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NATIONAL POVERTY REGISTRY

Project delayed, data obsolete

Costs more than doubled; experts call it missed opportunity for a ready database for economic shocks from Covid-19

NILIMA JAHAN

The government project undertaken to prepare the country's first-ever poverty registry has not been completed in more than seven years, with the data collected for it already rendered useless.

The National Household Database (NHD), initially known as the Bangladesh Poverty Database, is meant to help streamline the beneficiary selection process for social safety net programmes by gathering socioeconomic data of each household in the country.

Implemented in collaboration between the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) and the Department of Disaster Management (DDM), the project beginning in 2013 was supposed to be completed by 2017.

But the Tk 328 crore project, financed by the government and the World Bank, saw its deadline pushed to June 2021 and costs balloon to Tk 727 crore.

After taking four years only to work out the modes of operation, BBS collected the socioeconomic information of 3.5 crore

households from 64 districts in three phases in 2017 and 2018.

The data, BBS officials said, is synchronised with the Election Commission's database.

Progress on the NHD slowed to a halt while developing the Management Information System (MIS), where the socioeconomic data of each household in the country would be uploaded so various government departments could easily access it for selecting appropriate beneficiaries for their programmes.

DATA NOW OBSOLETE

The project delays mean not only are poor households deprived of benefits targeted to them for longer but also that the list has been rendered outdated due to the coronavirus pandemic, said experts.

CPD Distinguished Fellow Prof Mustafizur Rahman said the NHD data collected between 2017 and 2018 is now obsolete. Without the scope for periodic upgradation, the database may not be able to serve the people as it could have if ready

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Maintaining physical distancing, day labourers and less fortunate people wait on the premises of Pahartoli Girls' School and College in Chattogram yesterday to receive the prime minister's grant. The district's deputy commissioner distributed relief goods among them.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

STRANDED IN INDIA 80 return via Benapole

60 more in queue

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Many Bangladeshis, who were stranded at India's Petropole border, were allowed to enter the country through the Benapole border in Jashore yesterday.

Only those who have special permission from Bangladesh's deputy high commission office in India's Kolkata would be allowed to enter Bangladesh, said Ahsan Habib, officer-in-charge (OC) of Benapole immigration.

"Some 80 people entered Bangladesh today in phases from morning to evening," he told The Daily Star yesterday evening.

Around 60 to 70 Bangladeshis were still waiting at the Petropole border till yesterday evening.

Those who entered will have to remain quarantined for two weeks at a hotel in Benapole with their own expenses, the officer added.

Earlier on April 25, the Bangladesh government suddenly announced to seal the border with India curb the spread of Covid-19. As per decision the, passenger travel will remain closed but trade will continue.

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GETTING THE VACCINES, O2 Bangladesh joins China initiative

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has joined the China-led initiative with five other South Asian countries in the spirit of partnership and multilateralism to have vaccine and oxygen supplies during the critical period of coronavirus pandemic.

"We can see moves of unilateralism. We don't want it. We want multilateralism, cooperation and partnership. This is important. We have stressed on it," Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen told reporters yesterday.

This is the first foreign minister-level meeting of the China-led initiative called "China-South Asia Platform for Covid-19 Consultation, Cooperation, and Post-pandemic Economic Recovery". Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi chaired the meeting, joined by foreign ministers of Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Asked if India was joining the initiative, Momen said China invited India to join it.

The minister said China proposed establishing Covid Emergency Medical Facility, Poverty Alleviation Centre and exploring E-commerce in rural areas. "We have agreed to the proposal in principle. We want welfare of the people."

He said the South Asian countries in March last year also launched Saarc Covid Fund. Bangladesh also joined it. The Bangladesh prime minister had proposed setting up a regional institution for emergency medical services, but it was not done.

Momen said ASEAN countries also established an emergency medical facility in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. He stressed the need for stronger cooperation

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30 Rohingyas heading to Malaysia rescued

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Bangladesh Coast Guard members yesterday rescued 30 Rohingyas, who were trying to go to Malaysia illegally by a trawler through the Bay of Bengal, in Cox's Bazar's Teknaf.

The Rohingyas include 10 women and five children. They were residents of Kutupalong and Balukhali camps of the district.

The coastguards also seized the trawler.

Quoting the refugees, Amirul Haque, an official of Coast Guard's media wing, told reporters that around 50 Rohingyas boarded the trawler from the beaches in Teknaf and Ukhia upazilas on April 22.

The trawler illegally started for Malaysia on Monday night and at one stage, the trawler driver shouted that robbers had

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ROAD TO FREEDOM THIS DAY IN BANGLADESH LIBERATION WAR HISTORY

Tajuddin's plea for arms aid

APRIL 28, 1971

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

TAJUDDIN'S APPEAL FOR SUPPORT

Bangladesh Prime Minister Tajuddin Ahmed today appealed to neighbouring countries to grant immediate recognition to Bangladesh and to give unconditional arms aid and thus help a newborn country free itself from the clutches of a murderous army. In a message to the nation, broadcast over the Free Bangladesh Radio, the prime minister urged the countrymen to drive away the invaders "who are causing bloodshed on our soil by the weapons purchased from the exploited money of our own countrymen".

He said that Rangpur, Dinajpur, Faridpur, Bogra and Mymensingh (except cantonment areas) had been liberated from the West Pakistan army and expressed confidence that the remaining areas would come under the Bangladesh government shortly.

He also appealed to Bangalees residing in foreign countries to give all possible help to the freedom struggle. A DIPLOMATIC TIGHTROPE FOR INDIA The Indians, with strong sympathies for the month-old Bangalee independence struggle in East Pakistan, were trying to keep their balance on a diplomatic tightrope, buffeted by a heavy wind, reported New York Times. It added that despite its denunciations of the Pakistani army's offensive against the independence movement, New Delhi had so far refrained from recognising the new government of Bangladesh.

New York Times highlighted two basic reasons for this restraint: one was the desire to avoid having another war with Pakistan,

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INDIA'S O2 EXPORT BAN Health minister calls for calm

78 more die of Covid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

When the sudden halt to oxygen import from India may put the country at risk if the number of Covid-19 patients rises more, Health Minister Zahid Maleque said there is nothing to panic about the supply of oxygen in the country.

There is no shortage of oxygen at the hospitals and the government is working to increase the stock and capacity, the minister said in a press conference at Bangladesh College of Physicians and Surgeons in Dhaka yesterday.

"We only used to import 40-50 tons daily as the demand increased during [recent surge of] coronavirus. But we are okay despite imports have remained closed for the last four to five days," Zahid Maleque said.

The supply of medical oxygen to public hospitals has been under a strain as the demand for life-sustaining gas doubled in the last few weeks.

Uncertainty looms large when neighbouring India has been in acute crisis for oxygen due to the tremendous surge of a double-mutant variant of coronavirus recently.

With the second wave being much

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A group of people trying to protect themselves from the heat as they wait in line to buy essential commodities at a slightly lower price from a truck of Trading Corporation Bangladesh. The photo was taken in front of Hotel Purbani in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Int'l aid pours into India

Most of 60m doses of AZ vaccine from US to land in the country; WHO chief says Covid situation 'beyond heartbreaking'

AGENCIES

Vital medical supplies poured into India yesterday as hospitals starved of life-saving oxygen and beds turned away coronavirus patients, while a surge in infections pushed the death toll towards 200,000.

A shipment from Britain, including 100 ventilators and 95 oxygen concentrators, arrived in Delhi, said Reuters partner ANI, while France is sending oxygen generators able to provide 250 patients with a year's worth of the gas, its embassy said.

Ireland, Belgium, Romania, Luxembourg, Portugal and Sweden are also sending medical supplies to India through the European Union's Civil Protection Mechanism.

The first "Oxygen Express" train pulled into the capital, New Delhi, laden with about 70 tonnes of oxygen from an eastern state, but the crisis has not abated in the city of 20 million at the epicentre of the latest wave of infections.

With frustration mounting, relatives of a recently deceased Covid-19 patient attacked staff with knives at a hospital in the southeast of New Delhi, injuring at least one person, a hospital spokeswoman said.

A video posted on social media showed several people brawling with guards at the same hospital. Delhi High Court has advised local authorities to provide security at hospitals.

"For seven days, most of us haven't slept," said Dr K

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PRAYER TIMING APRIL 28

Fajr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
4:07	12:45	4:45	6:29	8:00
JAMAAT	4:17	1:15	5:00	6:39
			8:30	

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING

RAMADAN APRIL SEHRI IFTAR

15	28	6:29
16	29	4:01
17	30	4:00