



**WHERE'S YOUR MASK? ...** Mohammadpur's Tazul Islam was concerned about how many people plying the streets were not wearing masks at this crucial moment in the struggle against Covid-19. He decided to install a mannequin, complete with mask and an awareness message, in front of Satmasjid Super Market to drive the point home. However, five of the six people pictured near it are seen without a face covering, as has become a common sight in the capital.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

## Fresh embargo looming for South Korean visas

Two months after lifting restrictions, embassy issues warning as a number of travellers test Covid-19 positive after arriving from Bangladesh with negative certificates

EZAZ MAHMUD

Bangladesh can face a fresh embargo regarding visa issuance for entry to South Korea. Such a concern is looming since many Bangladeshis who entered South Korea in the past two months with Covid-19 negative certificates were later tested positive there.

The warning came in a recent notice issued by the South Korean embassy in Dhaka, in which the East Asian country emphasised on taking the highest cautionary measure to be free from coronavirus to avoid an embargo.

South Korea imposed an indefinite ban on visa issuance and flight operations from Bangladesh for the first time on June 23 last year. Through diplomatic efforts, Bangladesh was able to convince the country to lift the ban after eight months on February 8 this year.

The South Korean embassy notice, issued on Monday (April 5) both on website and Facebook, says: "Covid-19 positive cases are found successively among Bangladeshi nationals despite having Covid-19 negative certificates. Infection rate increased significantly in the later part of March 2021 which turns out to be a matter of serious concern for the Korean authorities."

However, although a concerning situation regarding visa embargo has been created, the South Korean embassy is sincerely trying to avoid it.

The notice adds: "The embassy expects a proactive and voluntary support from visitors for taking the highest preventive and cautionary measure to avoid Covid-19 infection before and after entering Korea. With your support, we want to avoid situation like the June 2020 ban on Korean visa issuance, the result of which can be severe for other Bangladeshis."

According to sources in South Korea, after the lifting of ban in February, 17 people in March and another six people in April reportedly tested Covid-19 positive after they entered South Korea with obtaining Covid-19 negative certificates while traveling from Bangladesh.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

## SC clears way to shut down 24 illegal brick kilns in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday stayed the High Court orders that prohibited the authorities concerned from evicting 24 illegal brick kilns having no valid licence in Chattogram, clearing the way for shutting them down.

Chamber judge of the Appellate Division of the SC Justice Hasan Foez Siddique passed the stay orders following eight leave to appeal petitions filed by Department of Environment (DoE) challenging the HC orders.

The apex court chamber judge also sent the petitions to its full bench for their detailed hearing on June 21, DoE lawyer Manzill Murshid told The Daily Star.

He said following a petition from rights body Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh, the HC bench of Justice Md Mozibur Rahman Miah and Justice Md Kamrul Hossain Mollah on December 14 last year ordered the government to shut down all illegal brick fields in Chattogram.

Multiple appeals were filed by the owners of some illegal brick yards with the Appellate Division seeking stay on the HC directive. However, the apex court chamber judge refused to pass any stay order on the HC directive.

On March 18, the HC issued a contempt of court rule against deputy commissioner of Chattogram and its DoE officials as they did not fully comply with the HC directive.

## Metro rail opening unlikely to meet December deadline

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Authorities are unlikely to meet the deadline for early commissioning of country's first ever metro rail in December this year due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

"We had taken an initiative for early commissioning of [metro rail]. But it now depends on Covid-19 situation. The government may set a [fresh] deadline once the situation improves," MAN Siddique, managing director of Dhaka Mass Transit Company Limited, said yesterday.

He was speaking at a monthly press briefing online to disclose progress and different perspectives of the long-running project.

At least 48 people involved with metro rail project got infected with Covid-19 in the last seven days, taking the total number to 518, he said.

However, work of the fast track project is going on in full-swing in two shifts -- day and night, he said.

The overall progress of the project is at 61.49 percent till March this year.

The first phase -- from Uttara to Agargaon -- saw 83.52 percent progress, second phase -- from Agargaon to Motijheel -- witnessed 57.68 percent

progress, he said.

The other part which is regarding installation of rail tracks and other equipment and procuring coaches saw 52.22 percent progress till this March, he added.

Total 7 kilometres out of the 20.1km line have already been installed and work of all 16 stations are going on, he added.

First set of metro trains have reached Mongla Port from Japan on March 31 and is expected to reach Diabari depot by April 23, he added.

Mass Rapid Transit Line-6, also known as MRT-6 is being implemented to build the 20.1km elevated metro rail from Uttara third phase to Motijheel at the cost of Tk 22,000 crore.

Once the coach arrived, the authority will carry out an integrated test and then go for test run, which may take at least six months, DMTCL sources said.

The original implementation period of the project was 2012-2024.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina later directed that metro services from Uttara to Agargaon be made operational by 2019, and from Agargaon to Motijheel by 2020.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

COVID-19 IN CTG

## Age group 31-40 the worst-affected

ARUN BIKASH DEY, CTG

Covid-19 infection rate in Chattogram is highest among people aged between 31 and 40 while the death rate is highest among those above 60, according to the civil surgeon's office.

The infection rate among 31 to 40 years old is highest 23.53 percent while death rate 4.5 percent. On the other hand, infection rate in people over 60 years is 13.2 percent but death rate 55.5 percent, office sources said.

The data has been recorded since the virus hit the country last year. Asked, Prof Dr Shakeel Ahmed, a public health expert and head of Bangladesh Institute of Tropical and Infectious Diseases (BITID) Laboratory, pointed out a number of reasons behind the scenario.

"We are not vaccinating people under 40 but they are going outside frequently," he said, adding, "Some go out of home for necessity but many do so for hanging around or chitchatting."

"These people are reluctant to maintain social distancing and use facemasks," said Dr Shakeel.

The mortality rate is comparatively lower among them as their immune system is stronger than the elderly people, he said. On the other hand, as old people do not frequently move outside and most of them follow health rules, infection rate is lower in this age group, said Dr Shakeel.

"The elderly mostly suffer from various diseases. When they are infected, their weak immune system can't fight with coronavirus in most cases," he said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

## CORRUPTION SUSPECTS LEAVING COUNTRY ACC challenges HC verdict on embargo

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday filed a leave-to-appeal petition with the Supreme Court, challenging the High Court verdict that emphasised formulation of a specific law or rule regarding imposing embargo on corruption suspects or accused leaving the country.

Lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan submitted the petition to the Appellate Division of the SC on behalf of the ACC seeking its order to scrap the HC judgement and observations.

In the petition, the ACC said the commission has special or extraordinary powers to conduct inquiry and investigation into corruption allegations and cases as per the Anti-Corruption Commission Act, 2004.

If the commission has to take permission from the court concerned for imposing embargo on corruption suspects and accused from leaving the country, the purpose of the inquiry and investigation in maximum cases will be frustrated, lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan told The Daily Star, citing the leave-to-appeal petition.

He said the ACC does not issue an embargo on anybody's leaving country, it (ACC) only requests the immigration department to restrain corruption suspects or accused on credible information about them.

The HC in its verdict prohibited the ACC to restrain any suspect or accused from leaving the country, but allowed the special judge's court concerned to exercise such powers, which is self-contradictory, Khurshid Alam Khan said.

It cannot be said when the apex court will hold hearing on the petition as the court is running at a limited scale now, the lawyer said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

## NSU holds its 23rd convocation virtually

CITY DESK

The 23rd Convocation Ceremony of North South University (NSU) was organised yesterday through a virtual session. It was broadcast live on NSU's Facebook page and DBC News.

At this year's convocation, 4,014 undergraduate and post-graduate students were certified, of whom two were awarded the Chancellor's Medal for exemplary performance while eight students were awarded the Vice-Chancellor's Gold Medal, said a press release.

Education Minister Dr Dipu Moni presided over the convocation ceremony and conferred the degrees. During her speech, she said, "Students need to be taught how to achieve lifelong learning. In this fast-changing world, knowledge that is so necessary today may lose its relevance in coming years."

She also said, "It may be important for a student to acquire knowledge in a new field even after completing their university education. Realising this need, the government is considering introducing a new education system that'll allow this type of learning to take place even after finishing university education."

Private Sector Industry and Investment

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



Traders wait near Gabtoli with gallons of milk, struggling to find a means to transport their goods. They source cow's milk from different upazilas around Dhaka and sell it inside the city, but the ongoing lockdown disrupted their usual mode of operation. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN



Five passengers on a motorised rickshaw is a flagrant violation of traffic rules by itself, but it's made all the more risky during the ongoing lockdown, where social distancing is a primary means to stop Covid-19's spread. This photo was taken yesterday from Aminbazar.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## 'BNP now relies on Hefajat's activities'

Says Obaidul Quader

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday said after failing to wage their movements successfully, BNP now depends on activities of Hefajat-e-Islam.

"BNP now needs political isolation, as they have contracted a disease worse than Covid-19, the symptoms of which are negativity, lies, conspiracies, arson, and terrorism," he said.

The minister made the remarks after inaugurating the construction work of "Second Aminbazar Bridge (eight lanes)" on Dhaka-Aricha highway through an online video conference around 11:30am.

The minister further said the government is doing its best in a coordinated manner to deal with this pandemic, which proves that BNP's statements are just not valid.

Mentioning that BNP is doing reprehensible politics, Quader, also Awami League general secretary, said, "We are monitoring their politics centring the coronavirus. One time they call for lockdown, and another time they say what will happen to people if lockdown takes place."

"Their policy is confusing people, and basically, they do this to oust the government. But people no longer support them or have faith in them," he said.

"People do not respond to BNP's movements, as they know that their movements mean arson and terrorism..." he added.

The construction cost of Aminbazar bridge has been estimated at Tk 199.5 crore, and its work is supposed to end by February 1, 2023.

## Allow motorbike ride-sharing services back on city streets

Pathao urges govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Pathao, a ride-sharing service provider, has submitted a letter to the Cabinet Division, urging the government to allow resumption of motorcycle ride-sharing services.

In a press release, Pathao also lauded the government for its timely measures to curb the spread of Covid-19.

Fahim Ahmed, president of Pathao, said, "The recent spike in Covid-19 cases in Bangladesh reminds us that our fight against the pandemic continues, and that we must act responsibly and comply with health and safety protocols."

"We call upon the government to allow resumption of motorcycle ride-sharing service. As Bangladesh's homegrown and largest digital services platform, Pathao is committed to enabling access to safe, reliable and affordable modes of transportation to consumers, and to providing income opportunities for the daily earners on our platform, whose livelihoods are at the greatest risk during this time," he said.