

3,000 Bangladeshi students want to return to China

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladeshi nationals studying in different Chinese universities, who were taken back in early February after the country was hit by novel coronavirus, now want to return to China to resume their academic activities.

Around 3,000 China-returnee Bangladeshi students yesterday wrote to the ministry for foreign affairs, requesting to take necessary measures for their return to China.

"The government of Bangladesh has successfully confronted the coronavirus and advanced a long way in inventing vaccine -- which is showing us a ray of hope. Students of some countries have got permission to enter China upon discussing it with their respective foreign ministries," reads the letter.

"We would like to inform you that most of the universities in China are starting classes from September. We have already spent eight months in Bangladesh and lagged far behind in studies," it added.

The students said if they cannot go to China to attend the upcoming semester, their studies and careers will be in jeopardy, and the large number of students and their families will be stuck in a crisis.

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These three little ones, cousins by relation, have been asking their parents for a day out at an amusement park or zoo for months. Since those have not opened in the capital, their parents brought them to the Central Shaheed Minar for an afternoon out in the sun -- and did not mind buying them each a balloon of their choice. The photo was taken on Sunday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Inadequate relief efforts amid double disaster

CPD finds claims of nepotism, mismanagement in aid distribution

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Facing two disasters -- the pandemic and flood -- simultaneously, poor people in northern areas of the country are suffering immensely, and they're not getting adequate aid from the government.

Civil society members and local people joined a webinar on effectiveness of government relief works during the coronavirus outbreak and flood situation yesterday, where they alleged that there has been mismanagement and misdirection of aid, politicisation and nepotism in relief distribution and assistance to people who were affected badly amid the disasters. Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) and Oxfam in Bangladesh organised the webinar.

Mostofa Amir Sabbih, senior research associate of CPD in his key presentation said that they have done a telephone interview based survey. They interviewed 30 beneficiaries of Kaunia upazila of Rangpur district who were eligible for getting Covid-19 assistance and flood relief.

He said that the interviewees claimed there has been politicisation and nepotism while selecting beneficiaries for the Tk 2,500 cash support for each poor family.

Almost all beneficiaries alleged that they get 10 kilograms of rice instead of the allotted 20kg rice, he said.

Only a few flood-affected people got 10kg of rice, and only two of the interviewees received Tk 300 in cash, he added.

He also said that there was lack of transparency in selecting beneficiaries and lack of publicity about the benefits.

Kaunia resident Azizul Islam alleged that there were at least 150 families who would be eligible for Tk 2,500 cash assistance in his area but only five families received it, of whom only three were truly eligible for the cash.

Renu Bala of the same area said that people involved in dairy business are facing hardship due to the flood but they're receiving barely any assistance.

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KHULNA

Most city drains clogged



This major drain near the city's Bypass road remains barely visible under a thick layer of discarded plastic waste.

PHOTO: STAR

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

Due to unplanned waste disposal and improper waste management, most drains of Khulna City Corporation (KCC) have turned into garbage heaps.

As a result, residents are not only facing environmental degradation and health risks due to blockages in the drainage system, but also contamination of water resources near uncontrolled dumping sites.

More alarmingly, these clogged drains have now become ideal breeding ground for mosquitoes.

According to KCC, the total length of drainage network of the city is 651.50 kilometres -- 291.23km are made of concrete, 55km are half concrete and 305km are soil drains.

Locals alleged that conservancy workers of the city corporation seldom clean the drains while officials claimed since very few drains are covered, locals use those as dumping spots.

This correspondent visited wards 5, 6, 9, 14, 19, and 21 last week to observe the drainage condition, and found most of the drains full of plastic, bottles, rags etc.

In some cases, water could not flow properly through them, while many were covered with thick layers of discarded plastic waste. Some of the drains were also found damaged.

"During the last three months, I did not see any conservancy worker cleaning the drain," said Abdur Rob, who runs a

grocery shop in Bastuhara Kitchen Market, maintained by KCC.

Like Abdur Rob, around eight shopkeepers conduct their business in the area.

On top of that, every morning around 15 traders sell vegetables there.

But there is no dumpster or STS (secondary transfer station) there and vendors dump their discarded materials and waste into the nearby drain.

"The city corporation needs to come up with an arrangement for managing waste at the market," said Rob.

Beside Sheikh Abu Naser Hospital, a large drain flows from there to Goalkhali via Khalishpur area. However, most of it remains choked by garbage. It has been filled up to the extent that grass and small plants were growing on them.

Kamal Hossain, a resident of Muigunni residential, said lack of maintenance and monitoring of some portion of the drain has blocked water passage.

He said often dirty water overflows on roads. "Stagnant water and dumped waste not just create nuisance for pedestrians and locals, it also brought back mosquito menace," he added.

The situation was graver beside Sonadanga-Notunrasta road. The drain next to BSN market, where 30 shops including drugstores and diagnostic centres operate, has become clogged with garbage including medical waste.

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CID arrests 'ringleader of trafficking gang'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Criminal Investigation Department (CID) claimed to have arrested ringleader of a human trafficking gang on charges of raping a girl and attempting to traffic her to India last year.

A team of CID arrested Mohemunuzzaman, also known by the names Pratik Khandaker and Babu, from Chattogram on Monday, Sheikh Md Rezaul Haider, an additional deputy inspector general of CID, told reporters at a press briefing at its headquarters yesterday. He is also accused in two other cases.

Earlier, three other accused -- Jannatul alias Jerin, Rifat and Jakia -- were arrested and the 14-year-old girl was rescued from the Benapole border area in Jashore.

CID officials said Mohemunuzzaman and Jerin, identifying themselves as a couple, sublet in the flat where the girl used to live with her family in Dhaka's Sabujbagh area, and developed a good relation with them.

The couple then lured the girl's mother with a high salaried job for her in Malaysia. In November last year, they took the girl to Benapole and raped her. They attempted to traffic her to India but police on information rescued her. Mohemunuzzaman was on the run since the incident. The family later filed a case with Sabujbagh Police Station.

CID officials said Mohemunuzzaman and Jerin once worked at a hotel in Malaysia and got involved in the human trafficking gang when they returned home five years back.

Repatriation process of 19 Tabligh men from India begins

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

The West Bengal government, along with the Bangladesh Deputy High Commission in Kolkata, has begun the repatriation process of 19 Tablighi Jamaat members from the neighbouring country.

They have been stuck in the state since the Covid-19 outbreak in March, after all of them recently tested negative for the virus.

According to sources in the Bangladesh Deputy High Commission in Kolkata, the Tablighi Jamaat members are now lodged at a house near the India-Bangladesh border.

More than 250 members of Tablighi-Jamaat in Bangladesh had gone to India to attend a congregation at Nizamuddin in New Delhi in March.

"Nineteen of them were quarantined in Kolkata on their return from the Markaz (headquarters) and were subjected to official procedures.

They were then moved to a house near

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PK Halder swindled Tk 2,500cr from ILFSL

Finds ACC enquiry

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With help from a top official of International Leasing and Financial Services Ltd (ILFSL), Proshanto Kumar Halder misappropriated about Tk 2,500 crore from the non-banking financial institutions (NBFI), finds Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) in its enquiry.

Proshanto, also known as PK Halder, is believed to have left the country with at least Tk 3,500 crore taken from four NBFIs, after the drive against illegal casino businesses began last year.

The NBFIs are ILFSL, Peoples' Leasing and Financial Services Ltd (PLFSL), Reliance Finance Ltd and FAS Finance and Investment Ltd.

According to investigation officers, Proshanto created some businesses that existed only on paper. He then took loans using those businesses and got away.

In this connection, Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday quizzed ILFSL Managing Director Rahsedul Haque. Preferring anonymity, an ACC official said Rahsedul helped Proshanto get the loans.

Before joining ILFSL in 2015, Rahsedul worked as deputy managing director of Reliance Finance, when Proshanto was its managing director. Proshanto then

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SK SINHA GRAFT CASE

Another three witnesses testify

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Three more prosecution witnesses yesterday gave their statements before a Dhaka court in connection with a Tk 4 crore money laundering case filed against former chief justice Surendra Kumar Sinha and 10 others.

Meantime, the court rejected a bail petition of another accused Mahbubul Haque Chisty, former audit committee chairman of Farmers Bank Ltd, after his lawyer submitted a petition.

The witnesses are -- ACC assistant director Monirul Islam, Mrinal Majumder, assistant vice-president and manager (operation) of Gulshan Corporate Branch, Farmers Bank Ltd and its executive officer Rezaul Hassan.

After recording their statements, Judge Shaikh Nazmul Alam of the Special Judge Court-4 of Dhaka fixed September 1 for next hearing of the case.

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Youth kills brother over bill payment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A man was stabbed to death by his younger brother in Banskhali upazila of Chattogram over a trivial matter yesterday.

The deceased is Md Emdad Imran (26), a resident of Notun Para area of Sadhanpur, said police. He was a lineman at a warehouse in Kotwali area.

Quoting family members, Inspector Mostafa Kamal, in-charge of Ramdash police outpost, said an altercation ensued between Imran and his brother Amzad (22), an auto-rickshaw driver, over paying electricity bills. At one point, Amzad stabbed Imran, leaving him injured.

He was taken to Anwara Upazila Health Complex, where he died, said Kamal.

The body was sent to Chattogram Medical College Hospital for autopsy while a case was lodged in this connection, added the inspector.

'Lease ghats out to us'

Demand boatmen at Karnaphuli, observe daylong hunger strike

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Around 300 Sampan majhis (boatmen) in Chattogram observed a daylong hunger strike in the city's Karnaphuli area protesting the city corporation's decision to lease out Karnaphuli ghats to various organisations.

They said they will not carry passengers until their demand for leasing out the ghat to their representatives.

SM Piyar Ali, president of Karnaphuli River Sampan Majhi Welfare Association, told The Daily Star, "Around 300 boatmen gathered at Sadarghat point of the Karnaphuli river and they kept all the ghats closed from 6am to 6pm during the hunger strike."

They threatened to restart hunger strike, if Chattogram City Corporation (CCC) does not accept their demands.

Piyar Ali said professional sampan boatmen had been taking lease of the ghats to serve passengers for a long time. If the middle of it, the CCC has planned to lease those out to other people, he said.

"Last April, when we applied to the LGED ministry, it directed the CCC to resolve the dispute," he added.

Sampan Majhi Rabiul Alam told this newspaper that sampan boatmen are already suffering due to coronavirus pandemic. "We went to the CCC authorities several times but they did not pay heed to our demand," he said.

Contacted, CCC Administrator M Khorshed Alam Sujon said they already offered tender and are about to hand over the ghats to the bidders.

"However, we are trying to give those back to the professional sampan boatmen by solving some legal complications. Hopefully, a solution will come out in a few days," he said.



Scrap collectors sit on piles of the items they've collected while transporting them on the back of a truck. With nothing to help them sit steadily, it is risky to be travelling this way in a country where reckless driving has taken many lives. The photo was taken yesterday at Gabtoli.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

DoE fines BWDB Tk 10.6 lakh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Department of Environment yesterday fined Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) Tk 10 lakh 60 thousand, for damaging Bakkhali River in Cox's Bazar by unplanned sand excavation.

The fine was imposed after a hearing at DoE office in the port city. Eight other businesses including brick kilns were fined Tk 2.45 lakh for violating DoE clearance conditions there. Nazim Hossen Sheikh, assistant director of DoE (region), told The Daily Star BWDB hired a contracting firm to excavate from MM Ghat area near the river.

He said BWDB did not take approval from DoE and did not assess impact of the excavation, adding that BWDB also did not follow procedure to select a place to store excavated sand.

"The firm excavated the river in an unplanned way and left sand on a nearby arable land, damaging the land and river," he added.