

## Petition challenges legality of ongoing 'lockdown'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Supreme Court lawyer yesterday filed a writ petition with the High Court, challenging legality of the ongoing "lockdown" imposed by the government to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

Md Eunus Ali Akond submitted the petition as a public interest litigation to the HC. He also sought HC order on the government not to impose a lockdown in the country without any emergency situation.

In the petition, he said citizens' fundamental rights including right to free movement and access to justice are being violated due to the ongoing lockdown.

People cannot move freely and approach the courts and offices for remedy due to the lockdown, which is contradictory to the constitution, Eunus Ali told The Daily Star citing the writ petition.

The lawyer also prayed to the HC to issue a rule asking the government to show causes why imposing lockdown without any emergency situation should not be declared illegal and unconstitutional. He said the HC may hold hearing on the petition today.



In the absence of public transportation, pick-up vans and motorbikes have become the only option for commuting for many in Chattogram. This family of four, including two children, crams itself on a motorcycle precariously, and moves past the port city's Karnaphuli area yesterday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

## DNCC COVID-19 HOSPITAL Struggling to meet the rising demand

Manpower shortage, lack of diagnostic tests hampering services

MOUDDUD AHMED SUJAN

The newly-launched DNCC Covid-19 hospital in Dhaka has been struggling with the rising number of patients due to shortage of skilled manpower and other facilities.

The hospital, set up at Dhaka North City Corporation's Mohakhali market, is yet to launch pathology test and diagnosis services for patients. The authorities, however, said they were expecting to resolve all the issues by the end of this month.

To tackle the second wave of coronavirus that started from the second week of March, the government partially launched operation of the 1,000-bed DNCC hospital from April 18.

As of yesterday, the hospital authorities have launched a total of 100 beds in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) and 30 beds in the High Dependency Unit (HDU) on the fifth floor of the hospital.

Besides, there are 50 beds with high-flow oxygen support (High-Flow Nasal Cannula) in operation in the emergency unit at the first floor of the hospital.

Of them, only eight ICU beds were vacant yesterday afternoon, according to the staffers at the Triage and Emergency Department at the hospital. On Thursday, the number of available ICU beds was just one.

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## CLINICAL TRIALS OF COVID-19 VACCINE

### BMRC to look into pending requests

Its ethical committee to hold meeting in a day or two over the issue, say officials

MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

The pending requests with the Bangladesh Medical Research Council (BMRC) on running trial of vaccines might see some positive outcome as the ethical committee is expected to hold a meeting in a day or two over the issue.

"Hope, there will be some positive outcome," said Prof Dr Shahla Khatun, chairman of the ethical committee at BMRC.

Uncertainty looms large after India -- the lone supplier of the Covid-19 vaccine -- expressed its inability in delivering vaccines to Bangladesh.

The crisis could have been avoided had the government not relied on a single source and took the advantage of other sources who had offered vaccines to Bangladesh earlier, experts believe.

"Since we've a large population, it is a common sense that we were needed to explore more options [for vaccine]," said Prof Be-Nazir Ahmed, former director of disease control at the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

"The way we're heading, vaccine seems our best

option. If you're vaccinated, either you'll not be infected or the attack would be mild. Which means, the 44-45 lakh people who received two doses have less risk," he said.

Be-Nazir said, "We're not bound to take vaccine after clinical trial but if a trial turns out successful, we would get priority. We now need to increase our diplomatic endeavour to ensure vaccine from different sources."

Two Chinese and one Indian organisations had applied for clinical trial at the end of last year.

One of the Chinese companies -- Institute of Medical Biology, Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences (IMBCAMS) -- requested the health ministry for carrying out Phase III Clinical Trial of SARS-CoV-2 on December 23, 2020.

The actual trials were still awaiting approval of the ethical committee of BMRC.

IMBCAMS SARS-CoV-2 is an inactivated (vero cell) type vaccine like polio and influenza. These consist of viruses grown in culture and then killed as a means to reduce virulence (ability to infect and

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## ARMANITOLA FIRE

### One more dies at hospital, death toll now five

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Another person burnt in the chemical storage fire in Dhaka's Armanitola on Friday, died yesterday morning.

Deceased Shafayet (35) was undergoing treatment at the intensive care unit of Sheikh Hasina National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery, confirmed Dr Samanta Lal Sen, chief coordinator of the institute.

With Shafayet, the death toll in the incident rose to five.

Shafayet suffered 25 percent burn injuries including in his windpipe, the doctor said, adding that he succumbed around 7:30am.

Shafayet's father Delwar Hosen (55), mother Layla Begum (45), brother Shaker Hosen (30), wife Mili Aktar (25), and two-year-old daughter Yashfa were also injured in the incident and are currently admitted to the same hospital. Three among the family members are in the ICU, said Dr Samanta Lal Sen.



Barely a fourth of Bidyanondo Field Hospital's 70 beds in the port city's Halishahar has been utilised since the facility was inaugurated last April 15. As private hospitals struggle with a large load of patients, the nonprofit is encouraging more people to opt for affordable treatment options.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

## POND EXCAVATION PROJECT AT RU

### Contractors take away soil as authorities nonchalant

RU CORRESPONDENT

Local contractors illegally sold a huge amount of soil dug up from Rajshahi University land, defying order of the authorities. However, the RU administration has not taken any effective steps against it.

University sources said following a tender in March 2020, RU agriculture project authority leased out 10 bighas of land for four years to excavate a pond, near Shaheed Shamsuzzoha Hall. Under the project, the lifted soil was supposed to be kept around the pond. But the contractors -- Masud Rana, also a brother of local Awami League leader, and Ohona Traders -- sold the soil, ignoring the terms of the tender, said Proddip Kumar Roy, acting officer of the agriculture project.

During a visit last week, this correspondent found 17 tractors being used to transport the soil outside the campus. Requesting anonymity, workers said around 200 tractors of soil were dug up every day, and sold to brick kilns and others.

Contractor Masud Rana told this newspaper, "We were verbally permitted to take soil; authorities were informed about it."

Dablu Sarker, owner of Ohona Traders, did not respond to the correspondent's calls.

Pro-Vice Chancellor Prof Anand Kumar Saha, RU agriculture project advisor panel chairman, said there is no chance for such permission. "In addition, we issued notices to stop excavation, on March 31 and April 10, but they defied the orders. So, we recommended the university authorities to take legal action against them."

Contacted, RU Registrar Prof Md Abdus Salam said, "We held a meeting with the contractors on Saturday. They will not take soil further, and they agreed to follow the tender's terms." Asked why no action was taken all this time and what will be the next course of action, he declined to comment.

VC M Abdus Sobhan could not be reached for comments over the phone.

## Syed Abul Maksud was a true public intellectual: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eminent citizens yesterday called for initiatives to preserve Syed Abul Maksud's humanist ideology, scholarly works and immense knowledge by publishing anthologies of his writings.

At a commemorative seminar held virtually, he recalled the scholarly contributions, uncompromising ideological stance and courageous activism of the late columnist and researcher who passed away from fever and respiratory problems on February 23 at the age of 74.

Good governance campaigner Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik (Shujan) organised the commemorative seminar.

In his opening remarks, Shujan Secretary Badiul Alam Majumdar said, "Syed Abul Maksud was an intellectual for the mass people. He used to mingle with people from all walks of life. He was a gifted writer. He delivered very serious and important messages for our nation through simple but humorous words."

Former cabinet secretary Ali Imam Majumdar said, "His research works are multi-dimensional and extremely insightful. The work truly reflected the evolution of Bangladeshi society and culture. His research works will

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On road construction duty in the burning heat of yesterday's noon, two workers take a break from mixing stone with bitumen and to rehydrate themselves. A heat wave is sweeping the country, and those who have to do hard physical labour -- especially outdoors -- are taking the heat, quite literally. This photo was taken from Barishal city's Kaladema area.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

## আমরা শোকাহত

ইস্টার্ন ইউনিভার্সিটির বোর্ড অব ট্রাস্টিজের (বিওটি) সদস্য, ইয়ুথ গ্রুপের চেয়ারম্যান, বিশিষ্ট শিল্পপতি ও সমাজসেবক রেজাকুল হায়দার (৬৭) গত ২৩ এপ্রিল ২০২১ শুক্রবার বিকেলে ইস্তেকাল করেছেন (ইন্না লিল্লাহি ওয়া ইন্না ইলাইহি রাজিউন)। ২৪ এপ্রিল সকালে রাজধানীর ধানমন্ডির তাকওয়া মসজিদে জানাজা শেষে নারায়ণগঞ্জের রূপগঞ্জ পারিবারিক কবরস্থানে তাঁর মরদেহ দাফন করা হয়েছে।

চট্টগ্রামের সন্দ্বীপ উপজেলার বাসিন্দা রেজাকুল হায়দার চট্টগ্রাম বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় থেকে স্নাতক শেষে ১৯৮২ সালে ব্যবসায়ী হিসেবে কর্মজীবন শুরু করেন। তিনি বাংলাদেশের অন্যতম শিল্প ও ব্যবসা প্রতিষ্ঠান ইয়ুথ গ্রুপের একজন প্রতিষ্ঠাতা ও বর্তমান চেয়ারম্যান ছিলেন। তিনি ইসলামিক ফাইন্যান্স অ্যান্ড ইনভেস্টমেন্ট লিমিটেডের (আইএফআইএল) পরিচালনা পর্ষদের চেয়ারম্যান এবং ইয়ুথ ফ্যাশন লিমিটেড, ইয়ুথ গার্মেন্টস, পেট্রোম্যাক্স এলপিজি লিমিটেড, পেট্রোম্যাক্স সিলিভার লিমিটেড, কমফিট কম্পোজিট নিট লিমিটেড ও শাহজীবাজার পাওয়ার কোম্পানি লিমিটেডের চেয়ারম্যান ছিলেন। এ ছাড়া, তিনি জেনিথ ইসলামী লাইফ ইন্স্যুরেন্স লিমিটেডের ভাইস চেয়ারম্যান, মিডল্যান্ড পাওয়ার লিমিটেড ও মিডল্যান্ড ইস্ট পাওয়ার লিমিটেডের পরিচালক ছিলেন। তিনি কয়েকটি শিক্ষাপ্রতিষ্ঠান ও সন্দ্বীপে একটি বৃহৎ হাসপাতাল প্রতিষ্ঠা করেছেন। তিনি আজীবন মানবসেবায় নিজেকে নিয়োজিত রেখেছিলেন।

জনাব রেজাকুল হায়দার স্ত্রী, দুই পুত্রসহ অনেক আত্মীয়স্বজন ও শুভাকাঙ্ক্ষী রেখে গেছেন। তাঁর মৃত্যুতে ইস্টার্ন ইউনিভার্সিটির বোর্ড অব ট্রাস্টিজসহ বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের শিক্ষক, কর্মকর্তা ও কর্মচারীরা গভীরভাবে শোকাহত। আমরা তাঁর বিদেহী আত্মার মাগফেরাত কামনা এবং শোকসন্তপ্ত পরিবারের প্রতি গভীর সমবেদনা জ্ঞাপন করছি।

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