

FOURTH DAY OF LOCKDOWN

## Daily wage earners come out to streets

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and MUNTAKIM SAAD

Before the first phase of restrictions following the surge of Covid-19 cases, Md Bablu (23) used to drive buses in the port city. He came to the capital recently for a better life, but as the weeklong "strict lockdown" started from April 14, his income came down to zero.

Bablu is now struggling, trying his best to earn some money by pulling a rickshaw at the capital's Rayer Bazar.

"It's my second day in Dhaka. I can get around Tk 300 now. If I didn't choose to pull rickshaw, my family would have to starve," a helpless Bablu said.

Bablu said he used to drive for Rabbi-Rafi Paribahan in Chattogram three days a week and earned Tk 1,000 daily. As the bus service was closed due to the lockdown, he came to Dhaka for a job.

"But now, police officers are harassing us at check-posts. The government didn't think how people like us will live for the whole week," he said.

Like Bablu, people from the low-income group, who live their lives based on daily income, are the worst sufferers during this lockdown.

And now, such people are coming out into the streets to voice their plight.

Being obstructed by the administration, rickshaw-pullers yesterday protested in Barishal and Dhaka, demanding ration for day labourers or allowance to carry on during the lockdown.

Talking to people out on the streets, these correspondents found that day labourers chose to come out since their income vanished.

Visiting Gabtoli in the capital, the correspondents found that some

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Many streets in the capital, including this one at Shonir Akhra area, were full of people and vehicles of all kinds yesterday, the fourth day of the weeklong lockdown. With daily earners losing their source of income, many have decided to go out and make whatever money they can get through the restrictions.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

## Getting vaccine jab in lockdown

HASAN MEER

When I received an SMS that I have to take the second dose of Covid-19 vaccine yesterday, in the midst of a "strict lockdown", I was a bit apprehensive.

How will I go to the hospital? Will there be any problem? And most importantly, I need to get the "movement pass" -- these were the issues that kept bugging me. So, I decided to take one step at a time. First, I planned to get the pass.

Being a journalist, I did not require one. But since I was not stepping out of home for work, so I decided to get one to be safe.

I visited the Movement Pass website on Friday night, and registered using my phone number.

I added all the information it asked for: where am I going, what time and for what purpose? I also had to add my photo, which I did not have readily available.

By the time I took a photo and tried to upload it, the session had already expired.

I redid the steps all over again. This time, it went smoothly. I was issued a card with a three-hour time limit.

Around 8am yesterday, I took all the precautionary measures one should, and stepped out of my Panthapath home.

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## Mosquitoes make DSCC residents' lives miserable

Experts for robust drives to curb Culex population

HELEMUL ALAM

Nazmul Hasan's family had adopted every measure they had heard of to save themselves from mosquitoes. They applied repellents and lit mosquito coils at their Lalbagh house in the evening. Also, they never forgot to hang mosquito nets before sleeping and used electric bats to kill the insects.

"Yet, all these measures don't save us from mosquito bites," a frustrated Nazmul told The Daily Star recently.

Nazmul's frustration is shared by the residents of Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC), who continue to suffer from the mosquito menace -- especially Culex mosquitoes -- as DSCC had failed to take adequate measures timely, they said.

There has been a rise in the Culex mosquito population just after winter, due to high temperatures and humid condition, late but excessive rainfall last year, and lack of proper attention to destroy mosquito hotspots, said entomologists.

Dr Manjur Chowdhury, an entomologist and former president of Zoological Society of Bangladesh, said one of the main reasons for the proliferation of mosquitoes

this year is heavy rainfall during October and November last year.

"Excessive rainfall at the beginning of winter helped create breeding grounds for mosquitoes at different places. When the water in drains and abandoned waterbodies gets gradually polluted, it becomes a breeding place for Culex mosquitoes," he said.

A large percentage of shallow drains in the city were deepened in the last couple of years, and as a result, they now collect more water. Covered with concrete slabs or footpaths, these drains get clogged with garbage and have been gradually polluted. Staffers of the city corporation cannot reach these places to spray larvicide properly, he explained.

Dr Manjur said the two city corporations did not take proper measures timely, as they were busy controlling Aedes mosquito population, at a time when they should have focused on Culex mosquitoes.

Prof Kabirul Bashar of Jahangirnagar University said when the amount of pollutants increases, the number of Culex mosquitoes also increases.

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## Hilsa supply starts in a limited scale

Around 40 maunds of national fish being sent to Dhaka markets from Barishal since Friday

SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barishal

Supply of hilsa from the Barishal wholesale market to Dhaka has started in a limited scale.

On Friday morning, 1,600kg of hilsa were sent to different fish markets in the capital from Barishal Port Road Wholesale Hilsa Market, confirmed suppliers.

Now, the amount of everyday supply is almost like this, said Badsha Mia, a supervisor at the market.

He said demand for the national fish is usually high at this time. But at the beginning of "stricter lockdown", there was no supply. However, from the third day, a small amount of hilsa is being supplied to Dhaka markets, he said.

Meanwhile, prices have risen by at least fifty percent. Badsha Mia said a hilsa weighing 1kg is being sold at Tk 1,500 while those weighing 800 grammes at Tk 1,000. They used to be sold at Tk 1,000 and Tk 600-700 respectively.

Usually, at least 300-400 maunds of hilsa are sent to Dhaka by five to six transport carriers on a daily basis. Now only 40 maunds are being sent, said Badsha.

Nirab Hossain Tutul, secretary of Barishal Port Road Matsya Aratdar Samity, said fishing at the hilsa sanctuaries has been banned for two months. Apart from this, due to the "lockdown", the fish is being supplied from the local rivers that are out of the purview of the sanctuary.

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## Kabori laid to rest



The 'sweet girl' of Dhallywood is given a guard of honour.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

ARTS &amp; ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Sarah Begum Kabori, the silver screen legend who became the latest in a long line of victims to Covid-19 early yesterday, was laid to eternal rest at the Banani graveyard in the capital with state honours.

Her body was taken first to Al-Markazul in the morning from the mortuary, from where she was taken to her Gulshan residence for a short period. She was given a guard of honour at the Banani graveyard, following which her namaz-e-janaza was held there after Zuhr prayers.

A number of film fraternity members, including Misha Sawdagar, Sohanur Rahman Sohan, Mushfiqur Rahman Gulzar, Mohammad Iqbal, Rumman Rashid Khan and Sohana Saba were present.

Kabori, also a former Awami League lawmaker, tested positive for Covid-19 on April 5, and was admitted to Kurmitola General Hospital the same day. Her condition deteriorated two days later, and she was shifted to the Intensive Care unit of Sheikh Russel Gastroenterology Institute & Hospital on April 8.

## Govt plans overlooked livelihood of the poor

Speakers tell webinar on the economic fallout of Covid-19 pandemic

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government's development plans largely exclude initiatives to safeguard the life and livelihood of the common people amid crises such as the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, speakers observed at a webinar yesterday.

Speaking at the webinar titled "Corona's Impact on Life and Nature and Future Development Plan", they also said the development plans only focus on economic growth and ignore measures to tackle the pandemic's negative impact on the life and livelihood of the poor and marginalised.

Life and Nature Safeguard Platform (LNSP) organised the webinar.

Addressing the webinar, Hossain Zillur Rahman, executive chairman of Power and Participation Research Centre, said the government should have rolled out a "smart" restriction plan to contain Covid-19 spread in a way that protects people's life and livelihood at the same time.

However, the initiatives taken do not reflect this approach, Zillur Rahman said.

He also said the urban poor have been affected harshly by the pandemic's first wave last year, and they are likely to face the crunch again during the second wave.

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## CRISIS IN BARIND REGION

### Revisiting laws to protect, manage our water sources

LAW DESK

According to a report published in The Daily Star recently, groundwater abuse for industrial and agricultural purposes is taking a toll on the Barind region in northwestern Bangladesh.

The region, according to the report, is characterised by decreasing rainfall and depleting groundwater levels, mostly extracted for paddy farming, rice mill operations, and other industrial purposes.

Experts have observed that people in the region are struggling to get drinking water while many paddy farmers are either diversifying into less water-intensive crops or converting their croplands to ponds and brick kilns.

It has also been noted that unchecked use of water has depleted groundwater in a region which also saw lower than average rainfall in recent years.

Stories like these make it necessary to visit the laws that can come in aid for protecting water stress areas as such.

The law that governs this area is The Water Act 2013. Section 17 of the said Act lays down the procedure for declaration of water stress areas and their management. For protection of any water source or any area, the government may, upon recommendation made by the executive committee (constituted under the Act), declare by notification in an official gazette, any area, any part of an area or any land connected thereto, as water stress area.

Under the said section, for proper management of the water stress area, imposition of restrictions by way of issuing protection order is also possible.

Under section 18 of the Act, there shall be preferential use of water from

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## Rickshaw-pullers march for relief, ration in Barishal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

Rickshaw-pullers in Barishal demonstrated yesterday, demanding relief and rations amid the "strict lockdown".

At least 500 rickshaw-pullers took part in a procession that started from Ashwini Kumar Hall at 11:30am, organised by Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal and its workers' front.

They rode their empty rickshaws through Sadar Road, Hospital Road, Nathullabad Amtala, and ended the march in front of the city corporation office in the city. They also held a rally there.

"We earn our living by pulling rickshaws. How will we survive if we can't work?" said Bachchu, a rickshaw-puller.

"Police harass us whenever we bring out our rickshaws, but what options do we have?" said another rickshaw-puller Kuddus.

Manik Hawlader, general secretary of Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal (BSD), said, "During the previous 'lockdown', rickshaw-pullers received some help from the city corporation and deputy commissioner, but this time nothing came from the either side."

"There are 5,000-6,000 rickshaw workers in Barishal. No one is thinking about them. Many have moved to villages, and some are living in dire conditions in slums," said Dulal Mallik, president of Rickshaw-Van Drivers' and Workers' Union.

Manisha Chakraborty, member secretary of BSD Barishal city committee, said, "We are not opposing the 'lockdown'. We are demanding rations for the workers who have to work daily to make ends meet. We are demanding free Covid-19 tests for them as well. It is the responsibility of the government to ensure this."

## Standing by starved strays

Activists in port city ensure street animals are fed

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

Animal lovers in Chattogram have been busy arranging and distributing meals for stray cats and dogs -- who have been starving as shops and restaurants remain closed -- to different areas of the city and adjacent areas.

They said they started their activities since the countrywide lockdown started on April 5.

"After the lockdown started, stray animals have been facing severe hardship, as dining in hotels and restaurants remain halted," said activist Usha Acharjee to The Daily Star. "These animals mainly depend on leftover food from hotels and restaurants."

A lawyer by profession, Usha is also co-founder of Social and Animal Activists Foundation. Since April 5, she has been distributing food across Chattogram Court Hill, Cherhai Pahar Intersection, Bridge Ghat, and more.

"I see it as my duty to help animals because they cannot voice their right to food."

Iyana Haque, another co-founder of Social and Animal Activists Foundation, said, "It is our duty



A group of dogs, tails wagging in excitement, surround a volunteer as he brings them a home-cooked meal.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

to serve those beings who cannot manage their food on their own.

"We first surveyed different areas to figure out where our help is needed the most," Usha said of their work process.

"The food is prepared at our volunteers' homes, from where we pick them up for distribution," she added.

Volunteers of Animal Care of Chattogram have also been busy distributing food for stray animals in Chattogram Sea Beach, Naval Academy Road, Bahaddarhat, and other areas.

Sumi Biswas, founder of the organisation, said they have been distributing food to around 200 animals every day since the lockdown started.

"We do this during regular times too. But during the lockdowns, we ramp up operations," Sumi told this correspondent. "We're trying to ensure no stray animals dies from the lack of food."

"In an interconnected urban ecosystem, the survival of animals like dogs, cats, and crows are necessary for our survival too," she said.

## BNP wants to deny history

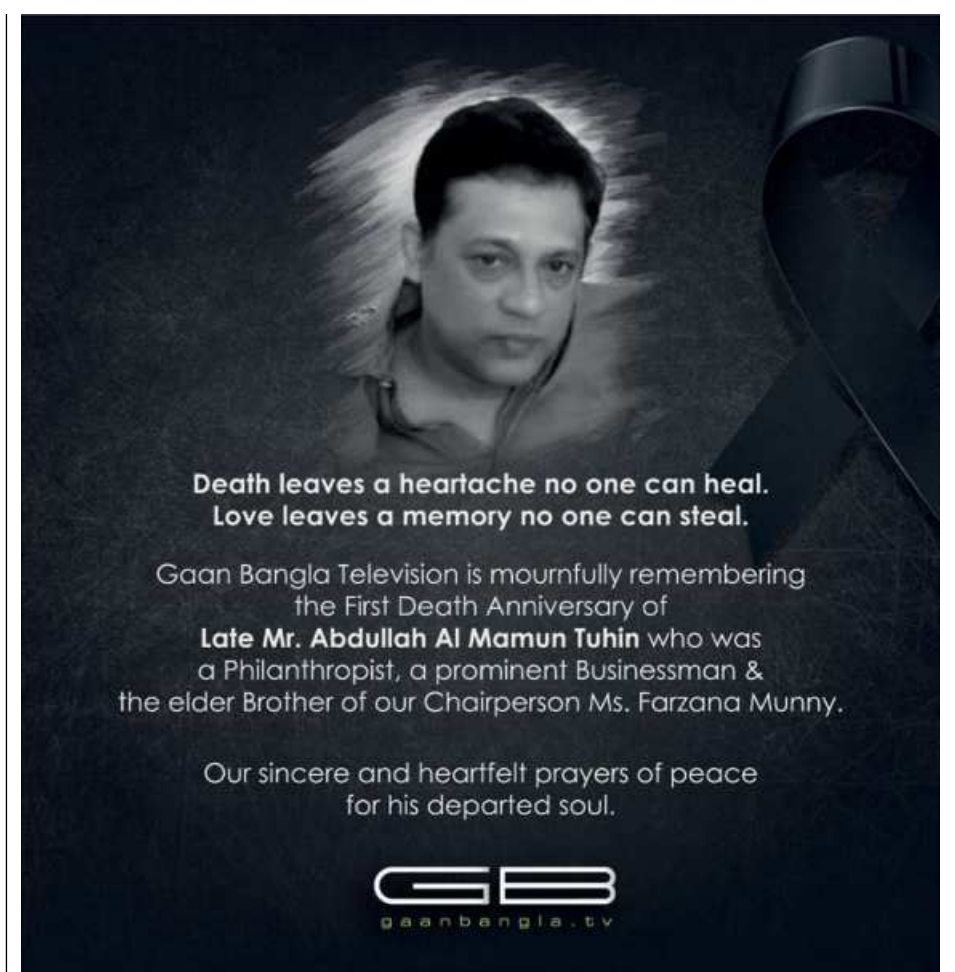
Says info minister

BSS, Dhaka

Sharply criticising BNP for not observing the historic Mujibnagar Day, Information and Broadcast Minister Dr Hasan Mahmud yesterday said BNP wants to deny history.

Talking to journalists after placing wreath at the portrait of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in city's Dhanmondi-32, Hasan, also Awami League joint general secretary, said the provisional government of independent Bangladesh was formed at Baidyanathata, mainly a mango orchard, in Meherpur on April 17 where Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was declared the first president of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and Syed Nazrul Islam was appointed as vice-president

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Death leaves a heartache no one can heal. Love leaves a memory no one can steal.

Gaan Bangla Television is mournfully remembering the First Death Anniversary of Late Mr. Abdullah Al Mamun Tuhi who was a Philanthropist, a prominent Businessman & the elder Brother of our Chairperson Ms. Farzana Munny.

Our sincere and heartfelt prayers of peace for his departed soul.

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