Pandemic Assistance

# PM to give aid to 36 lakh families

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will provide financial assistance to some 36 lakh families who have been hit hard by the ongoing coronavirus pandemic and recent natural disasters.

36 families The include 35 lakh low-

income ones engaged in different their names, national identity card occupations but hit hard by the rest one lakh are farmers affected by recent natural disasters.

Tk 2,500 will be provided as cash support to 35 lakh families, while Tk 5,000 will be given to one lakh farmer families each, said PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim.

The government will spend a total of Tk 930 crore to disburse cash among some 36 lakh families as the allocation for Covid-hit lowincome families is Tk 880 crore and for disaster-affected farmers is Tk 50

Out of 3.094.249 hectares of cropland in 36 districts, 10,301 hectares of cropland was destroyed and 59,327 hectares of cropland was partially damaged due to strong winds, hailstorms, and cyclones on April 4, 2021.

Some 100,000 farmers were disaster, according to the data of the Tk 2,500 as cash aid to each 35 lakh Department of Agricultural Extension. family this time.

Ministry of Agriculture recommended providing Tk 5,000 to each farmer as they are affected by double blows blows -- natural calamity and Covid-19 pandemic.

The ministry has already started enlisting the one lakh farmers incorporating

number, and mobile number in the current coronavirus situation and the list. The actual allocation for the farmers can be more or less depending on the number of farmers in the final

> In the 2019-20 fiscal year, the government disbursed Tk 2,500 as cash aid to each 35 lakh families scrutinising a list of 50 lakh families hit hard by the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. The allocation for providing cash support to the poor families was Tk 1,257.50 crore.

> The prime minister, in May 2020, inaugurated the disbursement of cash support through G2P (Governmentto-Person) through mobile financial services (MFSs).

> In the wake of the 2nd wave of coronavirus, the government has been enforcing Covid-19 lockdown since April 14 to prevent the spread of the

In this context, the ministry directly affected due to the recent concerned recommended providing

STRANDED MIGRANTS

# Lucky ones get to go to work abroad

Seven of 12 special flights depart

RASHIDUL HASAN

Seven out of 12 scheduled special flights left the Dhaka airport as of 9:00pm yesterday.

Of the seven flights, Biman Bangladesh Airlines operated two flights, one each on Dammam and Riyadh route; Oman Air operated one flight to Muscat; US-Bangla Airlines operated three flights, one and Emirates operated one flight to Dubai, Group Captain AHM Touhidul Ahsan, director, Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA), told The

Amid the nationwide lockdown that has been imposed to prevent the spread of coronavirus, around 1,600 expatriate workers remained stuck and could not return to their workplaces in Saudi Arabia, Muscat, Dubai, and Doha on these flights, sources at the

Director, HSIA, said there was no report so far about the cancellation of any of the 12 special flights scheduled

to fly yesterday from Dhaka. Meanwhile, several hundred migrant workers also gathered in front of the Biman's Motihjeel office in the capital and Saudi Arabian Airlines' office at the city's Hotel Sonargaon vesterday for the second consecutive days to re-issue their return tickets to

their workplaces in different countries. Talking to The Daily Star, in front of Saudia, several migrant workers told this correspondent that their visas would be expired within the next three to four days if they fail to go to

their workplaces in Saudi Arabia.

Meanwhile, graveyard staffers said

they have been struggling to perform

the burials while maintaining health

guidelines due to a lack of personal

protective equipment, gloves and

equipment last year to perform burials.

But this year, we are yet to get any.

We are having to do our job without

maintaining health guidelines properly,

ultimately risking our lives," said

Shaikul Islam, who has been working

in the graveyard for the last three years.

surge in Covid-19 infections and deaths

in the country," he said, adding that at

least six people are needed to carry out

of the virology department at Dhaka

Medical College, said wearing PPEs and

other protective gear is a must while

"Although the virus cannot spread

graveyard,

from a corpse but risks remain since

after a person's death, the body can

carry the virus for several hours," she

Rayerbazar

established on about 80 acres of land

in Mohammadpur area, is the largest

burying a Covid-19-infected body.

Prof Sultana Shahana Banu, head

just one burial.

"We are worried because there is a

had received protective

among the several hundred expatriate workers in front of Biman's Motijheel office, a migrant worker suffered a serious injury in his chest and face as he fell on a glass door at the entrance

Medical College Hospital.

Staging demonstrations in front of the Biman office, many passengers said they had to face untold sufferings each to Doha, Dubai, and Muscat; and had to spend a huge amount of money to reach Dhaka from different districts amid the countrywide "strict

"But after reaching here, we are not getting information from the Biman officials when we will be able to re-issue our return ticket," Tajuddin Ahmed, a migrant worker hailed from Kanaighat, Sylhet, told The Daily Star.

The return of several thousand Bangladeshi expatriate workers to their workplaces abroad, particularly in Saudi Arabia, suffered a major blow on Saturday due to the cancellation of

The government on April 14 suspended the operation of all international passenger flights to and from Bangladesh for a week to contain

However, the authorities the following day decided to operate at least 100 special flights to Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the UAE, Oman, and Singapore in a week from Saturday so that several thousand migrant workers

Due to the chaotic situation,

of the office building.

He was rushed to the Dhaka

Aminuddin, another Saudi-bound migrant worker, said he would be put in serious problems if he fails to go to Saudi Arabia by April 21, the deadline for his visa expiry.

eight flights from Dhaka.

the spread of Covid-19.



capital yesterday afternoon. The block has been designated for burial of Covid-19 patients.

## Quest for better conditions met with bullets

and emitting a rancid smell.

The tap at the labour shed was also found devoid of water on Saturday

Rafique Uddin, a worker from Kurigram district, told The Daily Star that they were forced to live in cramped rooms, use overflowing unhygienic toilets while facing lack of clean water.

Apart from resolving these problems, they demanded a rise in perhour wages and that arrears be paid, said Arif Billah, another worker at the

The problems could easily be solved through discussion and dialogue but our demands were met with bullets, he

Md Rafique, one of the workers at the power plant, told The Daily Star that more or less every worker faces problems with toilets, accommodation and water supply under 27 contractors at the plant. But workers under Zan Zejan, a Chinese company, faces problems beyond these issues.

Shahedul Karim Raju, a worker at the plant, told The Daily Star over phone that the problem started with workers under Zan Zejan and later spread to others.

Workers of Zen Zejan forced us to stop work on Friday. As we also have some problems we wanted an end to our crisis. That's why we went to meet the authorities of the Chinese company on Saturday morning."
Raju also said locals might have

played a role in instigating workers.

Mohammed Ansar, a member of Gondamara union parishad where the plant is located, told The Daily Star that Md Baizid, manager of Mahi Enterprise which works under Zan Zejan, used to rough up workers and deprived them of salaries, which led to the unrest.

Baizid could not be reached for Mohammed Liakot Ali, chairman of

Gondamara union parishad, told The Daily Star there there were some locals, who despite doing well, worked at the power plant as labourers.

Tomorrow's [today] meeting of

secretaries may make the decision,"

The Daily Star.

government

Covid-19, was reported.

Agriculture Minister Abdur Razzak told

The country went through the 14th

Although all public and private

offices remained shuttered and public

transport suspended, emergency

services, factories, and a few branches

implementing the restrictions through

stricter measures," a senior cabinet

day of restrictions yesterday, when the

highest, 102 confirmed deaths due to

"Police must look into such recruitment to see why they work and what their function inside the plant is,"

He claimed that the discontent has been in the making for the last three months. Some 30 locals fuelled the discontent. If the authorities investigate the matter rising above party lines, the key culprit will be easy to net, he said.

Two cases were filed against a total of 3,562 people with Banshkhali Police Station in connection with Saturday's

Police filed one of the cases accusing 2,500 unidentified persons on charge of attacking law enforcers while the power plant authorities have filed the other case accusing 22 named and 1,040 unnamed persons for setting vehicles on fire during the incident, Shafiul Kabir, officer-in-charge (OC) of Banshkhali Police Station, told The Daily Star.

Sub-inspector of Banshkhali Police Station Rashed and Chief Coordinator of the plant Faruk Ahmed filed the cases respectively, the OC said.

No one was arrested in connection with the cases till the filing of the

When asked about the necessity of indiscriminate firing towards workers, Chattogram District's Superintendent of Police (SP) SM Rashidul Haque told The Daily Star, "Around 2,500 to 3,000 workers gathered and tried to attack the Chinese workers of the project. They even assaulted their fellow workers and police personnel and set several project properties on fire."

As they attacked police and considering the circumstances, police opened fire to save the Chinese workers and property, and that led to the causalities," the SP said.

"If there is any police negligence, action will be taken after investigation. We've formed a probe committee and the report will make it clear," SP SM Rashidul Haque said

Local sources at Banshkhali's Gandamara said workers -- fearing harassment and further violence -- were

division official told The Daily Star

However, an "inner circle" within

Throughout the current restrictions,

the government is discussing the

likelihood of the restrictions being

the presence of law enforcers were

visible on the main streets in the city

and beyond, but very few of them were

vesterday, wishing not to be named.

extended until after the Eid.

ASK URGES GOVT FOR LEGAL ACTION

seen leaving the area since yesterday

Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK), a leading rights organisation, yesterday served a legal notice on the government requesting it to take appropriate legal action against those involved in killing and injuring workers of the SS Power

In the notice, the organisation urged authorities concerned of the government to give Tk 3 crore in compensation to the family of each of the workers who were killed and Tk 2 core to the family of each worker injured in the clash within seven days

by ensuring their safety and security. ASK in the notice requested authorities to file a criminal case against the perpetrators (be they the employers, administration or law enforcement agencies or any vested quarter) involved in the incident of killing and injuring workers, bringing charges of murder and grievous hurt against them under the relevant law.

The organisation also asked officials concerned of the government to withdraw the case filed against workers in seven days, saying the officials' prompt action is highly necessary to protect workers' right to life, property, livelihood and security.

Lawyer Syeda Nasrin sent the legal notice on behalf of ASK to the officials concerned saying that a writ petition will be filed with the High Court seeking necessary orders if the officials failed to take appropriate action in line with the demand of the legal notice.

The notice was sent to senior secretary and secretary to home ministry; secretaries to the ministries of law, industries, labour and employment, commerce and power, energy and mineral resources; inspector general of police; divisional commissioner, deputy commissioner and superintendent of police in Chattogram for taking appropriate action, Shahinuzzaman Shahin, another lawyer for ASK, told The Daily Star.

were exempt from the restrictions and

the government allowed resumption of

bus services within the 11 cities from

announced that shops and malls could

be open for eight hours from April 9 to

April 13 despite concerns from health

Large numbers of people were

seen on the streets buying goods and

going to offices and businesses. Many

began hanging out at tea-stalls in their

neighbourhoods. Very few steps were

restrictions until 6:00am on April 14.

the half-hearted enforcement of

restrictions would be effective at all,

the cabinet division on April 12 issued

a circular regarding a "strict lockdown"

from 6:00am on April 14 to April 21

The government later extended the

As the experts doubted whether

taken to enforce the restrictions.

On April 8, the government

April 7.

experts.

midnight.

#### OXYGEN SHORTAGE IN COVID

# India bans oxygen supply for industrial purposes

Our Correspondent, Delhi

Faced with a shortage of oxygen supply to treat an unprecedented rise in critical Covid-19 patients across India, its government last night decided to ban the supply of oxygen for industrial purposes from April 22 till further order.

"... the supply of oxygen for industrial purposes by manufacturers and suppliers is prohibited forthwith from 22.04.2021 till further orders," the health ministry said in a statement.

The matter was deliberated by the commerce ministry with all stakeholders and "after due deliberations, it was considered prudent to restrict the industrial usage of oxygen to meet the rising demand for medical oxygen," according to the

"The surplus oxygen available as a result of this temporary restriction will facilitate its freeing up for use as medical oxygen for treatment of Covid-19 patients," it said.

India is facing an unprecedented surge in new daily cases of Covid-19 and the requirement of oxygen for effective clinical treatment of patients has also witnessed a manifold

As per the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) under India's commerce ministry, the requirement of oxygen for Covid-19 treatment has already reached about 60 percent of the total daily oxygen production and is expected to rise further.

In another move to boost the supply of oxygen for treatment of Covid-19 patients in different parts of the country, the railways ministry is gearing up to transport liquid medical oxygen and oxygen cylinders and to run special trains called "Oxygen Express'

To facilitate easy and smooth transport of oxygen by freight trains across the country, a green corridor is being created for fast movement of 'Oxygen Express" trains.

The prohibition on oxygen for industrial use will, however, not apply to the supply of oxygen for production of ampoules and vials, pharmaceutical industries, petroleum refineries, steel plants, nuclear energy facilities, oxygen cylinder manufacturers, waste water treatment plants, food and water purification and process industries which require uninterrupted operation of furnaces.

#### CASE UNDER DSA

## Man held over FB post in Khagrachhari

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

A young man in Khagrachhari landed in jail yesterday in a case filed under the Digital Security Act over his Facebook comments.

Amit Acharjee, 29, was arrested around 11:30am, soon after local resident Ibrahim Kalil filed a case accusing Amit of "hurting religious sentiment on Facebook".

"He is accused of making provocative comments on a video of Islamist speaker Mizanur Rahman Azhari on Facebook. This spread tension on [sic] Facebook, prompting Amit to leave his house and go into hiding in the Bottoli area," said Inspector Golam Afsar of Khagrachhari Sadar Police Station. He added that Amit was arrested

from there and a court sent him to jail

## Record 102 die

FROM PAGE 1

At least 6,121 Covid-19 patients recovered during the period.

The total number of recoveries is now 6,14,936 and the recovery rate 85.53 percent.

Among yesterday's 102 deceased, 59 were men and 43 women. Of them, two were within 31-40 years old, 14 between 41 and 50, 23 within 51-60, and 63 were above 60 years old, added the release.

### Gaza sees record daily virus deaths

AFP, Gaza City

The Gaza Strip recorded its highestever daily toll of coronavirus deaths, authorities said Sunday, as the Israeliblockaded territory struggles with a dearth of vaccines.

The Palestinian enclave, hemmed in by a large concrete barrier, the Egyptian border and the Mediterranean Sea, had been largely spared by the Covid-19 illness for much of last year.

# Dhaka hotter in 20 years

Line of corpses only gets

graveyard in Dhaka, run under the Contacted, Md Asaduzzaman, DNCC social welfare officer, said burials of Covid-19-infected bodies

increased recently. Some 11 such bodies were buried there on Tuesday and another 12 on Wednesday, he said.

Five bodies were buried at the graveyard as of 3:00pm yesterday, he said, adding that the arrival of bodies usually increases after the evenings. So far, around 1,100 Covid-19-

infected bodies have been buried at the graveyard since people started to die from the infection last year, he added. However, Asaduzzaman said, "Some people may be burying the deceased

secretly in other graveyards in the city.

Besides, many are taking the bodies

to their village homes in different Staffers said the graveyard's block-8 has been dedicated for the burial of Covid-19 patients and it still has

enough space left. They added that although they charge Tk 500 for one burial, no amount is charged for the burial of

Covid-19 bodies. Some 32 people work in two shifts at the graveyard.

the smaller cities," the report said.

The annual daytime temperature in Chattogram has risen by 1.92 degrees Celsius, in Khulna by 1.27 degrees, in Sylhet by 1.10 degrees and in Rajshahi by 0.74 degrees, according to the report.

When it comes to night temperatures, Chattogram scored highest with a 90 degrees Celsius increase, followed by Dhaka with 1.57 degrees.

The lowest night temperature increase was observed in Sylhet city (0.16 degrees Celsius). "Human populations play a major role in shaping cities and influencing the thermal environment of urban areas, so increasing population both expand city size and are accountable for the rapid transformation of natural land

cover to impervious surfaces," the report "The situation is going from bad to vorse. Poor environmental governance is accountable for temperatures rising at an alarming rate," Ashraf Dewan, lead researcher of the study, told The Daily

He also said urban warming is increasing at an alarming rate in Bangladesh cities due to a variety of reasons including uneven building heights, extreme population density, meagre greenery, and above all, poor environmental governance.

"While buildings trap daytime heating and reduce nighttime cooling a result of multiple reflection, extreme population density means increased metabolic heating and greater anthropogenic activities," said Dewan, also a professor at School of Earth & Planetary Sciences, Curtin University,

He also said the rise of urban temperature is also associated with reduced evapotranspiration (the sum of water evaporation and transpiration from a surface area to the atmosphere) due to abundance of concrete structures.

waste "Besides. heat transports, buildings and industrial areas deteriorates the urban thermal environment," said Dewan.

instead of aiming for a high percent of green cover over particular areas. "As the country is frequently affected by various types of natural hazards such as floods, public policies are well

developed to lessen the impacts of natural disasters. Policies however are not well conceived for reducing urban warming. Hence, location-specific mitigation measures are imperative. In other words, adaptation strategies should be developed based on a city's attributes. Spatial planning can therefore be an important tool in this respect," Dewan concluded.

Renowned urban planner Neaz

If building height is more than the surrounding trees then these buildings will absorb heat and contribute to the urban heat island (UHI) effect.

"UHI are high in areas where highrise buildings are concentrated. Highrise buildings need more energy consuming mechanical gadgets (air conditioners, lifts, etc.) to operate, which generate

of water bodies. Water bodies play a major role in controlling microclimates through controlling microclimate humidity and temperature. The other reason the urban planner

cited was high building density, which hampers natural ventilation in buildings and contributes to the UHI effect. He said the UHI phenomenon affects human welfare in terms of living

conditions, especially for children and

the older people. Rahman, who was coordinator and deputy team leader, Detailed Area Plan, said in the DAP there were new guidelines for urban density control through regulating residential buildings height and density.

Restoration of khals (canals or creeks), rivers, wetlands and roads and metropolitan region.

#### "The alleys would be brought under stricter vigilance," the cabinet division official said, adding that all of banks continued their operations. While the main streets have been these decisions depended on the prime relatively empty, the alleys remained minister's approval. crowded as many shops other than On April 4, the Cabinet Division those selling groceries and drugs remained open with half-closed issued an 11-point directive with a set

of restrictions effective from 6:00am on April 5 to 12:00am on April 11 to "In the given situation, the contain the spread of coronavirus. It considering...

seen in alleyways.

Extended lockdown to be stricter

said violators of the directives would be punished. Different offices, mills and factories

from

To reduce urban heating, the expert geographer stressed on placing greenery strategically in heat-exposed areas

Rahman pointed at destruction of green space, especially those with large trees.

railways as urban lifeline is important. These urban lifelines are designed as public health infrastructure," he said, urging the creation of a greenblue network criss-crossing the Dhaka

### more heat," he said. Rahman also pointed at filling up