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BORDER HOSPITALS TACKLING COVID Understaffed, under stress

ZYMA ISLAM

As the Covid-19 crisis continues to unfold in border districts, with some put under lockdown to slow down transmission, major hospitals in those districts totter due to a shortage of frontline doctors and nurses.

Those understaffed hospitals have been grappling with an increased number of coronavirus patients for the past several days.

Take Natore district hospital for an example.

The 50-bed Covid unit at the hospital was struggling to tackle the rush of patients yesterday with five doctors and 10 nurses. Two days earlier, there were only three doctors and three nurses there. Two doctors and seven nurses were brought in as the flow of patients went up significantly.

Those 15 healthcare professionals, however, will be split into two groups. One group will work for 14 days at a stretch while the other group will be in quarantine for that period. That leaves the Covid unit with only seven to eight healthcare professionals at any given day.

That's not the whole story. Those professionals will work in three eight-hour shifts -- morning, evening and night.

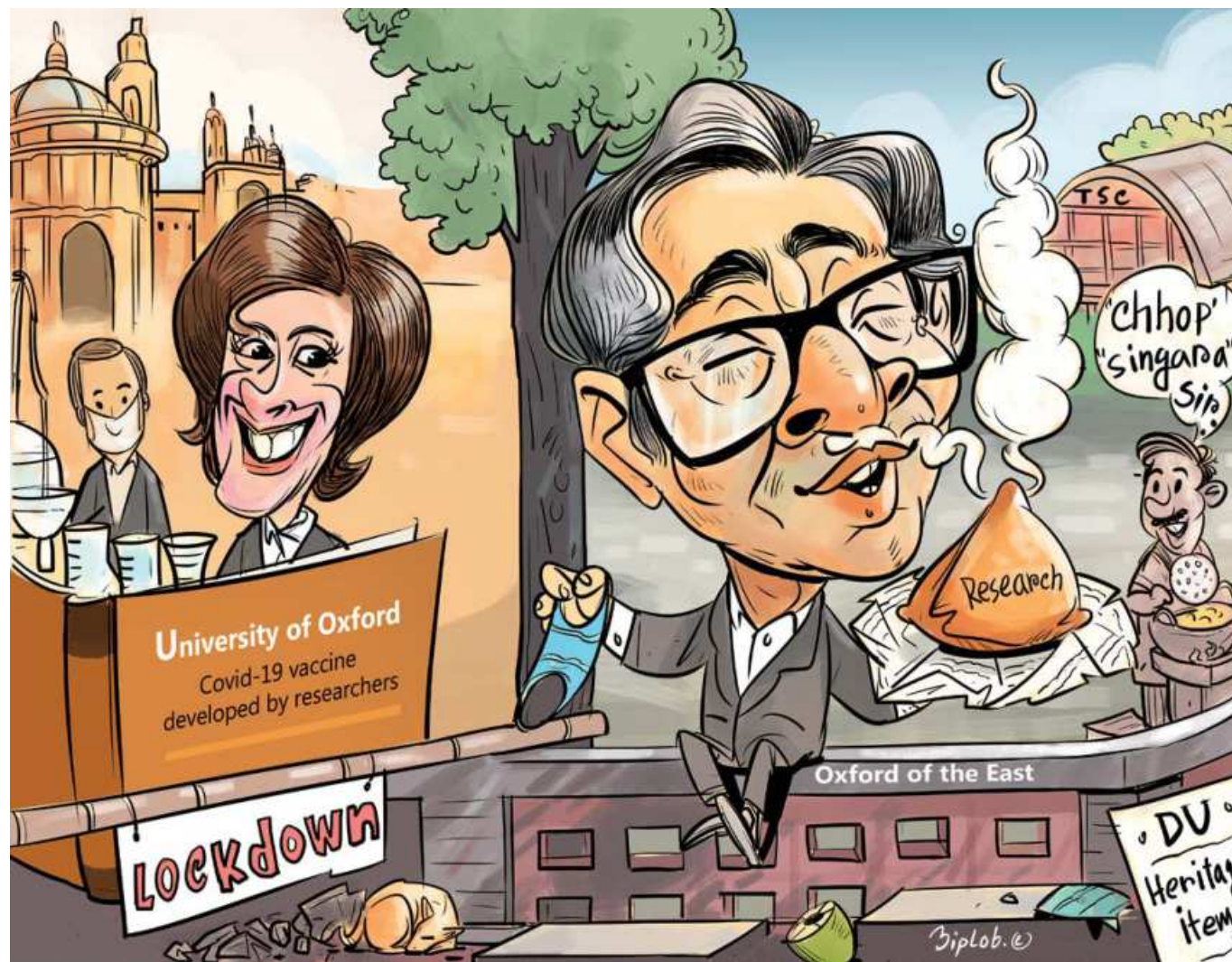
This is for a hospital where 88 percent of its Covid beds were filled as of yesterday morning.

The positivity rate in the district was 34 percent as of Sunday, shows data from the Director General of Health Services (DGHS).

"We are managing but if the situation gets worse, I don't know what to do. We are sending one or two critical patients to Bogura every day. Earlier, we used to send them to Rajshahi, but there are no empty beds there anymore," said Dr Poritosh Kumar Roy of the Natore hospital, which has zero ICU beds for Covid patients.

Rajshahi Medical College Hospital too is struggling with an increasing number of coronavirus patients. It is almost 42km away from Natore, making it hard for many critical patients from the district to reach there on time.

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OXFORD OF THE EAST A moniker that couldn't ring hollower

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE and ASIFUR RAHMAN

It has long been debated whether it is true that Dhaka University is the "Oxford of the East".

Former education minister Nurul Islam Nahid once said "this is just a saying". A few others also endorsed Nahid's remark.

Some academicians think the term "Oxford of the East" is used to glorify the successes in the university's early days.

The Quacquarelli Symonds World University Rankings 2022, released last week, placed Dhaka University (DU) in the 801-1,000 bracket while the University of Oxford in the UK was in the second position among 1,300 universities.

With such a gulf between the two and with DU's moniker in mind, a comparative analysis between the Oxford of the

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HOSPITAL	TOTAL COVID-19 BEDS	OCCUPANCY RATE	NUMBER OF DOCTORS	NUMBER OF NURSES
Khulna Medical College Hospital	100	141%	34	N/A
Natore District Hospital	50	88%	5	10
Chuadanga District Hospital	150	23%	18	65
Narail District Hospital	120	14%	9	40
TMSS Hospital, Bogura	160	N/A	28	over 75

"The government is more focused on medical supply purchase rather than investing in the manpower, and now service provision has become difficult."

DR RIDWANUR RAHMAN
INFECTIOUS DISEASES
SPECIALIST



'ATTEMPT TO RAPE, MURDER PORI MONI'

Nasir, 4 others arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police arrested five people, including a real-estate businessman and presidium member of the Jatiya Party, yesterday after film actor Pori Moni filed a case with Savar Police Station over their attempt to rape and murder her.

A team of detectives conducted a raid at a house in Uttara Sector-1 and made the arrest after Savar police sought help from Dhaka Metropolitan Police in this regard, said Harun or Rashid, joint commissioner (North) of Detective Branch of DMP.

Two of the arrestees -- Nasir, 65, the businessman and also a former president of Uttara Club Limited, and Tuhin Siddique Omi, a businessman -- are the named accused in the case.

Police said the flat belonged to Omi and Nasir was in hiding there.

Talking to The Daily Star over telephone, Jatiya Party Chairman and deputy leader of the opposition GM Quader said they would expel Nasir U Mahmud from the party if he was found guilty.

Three young women, who are said to be members of a DJ group, were arrested along with yaba tablets, foreign liquor and beer from the flat, the official said.



Pori Moni



Nasir U Mahmud

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Black fungus found in man after Covid recovery

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Black fungus has been detected in a patient at Dhaka Medical College Hospital days after he recovered from Covid-19.

The 45-year-old male patient tested positive for the virus nearly a month ago, said Dr Farhad Uddin Maruf Chowdhury, registrar of the medicine department at the hospital.

The patient was admitted to the DMCH about a week ago with post-Covid complications and problems in his right eye.

Doctors suspected that he was suffering from mucormycosis, known as black fungus, and collected samples after conducting a surgery in his nose, Farhad told this newspaper yesterday.

The samples were sent to Birdem Hospital and the

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Movement curbs in 2 more districts

PM instructs local admins to opt for shutdown if necessary; highest Covid cases logged in 7 weeks

STAR REPORT

With a spike in Covid cases and deaths, two more districts -- Jamalpur and Dinajpur -- have imposed restrictions on vehicular and public movement to curb the spread of the virus.

The country yesterday recorded 3,050 Covid cases -- the highest in the last one and a half months -- and 54 deaths -- the highest in five weeks.

Amid fears of further rise in virus transmission, 11 districts have so far slapped restrictions to check the spread of Covid. Apart from Jamalpur and Dinajpur, the curbs are in force in Satkhira, Khulna, Bagerhat, Rajshahi, Chapainawabganj, Natore, Kushtia, Chuadanga and Noakhali -- either in parts or in the entire district.

Yesterday, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina directed the local administrations, public representatives and law enforcement agencies to enforce restrictions whenever necessary to curb virus infections.

She gave the directives at a cabinet meeting yesterday. Later, Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam told reporters that the novel coronavirus is not spreading across the country at the same pace.

Directives have been issued to put under lockdown those areas where the infection rate is high.

"Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina asked the local administrations not to take any chances... They will

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Two MPs blast corruption in bureaucracy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Lawmakers Rashed Khan Menon and Rumeen Farhana speaking in parliament yesterday slammed corruption among bureaucrats and harassment of common people and journalists by them.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's brave initiatives to tackle the Covid-19 pandemic have been unsuccessful because of a group from the military, civil bureaucracy, and rich individuals close to the government, they told in parliament.

BNP's Rumeen Farhana elected from the reserved seats for women in parliament launched the blistering attack on

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19 SLOW MOVING PROJECTS Railway now seeks deadline extension

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The Bangladesh Railway's abysmal track record in project implementation will continue for a while, it seems.

The state-run agency, which started getting sizeable allocations after decades of neglect when the Awami League-led alliance assumed power in 2009, is now soliciting an extension for about half of the projects it is implementing.

At present, the BR has 41 projects under its wings involving about Tk 142,193.2 crore.

Of the 41 projects, two were taken on board recently and 24 of them should be done and dusted -- by June.

But, as things stand, only four are on course to meeting their June closing date.

The BR, which has scrapped one of the projects expiring this month, wants to extend the timescale for 19 of them beyond June, said a top official of the state agency on condition of anonymity to speak candidly on the matter.

Usually, with the extension of the deadline comes the increase in project costs. For now, only a couple of the 19 projects would be seeking cost revision, said another BR official.

While experts pinned poor planning owing to weak feasibility studies, lack of accountability and skilled manpower, and vested interests for the slow progress, the global coronavirus pandemic, which has retarded the normal course of events everywhere, has given the railways ministry the ammunition to push for a wholesale revision of the projects.

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Without maintaining physical distancing, people gather to buy and sell vegetables at the kitchen market in the capital's Karwan Bazar. Hardy any was wearing mask. It is an everyday affair in the market and it happens at a time when the Covid-19 situation has turned worrisome across the country. The photo was taken around 6:30am yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN



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জরুরি বিজ্ঞপ্তি

এতদ্বারা খাদ্যশস্য আমদানিকারক, পাইকারী ব্যবসায়ী ও আড়তদার, খুচরা ব্যবসায়ী, চালকল (অটোমেটিক রাইস মিল, মেজর রাইস মিল, হাফিং রাইস মিল) মালিকগণ ও ময়দাকল (মেজর ও কম্প্যান্ড ময়দাকল, রোলার ময়দাকল, আটাচাকি) মালিকগণকে জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, যারা সর্বমিল ১ (এক) মেগটন খাদ্যশস্য/খাদ্য সামগ্রী (এককভাবে কিংবা মিলিতভাবে) অর্থাৎ ১,০০০ (এক হাজার) কেজি ধান/চাল, গম/গমজাত দ্রব্য, সয়াবিন ও পামওয়েল (পরিশোধিত), চিনি (পরিশোধিত) এবং ডাল মজুত/ক্রয়-বিক্রয় করেন তাদের জন্য এস.আর.ও নং-১১৩-আইন/২০১১- The Control of Essential Commodities Act, 1956 (Act No. 1 of 1956) এর section 3 তে প্রদত্ত ক্ষমতাবলে খাদ্যশস্য লাইসেন্স গ্রহণ বাধ্যতামূলক করা ছাড়াও খাদ্যশস্য মজুতের পরিমাণ ও মেয়াদ নির্ধারণ করে দেয়া হয়েছে এবং অনুমোদিত প্রত্যেক লাইসেন্সধারী ব্যবসায়ীকে খাদ্যশস্য/খাদ্য সামগ্রী আমদানি, ক্রয়, মজুত ও বিক্রয়ের হিসাব লাইসেন্স প্রদানকারী কর্তৃপক্ষের বা তদকর্তৃক ক্ষমতাপ্রাপ্ত কর্তৃপক্ষের নিকট নির্ধারিত "ছকে" পাক্ষিক ভিত্তিতে প্রতিবেদন দাখিলের বিধান রয়েছে। কিন্তু লক্ষ্য করা যাচ্ছে যে, অনেক ব্যবসায়ী এ লাইসেন্স গ্রহণে অনীহা প্রকাশ করছেন এবং পাক্ষিক প্রতিবেদন দাখিল থেকে বিরত থাকছেন যা আইনের লঙ্ঘন ও শাস্তিযোগ্য অপরাধ।

এই পরিস্থিতিতে যারা খাদ্যশস্য লাইসেন্স গ্রহণ করেননি, তাদেরকে লাইসেন্স গ্রহণ এবং নিয়মিত প্রতিবেদন দাখিলের জন্য সংশ্লিষ্ট উপজেলা খাদ্য নিয়ন্ত্রক/জেলা খাদ্য নিয়ন্ত্রক/আঞ্চলিক খাদ্য নিয়ন্ত্রক/প্রধান নিয়ন্ত্রক, ঢাকা রেশনিং এর দপ্তরে অতিসত্বর যোগাযোগ করার জন্য অনুরোধ করা যাচ্ছে।

মহাপরিচালক
খাদ্য অধিদপ্তর