of Khulna-based NGO Rupantar. He stressed on this being a potential deterrent towards reaching the SDGs.

Underprivileged children have not been included in online classes because of a digital divide, said Mishal Bin Salim, a youth leader from National Girl Child Advocacy Forum.

"Thirty-two percent of the girls who enrol in secondary schools end up dropping out, compared to the five percent of boys," pointed out Orla Murphy, country director of Plan International Bangladesh. "60 percent of girls are married under the age of 18 while 82 percent of young girls become victims of violence."

"Covid-19 has deepened the fault lines between the youth population that is thriving and the group that is vulnerable, which includes women and young girls," said Debapriya Bhattacharya, executive director of Centre for Policy Dialogue, who also moderated the session. "There needs to be a safeguarding policy, an adjusting

"The challenge we have as a government is coming back on track on the SDGs and at the same time responding to the pandemic," commented Saber Hossain Chowdhury, a parliamentarian.

"If we keep the government's involvement in youth affairs limited to sports and recreation, then we will not be able to use the demographic dividend."

Currently, the government department tasked specifically with youth issues is the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

"We need to innovate now to make sure that services will find people wherever they are and help them," said Asa Torkelson, UNFPA Bangladesh Representative, speaking on the issue.

Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, said that while there is a group of youths involved in the SDG process, there is a far larger group who is left behind, in terms of education and employability. The demographic dividend is there -- but how much have they been incorporated?

Rashidul Islam, director-general of NGO Affairs Bureau, also spoke at the event.

## Financial issues

FROM PAGE 1

the killing as beyond comprehension. "The headlines talk about a crime we still cannot fathom," the statement said, going on to say that the loss was more enormous than anyone but those who really knew Saleh could understand.

"Fahim is more than what you are reading. He is so much more. His brilliant and innovative mind took everyone who was a part of his world on a journey and he made sure never to leave anyone behind."

Besides Pathao, Saleh was the chief executive and co-founder of Gokada, a motorcycle ride-sharing service that operated in Nigeria -- one of his latest ventures in an entrepreneurial career that began when he was in his teens.

Friends dubbed the entrepreneur the "Elon Musk of the developing world," NBC reported.

Following his death, Saleh's former Co-Founder at Gokada, Deji Oduntan, tweeted: "I am utterly shocked and deeply saddened by the news of Fahim's death."

"Fahim was passionate about building our Ecosystem and left an indelible mark in it."

According to his LinkedIn profile, Oduntan was the Co-Found and CEO until March 2019. Oduntan stepped down amid unconfirmed allegations of mismanagement, digital barker reported at the time.

Gokada raised \$5.3million in funding in May 2019, Techcrunch reported, and documents show the company filed a security offering of \$1.7million in June 2019.

However, in February of this year, the company laid off 75 percent of its workforce following a ban on tricycles and bikes in Lagos, local media reported.

The family described the brutality of

the killing as beyond comprehension.

"The headlines talk about a crime we still cannot fathom," the statement said, going on to say that the loss was more enormous than anyone but those who really knew Saleh could understand.

"Fahim is more than what you are reading. He is so much more. His brilliant and innovative mind took everyone who was a part of his world on a journey and he made sure never to leave anyone behind."

Besides Pathao, Saleh was the chief executive and co-founder of Gokada, a motorcycle ride-sharing service that operated in Nigeria -- one of his latest ventures in an entrepreneurial career that began when he was in his teens.

Friends dubbed the entrepreneur the "Elon Musk of the developing world," NBC reported.

Following his death, Saleh's former Co-Founder at Gokada, Deji Oduntan, tweeted: "I am utterly shocked and deeply saddened by the news of Fahim's death."

"Fahim was passionate about building our Ecosystem and left an indelible mark in it."

According to his LinkedIn profile, Oduntan was the Co-Found and CEO until March 2019. Oduntan stepped down amid unconfirmed allegations of mismanagement, digital barker reported at the time.

Gokada raised \$5.3million in funding in May 2019, Techcrunch reported, and documents show the company filed a security offering of \$1.7million in June 2019.

However, in February of this year, the company laid off 75 percent of its workforce following a ban on tricycles and bikes in Lagos, local media reported.

The family described the brutality of



PHOTO: PID  
Marking the National Tree Plantation Campaign 2020 and "Mujib Borsho" (Mujib Year), Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurates the distribution and plantation of one crore saplings across the country on Gono Bhaban premises.

## Bangladesh to move forward

FROM PAGE 1

She said coronavirus is not a problem for Bangladesh alone, but for the whole world. "We pray for all in the world so that they get rid of the pandemic."

Talking about her imprisonment day, Hasina, also the Awami League president, said it is a special day as the then caretaker government arrested her on this day in 2007 by filing false cases.

"I express my gratitude to the people of Bangladesh, expatriate Bangladeshis and the world leaders as well as thank millions of leaders and workers of Awami League and its associated bodies for their protest against my imprisonment."

The premier said the caretaker government was forced to release her due to protests by the people and pressure from national and international levels.

The PM said 12 false cases were lodged against her by the former BNP-jamaat government, while the then caretaker government filed five more false cases.

"I, at that time, said every case will have to be investigated and that

was done. By the grace of Allah, I was acquitted following their probe," she said.

Expressing her gratitude to the people, Hasina said she was freed on June 11 in 2008 due to their overwhelming support.

Talking about the country's forest coverage, she reiterated her government's goal of increasing it to 25 percent.

"When we formed the government in 1996, the country's forest coverage was only 7 percent. We raised it to 17 percent. Now, our target is to enhance the coverage to 25 percent and we are working relentlessly to achieve the goal."

The premier called upon the people to plant more trees to protect environment, saying that saving natural environment is a must.

"I would like to urge all to plant trees at places whatever you have and whatever you can. Those who live in towns can plant trees on rooftops or tubs of the balcony of their house.

"If you plant trees, you feel good and

## Virus curbs in disarray

FROM PAGE 1

CONTRADICTIONS, CHANGING MINDS

Signed by the Health Services Division Deputy Secretary Samima Nasrin, the letter to the Public Safety Division read, "... you are requested to take steps to stop people's movement from these cities to other areas." It said the recommendations were made to curb the virus spread.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader in a video message yesterday said, "I want to clarify that public transport would be operated during Eid-ul-Azha holidays."

Goods-laden vehicles, except those of emergency services, carrying drugs, cattle, and garment products, would remain off the roads from three days ahead of Eid, he said.

The general secretary of Awami League urged all to follow the health safety guidelines properly.

However, there are signs that the government changed its mind about the matter.

Sources at the road transport ministry said the