

Price hike before Ramadan must be controlled promptly

Speakers tell webinar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

It is very important to work in an integrated way to control the price hike of essentials during the upcoming month of Ramadan, said speakers at a webinar yesterday.

The price of items which are in use during Ramadan are showing an upwards trend for the last two or three months due to failure in proper market monitoring during the coronavirus pandemic, said SM Nazer, vice president of Consumer Association of Bangladesh (CAB).

Market monitoring is also being done in an uncoordinated way, when it should be done involving city corporations, other relevant departments of the government, and representatives of the business community, and after that it will create impact on the local level, he said.

Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry organised the webinar.

Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh said they have formed a standing committee on price control and monitoring of market

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

A visitor checks out books at Daily Star Books' stall at the Amar Ekushey Book Fair yesterday. Marred by the recent increase in Covid-19 cases and the resulting lockdown, this year's delayed iteration of the marquee event did not attract a lot of visitors, and is set to close today, earlier than scheduled.

2,000-BED TEMPORARY HOSPITAL

A Covid facility gone to waste

Govt says it was shut down due to lack of patients; experts term it 'white elephant'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With hospitals across the country, particularly in the capital, struggling to cope with a surging number of Covid-19 patients, the severely curtailed lifespan of a facility opened last year exactly for this purpose has drawn staunch criticism.

The much-hyped 2,000-bed Bashundhara Covid-19 temporary hospital is being cited as an example of the improper planning of Covid-19 management of the health department.

Yesterday saw the death of 78 Covid-19 patients in a day -- the highest in the country ever, while 5,819 people were tested positive for Covid-19.

On May 17 last year, the health minister inaugurated the hospital in the open space of International Convention Center Bashundhara (ICCB). Equipped with 2,031 general beds, 71 ICU beds, and 10 ventilators, it was set up as an isolation centre during the early months of the Covid-19 outbreak in the country.

The health ministry, however, closed the makeshift hospital on September 30 last year "due to lack of patient".

According to the health officials, the government had to spent around Tk 38.5 crore in five months.

Alliant Group -- a third party organisation -- built the structure for the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Healthcare hit hard by the pandemic: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Pregnant mothers, mothers with newborns, children below five years of age, patients needing emergency care and those with chronic illnesses, elderly people and persons with disabilities are suffering worse than others in terms of healthcare services during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, found a recent rapid assessment survey.

The findings of the study -- "Impact of Covid-19 on Essential Health Services in Bangladesh: A rapid assessment" -- conducted by Brac's Advocacy for Social Change programme and Bangladesh University of Health Sciences (BUHS) were shared at an online event organised by Brac yesterday.

According to the 2017-18 data of DGHS, on average 47 percent pregnant women received four-plus visits for antenatal care (ANC), while the survey found 37.6 percent pregnant women received 4+ ANC services during the survey period, around 10 percent lower than the national average.

In addition, 20 percent of deliveries were conducted by untrained midwives during the survey period, while one in seven children was not taken to hospitals when they fell seriously ill, mainly due to the high transportation cost and fear of

Covid-19.

The overall situation was much worse in rural areas compared to the urban ones where 60.8 percent of households experienced some form of sickness (other than Covid-19), while 28.6 percent reported higher clinical costs.

Ten percent of households reported difficulty in availing health services from hospitals, while two fifths of households reported that their health status had deteriorated due to a lack of proper healthcare.

Patients with chronic diseases also suffered significantly with 56.32 percent of chronic disease patients reporting that fear of coronavirus barred them from seeking treatment, while 54.51 percent reported financial difficulties.

Treatment for mental illnesses and disabilities was of particularly poor state, more so in rural areas.

Despite high initial demand, telemedicine services were only utilised by six percent of households surveyed, as service seekers could not explain their symptoms properly.

Carried out between April and August in 2020, the rapid assessment covered

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Fast-track projects to continue amid lockdown

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Works of the fast-track projects will continue amid the strict lockdown to be imposed from Wednesday to contain the sharp rise of Covid-19 cases and deaths.

The decision came at the 15th meeting of the Fast Track Project Monitoring Task Force held yesterday after chiefs of the implementing agencies of the mega projects opined to continue works, said meeting participants.

Prime Minister's Principal Secretary Ahmad Kaikaus, also head of the taskforce, presided over the virtual meeting.

"Works of the fast-track projects will continue amid lockdown maintaining health safety guidelines," Belayet Hossain, secretary of Bridges Division under the Road Transport and Bridges Ministry, told The Daily Star yesterday.

A project director said the meeting did not ask them to stop works during the lockdown rather told them to expedite it to ensure full implementation of the allocated money for this fiscal year.

"So, I think project works would continue," he told The Daily Star, wishing not be named.

The eight fast-track projects are: Padma Bridge, Padma Bridge Rail Link, Mass Rapid Transit Line-6 (Metro Rail), Chattogram-Cox's Bazar Rail Link, Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant, Matarbari 1,200MW Coal-fired Power Plant, Rampal Power Plant and the Payra Deep Seaport.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

'Missing' Humayun Ahmed painting exhibited in Cumilla

KHALID BIN NAZRIL, Cumilla

A controversy has stirred up centring a painting of celebrated writer, playwright and filmmaker Humayun Ahmed that either got lost or stolen during the time of his death in USA in 2012, and has now resurfaced in Cumilla after almost nine years.

The painting, which was displayed at a 10-day art exhibition in the city, was painted by the prolific writer while undergoing cancer treatment in New York.

Meher Afroz Shaon, widow of Humayun, alleged that event organisers did not obtain the painting legally and it was part of five stolen paintings of the legendary litterateur.

She said the painting exhibited in Cumilla is one of the 25 paintings by Humayun that were showcased in a New York book fair in 2012.

Later, one Ruma Chowdhury, who used to live in New York at that time and was called Ruma Saha, kept five paintings of Humayun without their permission, alleged Shaon.

This painting in question, a watercolour painting of a youth standing underneath a tree, is one of those five paintings, she added.

Ruma is currently living in Cumilla with her newly-married husband Monzurul

Azim Palash -- who hosted the art exhibition -- after divorcing her former husband Bishwajit Saha, an organiser of book fair and purveyor of Bangla books in North America.

Bishwajit used to be an associate of Humayun, who passed away at a hospital in New York on July 19, 2012.

Meanwhile, the 10-day exhibition titled "Selected paintings of hundred artists from Bangladesh and India" organised by Link Bangla, a venture of Palash, ended on Saturday.

Asked, Palash said the painting belonged to his wife Ruma and she kept it as a memorabilia.

Even though, as per Palash, the exhibition showcased 100 "selected" paintings by Bangladeshi and Indian artists, he mentioned no other artist except Humayun Ahmed in a Facebook post inviting all to the show.

Contacted, Ruma said the painting displayed at the Cumilla exhibition was not original. "It's a copy," she added.

When asked why they advertised that they were exhibiting an original painting by Humayun, she evaded the question and claimed that the original got lost at a book fair in New York.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Build field hospital to contain pandemic

Demand left-leaning student orgs

DU CORRESPONDENT

Leaders and activists of left-leaning student organisations yesterday demanded that the government build a field hospital to deal with the Covid-19 situation.

Holding a protest rally at Dhaka University campus, they also demanded that the government ensure food and employment for working class people, and free treatment of Covid-19 infected patients.

They further demanded fee waivers for students by subsidising educational institutions.

"We have seen different models of lockdown in the world for tackling the Covid-19 situation. But the Bangladesh government has imposed lockdown without following any model," said Arif Moinuddin, president of Bangladesh Democratic Students Council.

Masud Rana, president of the Bangladesh Socialist Students Front said, during the pandemic, only 38 central oxygen plants have been set up in the country.

"This number was supposed to be 79. Public health organisations say this is due to the government's negligence," he said.

Demolition of 'leaning' building starts in Ctg

CDA says its approved plan was violated during construction

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

Demolition process of a five-storey tilted building in Chattogram city started in the afternoon yesterday.

"Initially all the doors and windows are being removed," said Nezam Uddin, OC of Kotwali Police Station.

The building owned by one Kartik Ghosh tilted around 9:30pm on Saturday night while piling was undergoing on the ground floor for facelift, said locals.

The building is being demolished by the owner.

On information, police and fire service officials rushed to the spot immediately and evacuated all residents of the building and that of the adjacent ones.

Police and fire service personnel cordoned off the area at Gowalpara Enayetbazar while the firefighters were hanging a cautionary signboard that it's a risky building.

OC Nezam Uddin said they informed Chattogram Development Authority on Saturday night to check whether its approval plan was followed in erecting the building.

Meanwhile, no CDA official was seen to visit the site till 12:30pm.

Contacted, Hasan Bin Shams, chief engineer of CDA, said he did not deal with the issue. He advised to contact CDA chief town planner Shahinul Islam Khan.

When this correspondent called Shahinul over phone around 12:40pm, he said he heard about the matter and was on the way to the spot.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



A five-storey building in port city's Enayetbazar area tilted around 9:30pm on Saturday night while piling was undergoing on the ground floor.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN



PHOTO: TITU DAS

There will be no physical celebration of the Pahela Baishakh due to the ongoing lockdown. But artistes of Barishal Charukola were still busy yesterday preparing pieces for virtual programmes. This photo was taken from Sadar Road area of the city.

Another case filed against 'Shishu Bokta' Rafiqul

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Another case has been filed against "Shishu Bokta" Rafiqul Islam Madani under the Digital Security Act in Gazipur.

Mostafizur Rahman, a resident of Bason area, filed the case with Bason Police Station yesterday morning, said Kamrul Farooq, officer-in-charge of the station.

The case statement said some people in the name of religion are determined to destroy peace and prosperity in the country and in connection with that, Rafiqul had committed treason and delivered anti-state speeches in the name of Waz Mahfil, at the "Markazul Nur Al Islamia Madrasa" in ward-18 of Gazipur City Corporation. From January 25 to April 4, Rafiqul made several insulting, derogatory and defamatory remarks about the president and prime minister of Bangladesh and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, it also said.

On April 7, Rab arrested Rafiqul from Netrakona on charge of "anti-state" speech. On April 8, he was sued under DSA for "anti-state and provocative" speeches.

Four held over abduction, rape of teenage girl in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A 16-year-old who works as domestic help was abducted and raped in the port city's Akbarshah area.

Police early yesterday arrested four people after conducting a drive in a hilly area and rescued the girl from a house after receiving a complaint from her family.

The arrestees are Md Kalu Mia alias Raju (19), Sohel Mia (19), Dulal Baburchi (37) and Tarek Akbar (19). The victim was sent to Chattogram Medical College Hospital (CMCH) for medical test.

Officer-in-Charge (OC) Nezam Uddin of Kotwali police station said "The girl was picked up by Kalu and his cousin Sohel via a CNG-run auto-rickshaw from Rahmatganj under Kotwali police station on Friday noon. They later took her to Mir Awlia Mazar Pahar at Akbarshah."

"After taking her there, Kalu tried to physically harass the girl. A group of eight local youths appeared on the spot and filmed the incident on their cellphones. Later Kalu also joined with them and the eight took the girl to a house at Shapla Residential area of Akbarshah," said the OC.

Sub-inspector (SI) Mominul Hasan, who led the drive, said, "At the house, Kalu raped the girl. In the meantime, the others phoned the victim's brother seeking Tk five lakh as ransom."

"Due to repeated phone calls from the abductors, the victim's brother came to the station on Saturday night and informed police," said SI Mominul.

The SI said they then traced the perpetrators' location through investigation and arrested them one by one. Based on their confession, police later rescued the girl from one Palli Nabab Mia Bari of Shapla residential area.

A case was lodged by the girl in this regard.