

Let barriers be removed

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top official of the finance division told The Daily Star, wishing anonymity.

The dialogue series will start on November 26 on the topic "Job Retention, Restoration of Demand and Maintenance of Supply Chain," the official said.

Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister Ahmad Kaikaus, World Bank's Country Director for Bangladesh Mercy Tembon, Japanese Ambassador in Dhaka Ito Naoki, Centre for Policy Dialogue Executive Director Fahmidha Khatun, and SANEM Executive Director Selim Raibhan are among the panelists of the dialogue, said finance ministry officials.

The second day of the dialogue would be held on December 3 on employment creation and revitalisation of the rural economy. The last part of the series would be held on December 10 on food security, they added.

Experts believe that the dialogues would also help them find out the barriers standing in the way of the packages' implementation, and speed up the execution.

Hailing the initiative, Zahid Hussain, a former lead economist at the World Bank's Dhaka office, said, "It will be important to focus on the discussion on the specific issues such as food security and assisting the informal sector in the midst of the pandemic as identified."

"The government needs to pay serious attention to the assessments of why the implementation of stimulus packages for the cottage, micro and small enterprises in the formal and informal sectors is so slow," he told this paper.

The government's evaluation of the huge stimulus packages comes after experts and think-tanks decried over the slow disbursement of the funds to some of the sectors hit hard by the pandemic.

Since the virus was detected in Bangladesh in March, both the government and the central bank have unveiled 20 stimulus packages involving Tk 120,053 crore. The combined support now accounts for 4.3 percent of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

The packages have been provided in the form of low-cost loans to micro, small, medium and large industries and service-providers and food security, social protection and special allowances as the pandemic-induced shutdown paralysed the economy, drying up millions of jobs and creating the new poor.

For sectors like the export-oriented ones and large industries, the disbursement of the funds was quick. But the needy small and medium enterprises and farm sectors are yet to avail much of the support.

As of September, the banks disbursed 48 percent of Tk 76,000 crore funds they were entrusted with lending to the large industries. It means the banks have disbursed Tk 36,624 crore.

Families of POWs

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from Pakistan, the spokesman gives no indication whether Pakistan is ready to respond to the venture by repatriating families of stranded Bangladeshis in Pakistan.

LIFE TERM FOR MALIK
Dr Abdul Mottalib Malik, governor of the then East Pakistan during Yahya Khan's occupation regime, is sentenced to life term today for his offence of waging a war against Bangladesh and helping the occupation forces of Pakistan.

DRAFT ELECTORAL ROLLS PUBLISHED

A total number of 3,51,19,800 voters are registered throughout the country in the draft electoral rolls published today. The CEC says the number of voters registered this time has increased by nearly 12 percent over the number of voters of 1970 elections. The increase is attributed mainly to the extension of franchise to the age of 18 years.

SOURCES: November 21, 1972 issues of *Bangladesh Observer*, *Dainik Bangla* and *Dainik Ittefaq*.

Oxford Covid vaccine safe

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how well the vaccine works in preventing Covid-19 disease.

"We're still waiting to get to the point where we can do the analysis to just work out how well the vaccine can protect people, and we're getting ever closer to that," he told journalists.

The Oxford-AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine candidate, called AZD1222 or ChAdOx1 nCoV-19, had been among the front-runners in global efforts to develop shots to protect against infection with the novel coronavirus, or SARS-CoV-2.

Pfizer said Wednesday that a completed study of its experimental vaccine showed it was 95 percent effective, while fellow US firm Moderna said this week that its own candidate was 94.5 percent effective. Russia claims its candidate is more than 90 percent effective.

"We're not in a rush. It's not a competition with the other developers," Oxford's Pollard said, adding that AstraZeneca would release headline efficacy data before it was published in an academic journal.

Unlike the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna shots, both of which use new technology known as messenger RNA (mRNA), AstraZeneca's is a viral vector vaccine made from a weakened version of a common cold virus found

at least 100 billion galaxies.

In each system, they are assembled together in a complex web or network, spread out in long filaments and nodes that link them up. Those spreading nodes are familiar to pictures of both the universe and the brain, and account for some of the superficial similarities in images.

The universe is like a giant

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them up.

It suggests that vastly different physical processes can lead to very similar complex and organised structures.

For example, the human brains works because of the network of nearly 70 billion neurons that together make it up. The universe is thought to have



Submerged houses are seen on Wednesday around San Pedro Sula, 240 km north of Honduras capital of Tegucigalpa, after the devastation of Hurricane Iota. Storm Iota, which made landfall in Nicaragua as a "catastrophic" Category 5 hurricane Monday, killed at least ten people as it smashed homes, uprooted trees and swamped roads during its destructive advance across Central America.

PHOTO: AFP

UN adopts resolution for urgent solution

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of the Rohingya crisis, including granting them citizenship, and ensuring their safe and sustainable return to their homes.

"As a country that hosts over 1.1 million forcibly displaced Rohingyas, Bangladesh continues to seek a peaceful solution to this crisis, which lies in their safe and dignified return to Myanmar," said Ambassador Rabab Fatima, Bangladesh permanent representative to the UN.

She thanked the international community for their unremitting support to the UN resolution.

This resolution, which was adopted on Wednesday, would reinforce the calls made by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for an urgent solution to this crisis, the root of which lies entirely in Myanmar, said the Bangladesh mission in New York on Wednesday.

The resolution, co-tabled by OIC and European Union, received sponsorship from 104 member states, demonstrating strong and unified support in favour of the persecuted Rohingya Muslims and other minorities, who continue to suffer from human rights violations in Myanmar.

A total of 132 countries voted in favour of the resolution, while nine voted against and 31 abstained.

Apart from the EU and OIC member states, the resolution received significant cross-regional support, with co-sponsorship from the USA, Canada, Mexico, Argentina, Australia, New Zealand, Switzerland etc.

Some key ASEAN countries like Indonesia and Malaysia also co-sponsored the resolution.

This year, the resolution has taken some new developments into account, such as, provisional order of the International Court of Justice, initiation of an investigation by the International Criminal Court and the issue of continued disenfranchisement of the Rohingya and other minorities, who were barred from participating in the recent general election in Myanmar.

The resolution also expressed deep appreciation to the Bangladeshi government, which under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has demonstrated exemplary humanitarian gesture by sheltering and protecting the Rohingyas.

The Bangladesh government's efforts in tackling the spread of Covid-19 pandemic in the largest camp in the world was also recognised. The resolution called for the international community to support Bangladesh in its humanitarian endeavour.

The ambassador of Bangladesh expressed hope that the resolution

would create renewed pressure on Myanmar to address the Rohingya crisis by engaging with Bangladesh and other international actors in a constructive manner.

"The ongoing justice mechanisms in respect of the human rights violations committed by Myanmar authorities will also enjoy greater support from the international community," added Rabab Fatima.

Before the voting on the resolution, the permanent representative of Germany on behalf of EU and the permanent representative of Saudi Arabia on behalf of OIC made statements in support of the resolution.

They expressed hope that this resolution would help address the longstanding plights of the Rohingya Muslims and other minorities by ensuring their basic human rights to return to their homes in safety, security, and dignity, and would also help Myanmar overcome the challenges it faces in its democratic transition.

They called Myanmar to take urgent actions to address the citizenship issue of the Rohingya minorities.

The UN resolution on Myanmar continues to remain an important source of international norms in guiding a desired solution to this long standing Rohingya crisis.

UP members alone at fault?

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Since the relief was too scanty for a ward of nearly 7,000 people -- mostly CNG-run auto-rickshaw drivers, day labourers, beggars, rickshaw and van pullers -- Kabir said he spent money from his own pocket to distribute a separate relief package to 500 families on April 10-11, according to documents submitted to the ACC.

Each package contained 5kg of rice and 1kg of wheat.

The Daily Star, however, could not independently verify his claims.

"I requested UNO sir to inaugurate the distribution. He declined to come but suggested I carry out distribution maintaining social distancing," reads the letter.

Kabir said the UNO asked for the donation from him on April 10, when he met him that afternoon.

"The UNO asked me whether I'll be able to donate Tk 2 lakh for relief. I told him that I do not have that much money," claimed Kabir.

Two days later, on April 12, Kabir came to know that he had been suspended.

The order stated Kabir's suspension was "for misappropriating relief and tarnishing image of the government by spreading rumour."

Kabir was also show-caused and asked to explain why he should not be suspended permanently.

He replied to the show-cause notice the following day and later appeared in a hearing before the additional deputy magistrate of Narayanganj Kabir said he had been suspended.

In his written reply to the show-cause, Kabir said neither had the UNO seized any relief from his possession

nor had given him any chance to reply to any query, if the UNO had any.

Khadija said she submitted the probe report to her superiors. "I can't recall what was in the report," she said, when asked about the probe findings.

Saidul was transferred to Tangail Sadar Upazila as UNO on July 14. Contacted recently, Saidul said he took the action against Kabir after "scrutiny".

Asked how many packets of relief Kabir misappropriated, Saidul said: "I sought particulars of the beneficiaries but he failed to submit these."

Saidul refuted Kabir's allegation that he asked for Tk 2 lakh.

"There are so many industries in Sonargaon. If I needed money, I could have asked them. Why do I need to seek it from a member like him?"

Contacted, an official of Pirojpur Union Parishad, wishing to remain unnamed, said all members submitted particulars of the beneficiaries on the same day as the distribution.

"No one had brought allegations of misappropriation against the members," the UP official said.

Talking to this correspondent over the phone, Kabir said, "He [Saidul] has damaged my career with a false allegation and I'll have to live with this scar for the rest of my life."

"I have thought of filing a defamation suit but I know the administration will not allow me to do so."

Earlier this year, Chairman of Muriak union of Habiganj, Rafiqul Islam, too, was suspended over the allegation of nepotism in preparing the list of beneficiaries of the prime

minister's cash aid of Tk 2,500 to poor families.

Rafiqul, however, regained his post following an order of the High Court.

He said the UNO called him over phone and asked him to prepare a list of 1,176 beneficiaries within 48 hours, between May 1 and May 2.

"Ward members could prepare a list of 728 people by that time. It was submitted to the UNO's office and the UNO office's secretary completed the full list," he said.

"Some discrepancies were found and school teachers were assigned to check the list," said Rafiqul, adding, "Suddenly I saw on the media that I was alleged to be involved in the irregularities."

"I had no involvement in the list preparation but I was suspended."

Contacted, UNO of Lakshai upazila Losikanta Hazong said the issue of time constraint was there but as chief of the union parishad, the chairman could not avert his liabilities.

Losikanta said departmental proceedings against the UNO's members are on-going.

Itikher Ahmed Chowdhury, deputy secretary of Union Parishad-1 section of LGD, said they have so far suspended 108 UP chairmen and members over allegations of Covid-19 relief misappropriation.

"Two of them are suspended permanently for misappropriation and 30 chairmen and members have regained their positions following stay orders of the High Court, so far," said the deputy secretary of LGD's UP-1.

The fates of the remaining 76 UP chairmen and members were yet to be decided, he added.

Psychiatrists want judicial probe

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BAP said they arranged the press conference to clarify "misinformation" and present the truth in front of journalists. NIMH Director Prof Dr Bidhan Ranjan Roy Podder and other doctors and staffers were also present.

They said Anisul's sister and her husband, who are doctors by profession, took the police officer, escorted by three policemen, to NIMH around 6:50am on November 9. Dr Bidhan said Anisul's hands were tied with towels at that time and it was all captured by the security cameras.

In a written statement, BAP Vice-president Brig Gen Prof Azizul Islam said, "He [Anisul] was apparently very angry and violent, which is why three policemen escorted him to the hospital. He was first taken to the observation room and given a relaxing injection."

"Later, the hospital's resident surgeon advised that he be admitted to the hospital, which was noted in the outdoor ticket. But Anisul Karim's family refused to admit him. In the document, it's noted as 'refused admission.'

"The family members contacted Dr Mamun through another doctor of the hospital. Afterwards, Anisul's family members decided on their own to admit their patient to Mind Aid Hospital."

Assistant Professor Dr Sahana Parvin of NIMH said she could not determine whether it was a case of drug addiction or mental health issue as Anisul displayed symptoms that

matched both.

But according to his history, the police official had "high-pressure and went through two episodes in 2016 and 2020", she said.

"His family members told me that the police official was so aggressive that they couldn't go near him," she said without going into further detail.

NIMH Associate Professor Dr Mekhala Sarker, also Scientific affairs secretary of BAP, said Anisul's sister Dr Umme Salma contacted Dr Muslima Haque, the indoor medical officer of NIMH, over phone on November 7 around 5:40pm and wanted to know about the treatment at NIMH as one of her relatives was going through mental health issues.

The next day, they called twice and then Umme Salma's husband Dr Rashidul visited NIMH. He also met an NIMH doctor who had studied at the same institution as Rashidul.

Rashidul had said they did not like the outdoor unit and they were also not comfortable with the regulation of a compulsory attendant from the patient's side, Dr Mekhala said.

NIMH Director Dr Bidhan said their internal investigation did not find that Dr Mamun had any role in sending ASP Anisul to Mind Aid Psychiatry and De-Addiction Hospital.

On Tuesday, police arrested the NIMH registrar in Dhaka's Sher-e-Bangla Nagar area, alleging that the doctor had referred Anisul from NIMH to Mind Aid Psychiatry and De-Addiction Hospital as he received commissions for such referrals.

BAP said Dr Mamun was arrested at the hospital's dormitory in the evening and a government official cannot be arrested without the permission of the authorities. The hospital director said he was not informed about the arrest.

'TK 10 LAKH IN COMMISSIONS'

Investigators found that NIMH Registrar Dr Mamun referred as many as 25 patients to Mind Aid Psychiatry and De-Addiction Hospital in the city's Adabor area between July 2019 and November 2020 and made over Tk 10 lakh in referral commissions, the office of DMP Tejgaon Zone's deputy commissioner said in a Facebook post yesterday.

Dr Mamun also ran a private practice at the facility, for which he was paid separately, according to police, adding that several other doctors of NIMH and other government hospitals were also maintaining private practices at Mind Aid and referred patients there.

The NIMH registrar was on a two-day remand. He will be sent to court today, police said.

With Dr Mamun, 13 people, including two directors of the hospital, have so far been arrested in the case.

Anisul's father Faijuddin Ahmed filed the case with Adabor Police Station on November 10, accusing 15 people including five shareholders of the hospital for murdering his son.

Six out of 10 arrested employees of Mind Aid hospital confessed before a Dhaka court to their involvement in Anisul's death after competition of each of their seven-day remands.

The hospital's three other directors are still on the run.

Lone accused gets