



The lockdown has started to weigh down hard on the already distressed working class. Out on their luck, they are resorting to alternative means of earning. But even this is not working out, as customers are hard to come by. Morzina Begum, who used to be a domestic help, can be found at the capital's Baily Road area selling masks these days, with her toddler in tow. Though her income rarely exceeds Tk 50 a day, this will have to do for her family for now. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

It's more than just lack of food

The plight of Dhaka's waste pickers

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN
CHANDAN

To live off the streets of Dhaka is not merely living in hunger, it also comes with an immense lack of security. For the "tokai" -- a child waste picker -- living in the capital, hunger and malnutrition is almost the least of their concern, with much bigger dangers lurking around all the time.

From horrific child abuse, to getting involved in criminal gangs, the tokai life in Dhaka bears the risk of everything in between -- chronic health hazards, substance abuse, and more.

According to a 2016 study conducted by Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), the number of such street children stood at 1.5 million across the country in 2015, which is projected to get to 1.56 million by 2024.

Seventy-five percent of these children live in the capital, many of whom are involved in hazardous jobs like waste collection.

However, there is hardly any initiative from the government to rehabilitate these children-without-anchors.

Take 13-year-old Raju's case. After being ousted from his home by his step-mother some five years ago, Raju boarded a train from Khilkhet and arrived at Kawran Bazar. He has been living off picking wastes around the area ever since, and he now calls

it his home.

"This is the only job I can do to earn some money as I never went to school," he told this correspondent, while preparing for a hard-earned sleep on the same sack he uses to collect waste.

Except for the clothes he wore, the sack is Raju's only worldly possession.

"I cannot keep anything with me as everything will be stolen as soon as I fall asleep. Even if I wear a clean, good looking shirt, they will take it off from my body," he said.

Raju's day starts at 4am. "I collect everything -- paper, plastics, glass and metallic objects. When I can't find them on the streets, I search in the sewerage lines. At the end of the day, I can earn Tk 300-500 by selling my haul to recyclers' shops," he said.

Asked about his plans for the future, Raju smiled bleakly, and said, "I don't even know how to read and write. I don't know what the future holds for me."

Mohammad Shuman (16), another waste picker around Tejgaon area, revealed the brutal nature of this business.

"I have been almost beaten to death on mere suspicion of theft many times. One day, I picked a plastic jar thinking it was thrown away. However, nobody believed me and I was flogged mercilessly and

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Societal awareness key to preventing misuse of tech

Speakers tell MJF webinar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) has contacted Tiktok and Facebook authorities to remove obnoxious content from these platforms, and the authorities concerned also assured to take appropriate action regarding this, said BTRC vice-chairman Subrata Roy Maitra yesterday.

BTRC is also to launch the National Equipment Identity Register (NEIR) very soon, through which the identity of handset users can be detected, and nobody can use another person's handset and SIM card, he added, while speaking at a webinar today.

The webinar titled, "Misuse of information and communication technology: Way forward to prevent trafficking of women and girls" was organised by Manusher Jonno Foundation

(MJF).

According to the BTRC chairman, BTRC cannot block Facebook or TikTok if it wants, and this needs societal awareness as a whole.

"This is why we have been considering doing a workshop with parents in the context of the parental guide since they do not notice the parental guide when taking internet connections," he said.

Mohammad Shahidullah, deputy commissioner at Tejgaon Zone of Dhaka Metropolitan Police said, "It was too late for us to understand that women were being trafficked using technology."

"We thought these fun apps were being used here same way it was going on all over the world, but later we saw that a group of young people was also organising and committing crimes using these," he said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

48 new dengue cases reported

UNB, DHAKA

Bangladesh reported 48 more dengue cases in 24 hours until yesterday morning.

The recent spike in dengue cases has added to the worries of people, as the country continues to grapple with a devastating wave of the coronavirus pandemic.

Some 179 patients diagnosed with dengue are currently receiving treatment at different government and private hospitals across the country as of yesterday morning, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Of them, only one is receiving treatment at a hospital outside Dhaka.

All the new patients were reported to have admitted to different hospitals in Dhaka, and no one was said to be hospitalised outside Dhaka during the period.

So far, 673 patients have been admitted to different hospitals with dengue since

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

COUNTRYWIDE LOCKDOWN

Weekend sees quieter day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The tenth day of the ongoing "strict lockdown" witnessed less traffic and gathering on the capital's streets, as it was a weekly holiday yesterday.

But areas surrounding kitchen markets remained crowded, and people ignored health guidelines.

Like previous days, the alleys remained as crowded as well, as many grocers, tea stalls and other shops were seen operating their businesses, keeping their shutters half-closed. People were seen smoking cigarettes, drinking tea and chitchatting in groups. Many did not wear face-mask.

Seeing police vans, shopkeepers shut their shops to avoid any action against them.

Visiting different areas including Mirpur, Farmgate, Karwan Bazar, Shyamoli, Asad Gate and Mohammadpur, it was found that rickshaws dominated the main roads. Presence of personal vehicles was thin when compared to a weekday.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) detained 791 people over defying Covid-19 restrictions and health guidelines. Mobile courts fined 212 individuals Tk 1.66 lakh. DMP's traffic division fined 361 vehicles Tk 9 lakh, according to DMP's media wing.

Rapid Action Battalion conducted 191 patrols and set up 197 check-posts across the country, said a statement, adding that 36 mobile courts, accompanied by Rab, fined 145 people Tk 1.06 lakh.

Our correspondent in Chattogram reported that port city residents have been showing their reluctance to follow the restrictions.

Private cars and huge numbers of rickshaws and ride-sharing motorbikes were seen plying different streets. Public presence was thin on the main streets, but lanes of different areas had huge gatherings, violating health guidelines.

Meanwhile, ferries on Shimulia-Banglabazar route only allowed private cars, if passengers could give valid reasons, a day after Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation issued a circular -- saying transportation of all sorts of public and private vehicles, except those engaged in emergency services, is suspended.

Over 200 goods-laden trucks, ambulances and private cars were seen waiting at Shimulia ghat in Munshiganj's Louhajang upazila to cross the river, as 10 ferries out of 16 are operating on the route, reports our Munshiganj correspondent.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Govt takes over 300-year-old building in Ctg

The Mughal era one-storey structure found to be supported by clay pots underneath

ARUN BIKASH DEV, Ctg

The government has decided to take over a 300-year-old building located on Nazu Miah Lane at port city's Patharghata for preservation due to its archaeological importance.

The archaeological importance was known when the present owners of the building went to demolish it to replace it with a multi-storey building last week.

When part of the basement was dismantled, locals found that the one-storey building stood on a number of clay pots.

It is known that Shariat Ullah Saodagar, a merchant of Chattogram, built the building around 300 years ago. His fourth generation descendants are its owners at present.

"I don't know why egg-shaped clay pots were used under the building's basement," said septuagenarian Md Faruk, one of Shariat Ullah's descendants. "The technology makes us wonder."

Aliur Rahman, chairperson of Chattogram History and Culture Research Centre, told The Daily Star that he rushed to the spot and found that 34 pots were recovered.

"We think around 120 pots might be under the basement. It's interesting that the pots hold the building's weight of around 2,500 tonnes," he said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



After dismantling part of the basement of a 300-year-old one-storey building, these clay pots were found to be supporting the whole structure, which fascinated locals. Over a hundred of these egg-shaped pots are bearing the weight of around 2,500 tonnes. Experts say the technology was used during the Mughal era to manage temperature of buildings and make them resistant to earthquakes and flood. The photos were taken yesterday.

PHOTO:
RAJIB RAIHAN



PM'S GIFT FOR THE POOR

Massive corruption in building houses: BNP

UNB, Dhaka

BNP yesterday alleged that there has been "massive corruption" in the construction of houses meant for landless people as the Prime Minister's gift under the Ashrayan Project, as many of those have collapsed partially or developed cracks in many places.

"There have been limitless corruption, looting, waywardness and politicisation in the construction of houses for the landless poor, which is being branded as a gift of the Prime Minister with fanfare," said the party's organising secretary Syed Emran Saleh Prince.

Speaking at a press conference at BNP's Nayapaltan central office, he also said the way those houses are seen collapsing before or after the handover proves that 'massive plundering' in the name of development is going on in the country.

"A grand festival of looting is on as Bangladesh seems to have become a paradise of unlimited graft."

About the loss of huge lives in a factory fire at Ruppangj in Narayanganj, he said the incident happened due to negligence and indifference of the factory owner, who is an Awami League leader.

"He must be brought to justice," Prince added.

The BNP leader demanded the government rehabilitate the victim families and give them adequate compensation.

Revoke ban on providing info from hospitals: TIB

GM Quader smells graft, irregularities if the order in place

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Expressing deep concern over the ban on providing information of patient and health services in government hospitals to media during Covid-19, Transparency International (TIB) yesterday demanded immediate revocation of the order signed by Dhaka District Civil Surgeon on Thursday.

Meanwhile, Jatiya Party Chairman and Deputy Leader of the opposition GM Quader yesterday said it is inconsistent with the democratic system that media workers would not get information from any hospital in the district except from the civil surgeon.

In a statement, TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman called for strict action to be taken against those in whose interests such restrictions were imposed.

"Currently, the Covid-19 pandemic has taken a terrible turn in the country and the number of infections and deaths is on the rise almost every day. Amid this situation, imposing restrictions

on the disclosure of any information related to health service and patient care of government hospitals in Dhaka district to the media is a complete violation of the constitutional right of free media and free flow of information and the 'right to information' law."

At the same time, it conflicts with the promise of independent and objective journalism and is a deliberate obstruction of the free flow of information to the media, TIB also said.

TIB said attempts to impose such restrictions during the beginning of the Covid-19 in the country had to be scrapped in the face of widespread protests.

In a statement, GM Quader said free flow of information is an essential condition for the establishment of democracy and good governance.

"We are surprised to see that 24 hours have passed but the directive issued by the Dhaka Civil Surgeon has not been withdrawn yet."

'Bangabandhu Chair' to be established at Delhi University

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) will establish "Bangabandhu Chair" at the University of Delhi to honour Father of the Nation of Bangladesh and the 50th anniversary of the country's Liberation War and Indo-Bangla diplomatic relations.

ICCR Director General Shri Dinesh K Patnaik and University of Delhi Acting Vice Chancellor Prof PC Joshi will sign a memorandum of understanding on July 12 in this regard.

The MoU will be effective for five academic years, sources said.

The initiative is the outcome of an understanding reached during Indian Prime Minister's visit to Bangladesh in March this year, according to a statement of the ICCR, an autonomous body of Indian government involved in India's external cultural relations.

Bangabandhu Chair will focus on better understanding of developments in Bangladesh, which is considered one of India's most important neighbours positioned at the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3