

Country's lone tissue bank gets Tk 174cr boost

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In the past 12 years, the lone tissue bank of the country has helped a total of 8,300 people who have had organ transplantations.

The information was disclosed after an Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecne) meeting yesterday.

A project worth Tk 174 crore for upgrading and extending the bank was approved at the meeting.

At a briefing after the meeting, Planning Commission member Nasima Begum said two lakh people injured in fire incidents or accidents went through organ transplantations with the bank's help in the 12 years since its establishment in 2009.

Additionally, 347 skulls were replaced with the bank's facilities during the period, she said.

Nasima added that amputated and severed body parts, collected from hospitals, are stored in the bank in minus 80-degree Celsius temperature after sterilisation.

The organs can be stored for up to five years, she said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



Mayor Atiqul Islam inaugurated DNCC's anti-dengue and chikungunya drive at Mohammadpur Town Hall area yesterday, with the aim to contain the potential public health hazard the mosquito-carried diseases pose. However, in the process, the gathering of people for the inauguration compromised the more pressing health hazard of the Covid-19 pandemic.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Lockdown gets laxer every day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With rising public and vehicular movement, everything except public transport is plying the capital's roads, as the nationwide "strict lockdown" rolled into its sixth day yesterday.

Despite restrictions, hundreds of holidaymakers and service-holders, who had gone to their village homes, continued to enter the capital through different entry points and by changing different modes of transport.

Dhaka almost went back to the way it normally is, with an increased number of vehicles and people on the streets. Only movement of public transport remained suspended, as per government restrictions.

In the morning, office-goers were seen travelling by rickshaws, motorbikes and private cars. Many were seen walking long distances. This correspondent visited Asad Gate, Farmgate, Mohakhali, Gulshan, Banani, Pragati Sarani, Panthapath, Mohammadpur, Shyamoli, Ring Road, Adabor, and Dhanmondi areas, and witnessed the scenario.

A traffic inspector of Shabbagh area said the pressure of vehicles increased yesterday, when compared with the last few days. "In some areas, traffic control is needed due to the increasing number of vehicles."

There are more crowds in the alleys than on the roads. Visiting by-lanes at Mohammadpur, Kalabagan, Green Road and Bhatara areas, our correspondent found some shops and tea stalls open.

People were even seen gossiping on roads and moving from one place to another without wearing masks. Some shops were found open with shutters half-closed.

A hardware shop owner in Sher Shah Suri Road, wishing not to be named, said customers continue to come even in this lockdown. "Many are repairing households in this lockdown. They call us over phone and make queries about products. We just supply them from the shop."

People continued venturing out with families and friends, defying the lockdown rules.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2



PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Women from low-income groups stand in line to get daily produce from a truck of Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB). Due to job losses, many cannot afford essentials at market prices. This photo was taken from the capital's DIT Road.

Never called back to work

Domestic workers struggling to make ends meet after losing job in pandemic

NILIMA JAHAN

A few weeks ago, the photo of 65-year-old Asiya Begum -- a house-help who was walking for two hours, wading through ankle-deep water, to reach her home at Hemayetpur from her employer's house at the capital's Lalmatia -- went viral on social media.

Since the first day of the lockdown, Asiya had been walking around 32 kilometres daily, going to her workplace and returning, in absence of public transport.

The photo drew attention of people of all social classes, and thousands of comments condemned the inhumane attitude of the employer, who forced her to work amid the lockdown.

Despite the conditions, according to Prothom Alo Staff Photojournalist Dipu Malakar, who took the picture, Asiya considered herself lucky to be working, even amid rain and lack of transport, especially at a time when almost all domestic workers in her neighbourhood became jobless in the pandemic.

"Asiya walks for more than four hours every day to get Tk 5,000 per month from her job. She uses that money to treat her only son, who has cancer," he said.

"According to her, if she loses this job, she will have to starve with her son," Dipu added.

Asiya's fear is real, as according to National Domestic Women Workers

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Union (NDWWU), an overwhelming majority of the capital's domestic workers lost their jobs in the pandemic. Employers did not allow house-helps to enter homes, considering them to be potential coronavirus carriers, as most live in packed low-income settlements.

According to the union, many are yet to manage jobs, and in absence of any government support, they have been leading a miserable life amid financial worries and debts.

For example, 33-year-old Jaheda Begum, a resident of Mirpur's Wapda slum, used to work at three houses in Mirpur Cantonment, from which she would earn Tk 9,000 per month.

Last year, when the countrywide lockdown began, Jaheda was told not to come to work and was promised to be reappointed, once the situation gets better.

After receiving a month's salary, she was never called back.

"It was a nightmare for me. I was shocked and didn't know what to do. Later, when the situation got better, I managed a job at Mirpur DOHS, which paid Tk 2,000. But when my daughter gave birth, I couldn't join work for only two days, and they replaced me with someone else," she said.

Speaking about the stigma she would regularly face, Jaheda said, "I was always treated as a virus carrier, even when I

Turkey releases postal stamp on Bangabandhu

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Turkey has released a postal stamp in honour of Bangladesh's Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Bangladesh Ambassador to Turkey, Mosud Mannan, and Turkey's Foreign Ministry's Cultural Wing Director General Denise Chakar released the postal stamp, published by the Postal Department of Turkey, at a special meeting on Tuesday.

Paying tribute to the memory of Sheikh Mujib, Mosud Mannan said Bangabandhu was a symbol of peace, democracy and secularism both in Bangladesh and at the global level. Throughout his life, he worked for humanity, for the socio-economic freedom of people, and their empowerment.

Both of them agreed that the friendly relationship between Bangladesh and Turkey will deepen with the release of the postal stamp.

Ambassador Mosud Mannan expressed special gratitude to Denise Chakar for the postal stamp marking Bangabandhu's birth centenary.

Safe migration an urgent need

Speakers tell anti-trafficking webinar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government and other stakeholders, including civil society groups, need to focus their efforts on advancing rights-based approaches to prevent exploitation of individuals by trafficking networks, participants said at a webinar yesterday.

They also called for efforts to shrink the space in which trafficking networks operate.

The Counter-Trafficking in Persons Technical Working Group under the Bangladesh United Nations Network on Migration organised the webinar, commemorating World Day Against Trafficking in Persons 2021.

The "Global Action against Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants - Bangladesh" project -- funded by the European Union and implemented by UN Office on Drugs and Crime and International Organisation for Migration (IOM) -- supported in organising the event.

Addressing the webinar, Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen said the government's response to the challenge is being guided by a "well laid-out robust policy framework" and a range of targeted actions.

"The changing geopolitical and development paradigm, coupled with the recent Covid-19 pandemic, is constraining our efforts to promote orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration," he said.

The foreign secretary said in recent times, a

few thousand Bangladeshi nationals have been victims of either trafficking in persons or migrant smuggling rings in several countries, including Libya, Tunisia, Malta and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The government has repatriated many such victims and is determined to continue the effort within the shortest possible time, he added.

In her address, Siobhan Mullally, UN Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, noted that the impact of Covid-19 increases risks of trafficking in persons.

"We urgently need to address the increasing risks of child trafficking, combat online exploitation, exploitation of migrant workers, and the particular risks of sexual exploitation," she said.

The Global Compact on Migration commits to eradicating trafficking in persons, she said, adding that this commitment must translate into meaningful change on the ground.

Mia Seppo, UN Resident Coordinator in Bangladesh, said Covid-19 is presenting new challenges to the protection of migrants, also outlining the intersectionality of the issue. "It is widely known that the pandemic impacts men, women, and children, including adolescents, differently," Seppo said.

To combat the scourge of trafficking in persons, all stakeholders must join hands and work together, she said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

BURIAL OF COVID-19 PATIENTS IN MYMENSINGH

Women volunteers step up to the plate

MD AMINUL ISLAM, MYMENSINGH

The pandemic situation is dire in Mymensingh

Even after Mymensingh Medical College Hospital increased the number of beds in its Covid-19 unit from 210 to 500, the hospital's 20-bed ICU remains at capacity due to the onrush of critical patients.

Dr Mohiuddin Khan Moon, focal person of MMCH Covid-19 unit, said the number of admitted patients at the unit was 222 on July 1, but drastically rose to 478 by Sunday.

Until yesterday, a total of 162 Covid patients and 247 suspected patients died at the hospital. According to the official report of the health department in Mymensingh, there has been 362 reported since the onset of the pandemic.

With so many deaths comes the need for as many burials. Though



PHOTO: COLLECTED

The four female volunteers each have their own story behind joining Ali Yusuf's (centre) team to bury deceased Covid patients.

this may not register on the surface, this is an immensely difficult task, one that adds to the brutality of the pandemic.

Ali Yusuf and his team of volunteers have been carrying out burial rites at the district

since almost the beginning of the pandemic last year. But despite their good intentions, they kept hitting a roadblock when it came to gender. As all of his volunteers were men, this was a religious issue while burying deceased women.

But thankfully, four women volunteers stepped up to join their cause. Shamima Akter Sumi (37), popularly known as Kabya Sumi Sarker; Tania Yeasmin (36), Rozi Yeasmin (40), and Tahmina Afrin (18), all hailing from different areas of Mymensingh city, joined the team on July 20. They began their work with the burial of deceased woman at the city's Akua area.

Tania began her journey down this path after she and her house-help first attended the burial of a woman at the city's Eidgah area. While there, she noted there was no one to bathe the deceased. With some free time on her hand -- though down to an unfortunate firing from her NGO job post-pandemic -- the mother of two decided to join the volunteers' group run by Mymensingh District Administration.

Kabya Sumi was a Covid-19

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Sylhet division records highest single-day Covid deaths, infections

STAR REPORT

A total of 736 new Covid-19 cases and 17 deaths were recorded in Sylhet division in 24 hours till yesterday morning, breaking previous records.

Before this, the highest number of infections in a day was 708, recorded on Tuesday, and the highest deaths of 14 were recorded on Monday.

A total of 1,870 samples were tested in the labs. The infection rate in the division stood at 39.36 percent.

Sylhet Divisional Director of Health Dr Sultana Razea confirmed the information in the daily Covid-19 divisional statistical report.

Till yesterday morning, 384 people were admitted to hospitals in the division. Among them, 262 were in Sylhet, 67 in Sunamganj, 29 in Habiganj and 28 in Moulvibazar.

Of the latest cases, Sylhet district saw the highest coronavirus infections as 341 people, out of 891 samples, tested positive.

In Sunamganj, 116, out of 299 samples, tested positive. In Habiganj, 54, out of 131, samples tested positive and in Moulvibazar, 225, out of 549, samples tested positive.

The infection rate is 38.27 percent in Sylhet, 38.80 percent in Sunamganj, 41.44 percent in Habiganj and 40.98 percent in Moulvibazar. A total of 37,654 people have been infected with Covid-19 in the division so far while 29,574 people recovered and 655 died till yesterday.



Today is International Tiger Day, an annual celebration that aims to raise awareness about the big felines. During a visit to Chattogram Zoo yesterday, nine tigers of the establishment were seen passing a relaxed time, as the premises are closed to visitors. Inset, three tiger cubs were inoculated to ensure they grow up strong and healthy.

PHOTO: RAJIB RATHAN



CORRUPTION ALLEGATIONS

BFIU seeks Sayeed Khokon's bank account details

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit yesterday asked banks to provide detailed information of accounts and transactions of Sayeed Khokon, former mayor of Dhaka South City Corporation.

The intelligence agency, dedicated to tackling money laundering and terrorist financing, asked the banks to provide information within three working days.

Despite repeated attempts, The Daily Star could not reach Khokon for comments.

Earlier on June 27, a Dhaka court ordered to freeze eight bank accounts of Sayeed Khokon and three of his family members -- wife Farhana Alam, sister Shahana Hanif and mother Fatema Hanif -- as part of investigation into allegation of amassing illegal wealth.

Of them, three accounts belong to Khokon's business firms, two belong to his wife, two belong to his sister, and one belongs to his mother.

After the court order, Khokon at a press conference at National Press Club blamed the current DSCC mayor -- Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh -- for the order.



SEE PAGE 4 COL 2