



In this photo taken on Saturday, members of Bangladesh Army's 66th Infantry Division are seen organising a food distribution drive at the playground of Rajarampur Government Primary School in Dinajpur Sadar upazila.

PHOTO:
KONGKON KARMAKER

COPING WITH PANDEMIC

Food drive, medical camp of Army continues in Dinajpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Members of Bangladesh Army have provided food assistance to at least 1,000 people in all 13 upazilas of Dinajpur since July 1, from when a "strict lockdown" has been declared to stem the spread of Covid-19 infection across the country.

The recipients, mostly daily wage earners, were given the assistance and free medical treatment, as they remained jobless after various restrictions were imposed on movement and businesses as part of the lockdown.

So far, the 66th Infantry Division of

the army have been distributing food relief and providing medical treatment to affected people in Nawabganj, Biral, Bochaganj, Chirirbandar, Parbatipur and Dinajpur Sadar upazilas.

On Saturday, at least 600 people in Biral, Bochaganj and Dinajpur Sadar upazilas received food aid from the army.

Brig Gen Khandakar Shafiquzzaman, PSC station commander of Bir Uttam Shaheed Mahub Cantonment in Parbatipur upazila, visited the upazilas and observed distribution of food among the affected population in the upazilas.

On Saturday noon, he took part in a

food drive at the playground of Rajarampur Government Primary School in Dinajpur Sadar upazila, where 300 jobless people received food aid.

Earlier, at Biral Government College ground, he distributed food to more than 300 people from Biral and Bochaganj upazilas.

While speaking with journalists, Brig Gen Khandakar Shafiquzzaman said that Bangladesh Army has always been playing a pivotal role in every crisis faced by Bangladesh.

Members of Bangladesh Army made

contributions from their salaries to raise fund for the food drive, he added.

Salma Begum, a 70-year-old woman from Rajarampur village, said her son, the breadwinner of her family, has been without a job since the lockdown started. "We've been facing a difficult time due to the lockdown, but the food given today will help us survive."

Major Abdullah Al Imran of the 66th Infantry Division said such programme of Bangladesh Army to help the people will continue during the pandemic situation, so people can stay at their homes.

2 land in jail

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The victim's father filed a case against Bayat Friday night. Bayat was arrested on Saturday night, said Syed Mizanur Islam, officer-in-charge (OC) of Harirampur Police Station.

Yesterday, the accused was produced before a court that sent him to jail, said the OC, adding that the accused in primary interrogation admitted to raping the girl.

In Satoria upazila, Al-Rafi, 22, of Uttar Kaunnara village lured an 18-year-old girl with the promise of marriage and allegedly raped her multiple times and filmed the incidents.

He shared footage of the incidents and those made it to social media.

On Saturday noon, the victim filed case against Rafi accusing him of rape and filming the crime.

Police arrested Rafi Saturday night.

Rafi was produced before a court that sent him to jail yesterday, said Habibur Rahaman, OC (investigation) of Satoria Police Station.

Inoculation

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Vaccine registration is now open for people aged 35 and above along with front line workers and professionals.

On July 1, the government resumed administering the Sinopharm vaccine at all district hospitals and 40 centres in the capital.

Vaccination campaign, which started on February 7, stumbled due to suspension of Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine supply by the Serum

Institute of India amid a surge in daily infections and deaths in that country.

Amid a fast depleting vaccine stock, Bangladesh suspended administering the first dose of the vaccine on April 26. Registration for vaccination was also suspended nine days later.

Bangladesh and Serum signed an agreement that the latter would ship three crore shots of the vaccine to Bangladesh in phases between January and June.

Serum delivered the first 50 lakh doses in January, but shipped only 20 lakh the following month. No shipment has arrived since. Meanwhile, India gave Bangladesh 3.3 million doses of the vaccine as gift.

UK envoy summoned over

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Further restrictions on the freedom of expression, including the use of the Digital Security Act, to muzzle criticism of the government's Covid-19 response, and continued violence against women and girls.

Patel was also advised to consult the authorities concerned in case of any confusion over legal issues, in reference to the use of phrases like "house arrest of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia", according to a statement by the ministry.

The ministry also said it was grossly misleading to use the words "house arrest" in reference to the former prime minister's current situation.

Officials at the office of the director general (West Europe and EU) interacted with the UK diplomat and clarified that on the application of Khaleda Zia's brother, the government had -- as per the provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898 -- suspended her prison sentence and released her in March 2020 on condition that she would receive medical treatment at home and would not travel abroad.

The ministry pointed out that the

suspension of her sentence and release from prison, applicable for an initial six-month period, was subsequently extended twice -- once in September 2020 and once in March 2021.

The foreign ministry officials reiterated the government's position on certain terminologies used in the report in reference to Bangladesh that are either not internationally agreed upon or not recognised by Bangladesh's own laws.

Patel took notes on the government's views and assured conveying those to FCDO authorities.

He said that the UK valued its diversified partnership with Bangladesh and wished to continue a constructive dialogue on human rights and governance issues through established mechanisms.

He recognised Bangladesh as a "maturing democracy" and said the UK government did not take sides with or against any political party of the country.

The officials on both sides agreed on the importance of using authentic sources of information for citations in official documents or reports.

Journo Tanu gets bail

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sick in custody, police took him to hospital.

They cuffed one of his hands with the metal headboard of the hospital bed, to ensure that the journalist does not escape.

Meanwhile, a Thakurgaon court granted him bail yesterday, considering his illness, as he was suffering from post-Covid-19 complexities.

Thakurgaon Senior Judicial Magistrate Arifur Rahman passed the order, rejecting police prayer for a five-day remand.

"They sued me because I revealed some irregularities, and was looking for information regarding some other irregularities in the hospital," Tanu told The Daily Star after his release.

His arrest over publishing the report on July 5 titled "Allocation Tk 300, but patients get food worth around Tk 70", stirred the journalist community to protest.

Many took to social media, demanding immediate withdrawal of the case and investigation into the reported irregularities.

Journalists and rights activists have long been demanding scraping of the DSA, saying that the law has been misused against journalists and others to muzzle voice.

Last year, as many as 457 people of all professions were prosecuted and arrested in 198 cases filed under the DSA, says UK-based Article 19 in its annual report.

Explosion in Sudan port city

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and the country's main port, and also involved an armed attack.

"An explosive device went off at Al-Amir club... killing four people," the Central Committee of Sudan Doctors said in a statement.

Three others were wounded after being shot or stabbed, it added.

Of them, 75 were journalists, it added.

"The case filed over Tanu's report is an attack on free press," said Mansur Ali, president of Thakurgaon Press Club.

"It's not acceptable ... journalists risk their lives to identify irregularities and help the authorities address them and ensure better facilities during the pandemic," he told our Thakurgaon correspondent.

The local journalist leader expressed concern and condemnation over the case filed under the DSA and demanded its immediate and unconditional withdrawal.

Tanu's family made similar demands. "... we demanded amendment to the black law which created panic among journalists," Tanu's elder brother Mahabur Alam Sohag told this newspaper.

He said the hospital authorities lodged the case to harass his brother though the report was fact-based. Even, the hospital authorities admitted in the case statement that there was a disruption in food supplied to patients for a couple of days in June, he said.

He expressed gratitude to the journalist community for support and raising their voice against the case.

Apart from working for Jagonews24, Tanu is the district correspondent of private television channel Independent TV and Bangla daily Ittefaq.

Witnesses said the attack was carried out by armed men on a motorcycle, but it was not immediately clear what motivated it.

Authorities said yesterday that one of the alleged perpetrators had been arrested.

Dozens of people later gathered outside the public prosecutor's office in Port Sudan demanding the assailants be brought to justice, witnesses said.

2 Bangladeshis

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from Turkey's Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD) were dispatched to the scene.

In July 2020, a boat carrying up to 60 migrants sank in Lake Van.

Turkey has been a key transit point for asylum-seekers aiming to cross into Europe to start new lives, especially those fleeing war and persecution. Migrants -- mostly from Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan -- regularly cross the Iranian border into Turkey on foot before being ferried west to cities such as Istanbul and Ankara.

Journeys often turn lethal, be it a short journey to Greece by sea aboard unsafe boats or in overcrowded minibuses and trucks.

Turkish security forces rescued or held some 352 irregular migrants over a 24-hour period on Monday and Tuesday last week across a number of provinces in Turkey.

Glass-bottomed

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power packs as traction power), and is about 11.5 kilometers (about 7 miles) in length.

A maximum of 120 people can fit in each car. Because the glass can reflect the heat, the trains are air-conditioned to balance it out. It is made of lightweight carbon fiber materials.

The train can travel about the same speed as a subway, about 80 kilometres (50 miles) per hour.

Currently, the train line has four stops: Dayi Station, Guanghua Avenue, Sujiazhen Station and Anren Station. At Dayi, riders can connect to the Chengdu Express Rail Line and Planning Line 12 of the Chengdu city subway.

Though the Zhongtang Air Railway is geared more towards sightseeing tourists than locals commuting to work, it's another feather in the cap of the Chinese rail network.

In related news, Tibet recently welcomed its first-ever bullet train service. A 435-kilometre (250-mile) rail line connecting Tibetan capital Lhasa with the city of Nyingchi made its first trip on June 25.

Arms shipment is condoning

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Bangladesh that would give the refugees confidence to return home. He explained the Indian view that such conditions could be created only by genuine political accommodation by Pakistan with representatives of the Bangladesh people.

DOING BUSINESS WITH YAHYA

The New York Times, in a news analysis published on July 12, 1971, criticised severely Nixon and the UN Secretary General U Thant for being silent on "immense human disaster" in Bangladesh.

"...the silence in some quarters is so puzzling. President Nixon has said nothing. That great moralist, U Thant, who regularly

criticizes American action in Vietnam, has not had much to say about racial killing by Pakistani soldiers. And there are many others," said the news analysis.

It further said, "We can no longer have any illusions about our ability to make unpleasant governments around the world behave well, but there does come a point at which self-respect requires us to stop helping them. That is why an American official, one who is certainly a realist, said the other day: There is not much we can do about East Pakistan, but I dislike--pardon the phrase--our moral posture."

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Taliban widens control

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Australia had deployed 39,000 troops over the past 20 years as part of US and Nato-led operations against the Taliban and terrorist groups in Afghanistan, a mission that cost the country billions of dollars and left 41 Australian soldiers dead.

Taliban officials said on Friday the Sunni Muslim insurgent group had taken control of 85% of Afghanistan's territory, as the United States and others withdraw the bulk of their troops after 20 years of fighting.

Afghan government officials dismissed the assertion as a propaganda campaign.

Meanwhile, Afghan authorities said yesterday they have installed an anti-missile system at Kabul airport to counter incoming rockets.

"The newly installed air defence system has been operational in Kabul since 2:00 am Sunday," the interior ministry said in a statement. "The system has proven useful in the world in repelling rocket and missile attacks."

Euro final fuels Covid outbreak

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football final in more than half a century.

But the fans do not appear to have been put off. Hundreds converged on Wembley many hours before kick-off, singing and swigging beer.

Neil Houldsworth, 61, told AFP: "If it gets busier I will wear a mask."

"Personally, there's no worry at all," he added, trusting in the high numbers of double-jabbed people.

Pensioner David Durant added: "Maybe I'm a bit double-jab happy."

"It's better here in the open air to drink our beer. You're less likely to get it (Covid-19). You try, but it is very difficult with a game like this to observe social distance."

Prime Minister Boris Johnson has signalled that remaining restrictions should be lifted in England on July 19, but infection rates are again surging -- driven by the Delta variant.

His government argues that, with more than 85 percent of adults having received at least one shot, the link between infections, hospitalisations and deaths has been severed.

But many scientists are deeply uneasy with relaxing all remaining rules, including social distancing and mask-wearing. As England's players departed their St George's Park base on Saturday, large numbers of cheering fans lined the road, hardly any seen wearing masks in video and photos tweeted by the team.

Health experts have expressed concerns about Euro 2020 events becoming super-spreaders throughout the tournament, especially in Britain and Russia because of the Delta variant.

Authorities in Denmark, Finland and Scotland have already reported infections among fans after they attended Euro matches.

'WORSE, MUCH WORSE'

The known Covid-19 global death toll has topped four million, with the fight complicated by the emergence of variants that have accelerated outbreaks even in countries that had successfully weathered the early phases of the pandemic.

Australia, where restrictions have been reimposed in a number of cities recently, yesterday announced its first virus-related death in the Sydney outbreak.

Authorities warned the situation was expected to worsen in Australia's biggest city, already in a third week of lockdown and the population overwhelmingly unvaccinated.

"Tomorrow and the few days afterwards will be worse, much worse than we've seen today," said Gladys Berejikian, premier of New South Wales state, of which Sydney is the capital.

South Korea, once a model for Covid-19 response, will tighten restrictions from today in and around the capital Seoul after new daily infections hit their highest level since the pandemic hit.

The Asia-Pacific region has seen a dramatic rise in cases in a number of countries, with Thailand, Indonesia, Pakistan and Vietnam imposing fresh curbs as a result.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

Jakarta received more than three million doses of the Moderna vaccine from the United States yesterday as the Southeast Asian archipelago reels from its deadliest Covid-19 wave since the pandemic began.