

# Shopping malls thrive amid lax lockdown

Transport workers demand resumption of services

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Lockdown imposed by the government to contain the second wave of Covid-19 appears to be in place only on paper, as there are little to no restrictions being implemented in reality.

Roads and shopping malls are crowded with vehicles and people amid the pandemic.

With Eid-ul-Fitr ahead, shopping centres and malls are filled with customers.

Visiting some major shopping malls and markets in Dhaka -- New Market, Chandni Chawk, Gausia, Noor Mansion, Chandrima Super Market, and Bashundhara City Mall -- yesterday, The Daily Star correspondents found customers pouring into the shops from 10am.

At most shopping centres, maintaining the health and safety rules appeared a big challenge due to the heavy flow of customers.

At the entry points of some markets, antiseptic mix was sprayed on customers, instead of providing them with hand sanitisers. Besides, there was not enough space inside most of the shops to maintain physical distancing.



This traffic jam at College gate on Mirpur Road resembles Dhaka as we once knew it -- long before lockdowns were on anyone's radar. The photo was taken yesterday around 10am.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

customers come in the afternoon from 3pm and do their shopping till 5:30pm before iftar. Many do their shopping after office time, so there is a heavy crowd of customers in malls starting from the afternoon.

On the other hand, as the businesses close by 8pm, few customers visit after iftar.

So the organisation demanded to extend the business hour till 12am ahead of Eid.

In the letter, they claimed that 95 percent people wear masks during shopping at the markets. However, during visits to popular markets and shopping malls, this correspondent found that many shopkeepers and customers wear masks incorrectly, and frequently take the masks off.

## WORKERS DEMAND PUBLIC TRANSPORT RESUMPTION

Meanwhile transport workers yesterday brought out a procession in some parts of the city including Gabtoli and Sayedabad to press home their three-point demand including resumption of public transport services maintaining health protocols.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

## CAAB PUTS OMAN ON HIGH-RISK LIST

# Returnees left in the lurch

Expats term decision illogical, demand withdrawal

EZAZ MAHMUD

The Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh's (CAAB) latest decision to put Oman as one of 12 "high risk" countries has left hundreds of expatriates in the Gulf country waiting to come home on Eid vacation in trouble.

Bangladeshi community leaders demanded withdrawal of the decision as due to it expatriates will not be allowed to enter Bangladesh from Oman.

According to them, Oman in no way can be put as a "high risk" country. Over the past few days, although infection rate has increased slightly there, it was not out of control unlike other countries in the list.

Besides, at present Oman is not in the list of "high risk countries" of any other country.

After the new directive, two Dhaka-bound flights scheduled on April 30 night from Oman's Muscat International Airport were cancelled. About 200 passengers suffered immensely for that. They weren't aware of the CAAB directive, which came barely few hours before their journey to the airport.

CAAB allowed some international flights to operate conditionally from Saturday. However, special conditions have been

imposed for travelling to 38 countries identified as "highly risky" and "risky".

As per the CAAB notice, in group 'A' or "high risk" countries, Oman is the only country from six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations and one of two Middle East countries, after Iran. As per it, passengers will not be allowed to enter Bangladesh from Oman, on direct or transit flight.

Bangladeshi expatriates or Bangladeshis who in the last 15 days were on visit to any of the 12 countries including Oman will be able to return to Bangladesh upon special permission from related government authorities, and have to undergo a mandatory 14-day quarantine in government-approved hotels at their own expenditure.

Expatriates from Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates -- which are in category 'C' -- as well as from three other GCC countries -- Kuwait, Qatar, and Bahrain -- which are in the list of 'risky' countries -- have not been barred from entering Bangladesh.

According to latest data of Worldometer, so far 1,95,807 persons have been infected with coronavirus in Oman. Of them, 2,043 died, and 1,76,833 recovered. Although infection rate increased during the second wave, it is not alarming and prevalence of

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

## 'It might create more panic'

HC bench refuses to interfere in govt's Covid measures

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A High Court bench yesterday said more panic might be created if it interfered with the government's decisions and actions regarding the Covid-19 pandemic.

"The government has been trying its best to tackle the Covid-19 pandemic. If we interfere in this situation, it might lead to more panic and confusion in the society," the bench of Justice M Enayetur Rahim and Justice Sardar Md Rashed Jahangir said, after a writ petition was filed seeking its directive on the government to formulate comprehensive short, mid and long-term national plans in Covid-19 management and to vaccinate all vulnerable citizens, irrespective of age.

The court refused to pass an order, asking how the government can formulate a comprehensive national plan for a virus whose patterns even national and international experts cannot predict.

The HC bench told the petitioners that the country is yet to reach an emergency situation where the court should pass such an order. It asked Mohammad Humayun Kabir Pallab, one of the writ petitioners, to wait and see how the situation develops and move the same writ petition should

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

## HC clears way to hold FBCCI polls on May 5

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday cleared way for holding election to the posts of directors of Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) on May 5.

The court discharged the rule it had issued earlier questioning the inaction of authorities to halt the election process.

The bench of Justice M Enayetur Rahim and Justice Sardar Md Rashed Jahangir came up with the order following a petition filed by election board of FBCCI.

Lawyer Imtiaz Moinul Islam told The Daily Star the petition filed by Amir Uddin Bipu challenging the election process is not acceptable as he is not a member of FBCCI.

There no legal bar to hold the elections, he said.

## PRE-BUDGET DISCUSSION

# Ensure economic incentive for indigenous people: MJF

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government in its next budget must ensure a special economic incentive for indigenous people severely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, demanded leaders of indigenous rights organisations yesterday at a webinar organised by Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF).

They also consider it essential to have a specific allocation for the indigenous community to make the development activities more inclusive.

The leaders also demanded a separate paragraph in the national budget while allocating funds for the development of indigenous people.

Even if the budget speech is short, there should be a description of the ethnic people, their identity, rights, culture, lifestyle, development etc. at least in one paragraph, they demanded.

The points were made at the webinar titled "Specific and Inclusive Budget for Ethnic People".

Bangladesh Adivasi Forum President

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

## Fake currency gang busted in Dhaka

Three arrested with notes worth Tk 46 lakh, equipment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detective Branch (DB) of police claimed to have arrested three persons yesterday in connection with note forgery from Kamrangirchar area of Dhaka.

Of the arrestees, Imam Hossain and Md Pias completed their diploma from the Government Polytechnic College in Barishal. One of them used to work as a network engineer and another as an engineer at a textile mill.

They joined hands with the leader of a note forgery gang, Jiban Hossain, to earn some easy money. Jiban used to pay each Tk 22,000 per month apparently.

Mashiur Rahman, deputy commissioner of Gulshan Division of DB police, told The Daily Star police arrested the three from a house in Kamrangirchar, acting on a tip-off. Police found counterfeit money from under the bed, under the mattress, hidden inside clothes in the closet, and seized around Tk 46 lakh worth of fake notes and counterfeit money-making materials, he said.

The stockpiled equipment was enough to make another Tk 1.5 crore worth of fake notes, said police.

During interrogation, Jiban told police that he was arrested three years back but coming out of jail, he started making fake notes again, said DC Mashiur.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

# 49

JOURNALISTS KILLED IN THE LAST YEAR

# 635

PRESS FREEDOM VIOLATIONS LINKED TO COVID-19 SINCE FEB. 2020

International Press Institute

These are global figures collected by IPI

“

A critical, independent and investigative press is the lifeblood of any democracy. The press must be free from state interference.

Nelson Mandela

1994 IPI World Congress in South Africa

# WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY 2021