

BANGLADESH UPDATE

305
New cases in 24hrs

15,69,162
Total cases

27,854
Deaths

15,32,966
Recoveries

GLOBAL UPDATE

5,000,770
Deaths

246,554,984
Total cases

A scheme

FROM PAGE 1
However, the child, who has suffered such a cruel attack, is yet to see justice done. Meanwhile, her medical bills are racking up -- bills that her fisherman father is unable to pay.

Right now, Setu waits at the national kidney hospital in the capital for a major urinary tract reconstruction surgery. On the day The Daily Star spoke to her, doctors prescribed diagnostic tests costing Tk 18,000. The sum -- just for a day's tests -- is many times over her family's monthly income.

Zeenat Ara Haque, executive coordinator of WE CAN Alliance to End Domestic Violence, estimated this round of medical treatment will cost the family Tk 4 lakh. The girl has been through two rounds of intensive medical treatments already in the last five years.

On February 24, 2021, the High Court issued a rule asking the government to explain why it should not be directed to outline a scheme to ensure compensation for rape victims.

The court issued the rule in response to a writ petition filed by an organisation called Children Charity Bangladesh Foundation. The petition presented the cases of three minor girls to argue the need for compensation for rape victims -- one of them was Setu.

The HC gave the government one week to respond.

Several months have gone by, but none of the respondents submitted any written reply to the rule, and as a result, the compensation for the three children is yet to be settled.

The secretaries to the ministries of home, women and children affairs, health and finance, chairman of National Legal Aid Services Organisation, inspector general of police, commissioners of Rangpur and Khulna metropolitan police, superintendent of police in Rangpur, Khulna and Dinajpur and officers-in-charge of police stations concerned of the three districts where the cases were filed, had been made respondents to the rule.

The two other cases include that of a 9-year-old girl who was raped allegedly by a police constable in Terokhada, Khulna, last year, while she was picking flowers. The other victim is a 4-year-old who was raped and killed last year allegedly by her neighbour who lured her with a sweet treat.

Justice has not been served in these cases too.

Deputy Attorney General Nawroz MR Chowdhury told The Daily Star that it is not mandatory for the respondents to submit a written reply to the High Court rule, and that the reply can be placed when the High Court holds a hearing on the rule.

Writ petitioner's lawyer Md Abdul Halim told this newspaper that he will seek a hearing soon. He said the pandemic affected the regular functions of the court.

Lawyer Halim hoped that a landmark verdict will come from the HC if it can hold the hearing and dispose of the rule.

"The parents of the victims are not aware of public law compensation and also are very poor ... they are not aware of this jurisdiction; nor are they in a position to engage a lawyer in the Supreme Court to seek protection under the constitution," said the petition filed by Halim.

Last year, Bangladesh Legal Aid Services Trust analysed 44 rape cases and found that even though the court slapped the culprits in all the cases with monetary fines, the money was not converted to compensation in 93 per cent of the cases. Only three victims got compensation.

Zeenat of WE CAN said compensation for Setu -- and other rape survivors -- is one of their demands while they fight for justice.

"But we also need the court to give a verdict soon. The case has been hanging for five years," she said, referring to the case filed over Setu's rape.

A verdict was supposed to be delivered on March 31 by the Dinajpur court, but seven months have gone by with no update.

Of the two accused, one is out on bail, adding to the frustration of the victim's family.

Setu does not understand compensation, but she does understand that she is fighting a legal battle. And she demands justice.

"I want capital punishment for them," said the girl quietly, fiddling with a colouring book, serving a reminder that no amount of money can compensate for the ordeal she is going through.



From left, Erik Aas, CEO of Banglalink, Abul Kashem Md Shirin, MD of DBBL, Deepal Abeywickrema, MD of Nestlé Bangladesh, Naser Ezaz Bijoy, CEO of Standard Chartered Bangladesh, Alihussain Akberali, chairman of BSRM Group, and Hassan O Rashid, MD of Prime Bank, pose for a photo with the planning minister, third from left, after receiving "A Better Tomorrow CSR Awards" in the capital last evening.



Five youths -- from left, Ahmed Imtiaz Jami, founder of Obhizatrik Foundation, Amiya Prapan Chakraborty Arka, founder of Dhruvotara Youth Development Foundation, Esrat Karim Eve, founder of Amal Foundation, Tawhida Shiropa, founder and CEO of Moner Bondhu, and Ratul Dev, founder of GenLab -- pose with Planning Minister MA Mannan, third from left, at the "A Better Tomorrow CSR Awards" ceremony in the city yesterday. The five were honoured as "Young Humanitarian of the Year".



MA MANNAN
Planning Minister



RAJIV PRASAD SHAHA
Chairman and MD, Kumudini Welfare Trust of Bengal Ltd



SHEHZAD MUNIM
Managing Director, BAT Bangladesh

PHOTO: STAR

Cheers for CSR champions

FROM PAGE 1
Bangladesh is rising to the occasion. Ultimately, it is the human value that actually transforms the society," he added.

If corporates amplified their CSR activities, they would be able to bring significant collective change in the country, said Ahsan Rony, co-founder of the CSR Window Bangladesh.

"This will definitely encourage us to do more. We always try to focus more on the impacts than the monetary value, and this is something we have been doing for a long

time," said Naser Ezaz Bijoy, CEO of Standard Chartered Bangladesh, on receiving the award.

Corporates were the direct beneficiary of the country's prosperous journey. "So, it is incumbent on us to give it back to the community and the country," he said, while calling for the adoption of ESG standards.

"We always believe in giving back to society. It is the core essence of Nestlé. Recognition of that is significant for all of us," said Deepal Abeywickrema, MD

of Nestlé Bangladesh.

The partnership with Google Area 120 for Kormo has already resulted in remarkable success, said Erik Aas, CEO of Banglalink. "Today's recognition will motivate us for further efforts to support the youth of the country," he added.

The people and the companies that have done so much for the country should be encouraged and supported more, said Alihussain Akberali, chairman of BSRM Group.

"And their voices should be

heard -- our letters should not be in the box of the government offices," he added.

The award will encourage the Prime Bank family to continue with the good work, to have a positive impact on the society and the people they serve, said Hassan O Rashid, MD and CEO of Prime Bank.

"Although we don't want to expect any return for the CSR activities we have been doing for a long time, we are very delighted to have won the award. This will encourage us,"

said Abul Kashem Md. Shirin, MD and CEO of Dutch-Bangla Bank.

IDLC Water Ambulance of IDLC Finance, the Uchash School of IPDC Finance, the Plant For Planet of Epyllion Group, Swapno of Marico, the Food and Nutrition Support Programme of Confidence Group and the Child Online Safety of Grameenphone received the honourable mention in the six categories.

Khayam Sanu Sandhi and his team performed at the event.

BANGLALINK BEST CSR IN FINANCIAL INCLUSION

Youth unemployment is an epidemic in Bangladesh, and with the view to being a part of the solution, Banglalink in 2018 teamed up with Google Area 120 to set up Kormo, a platform that matches job seekers with their preferred jobs.

At select Banglalink outlets, there are kiosks, where Kormo representatives provide personalised career development advice, and guide them on how to create a CV and apply for jobs.

Later, a Kormo app was rolled out, where aspiring job seekers can get the same services. More than 70,000 job seekers have applied through the app so far.

Kormo has introduced online job fair partnerships with Banglalink, too. More than 50 employers have participated in each job fair with 60 to 70 live jobs. On average, 40,000 job seekers applied for jobs in the online job fairs and a good number of them matched with their desired jobs.

Another signature programme is the bi-weekly "Meet with Experts", where local market experts share their experience and career journey with job seekers. So far, 15,000 job seekers have directly benefited from this online show.

In so doing, Banglalink is promoting financial inclusion and community engagement, making it the prime candidate for the award.

BSRM BEST CSR IN ENVIRONMENT

In 2013, with the view to preventing forest devastation, BSRM took up the Livelihood Programme for Conservation in partnership with Young Power in Social Action.

The project found and created income-generating opportunities for communities dependent on felling trees and selling wood to brick mills for income.

The income-generation project targets the poor and mostly landless communities in Mirsarai, Chattogram. The project identifies families to provide capacity-building support and pays them a seed fund to start their own agricultural income.

Presently, 6,940 households are enrolled in income-generating activities, which include nursery, vegetable cultivation, gardening, crop cultivation, cattle rearing and fishery. Since the households do not fell trees for income, an estimated 55,520 trees are preserved, adding to local biodiversity.

BSRM Group of Companies have provided about Tk 1.2 crore since the start of the project overseen by YPSA in 2013. The amount is used as revolving funds.

So far, the beneficiaries pay back all owed funds in full and have seen an average increase of Tk 2,930 per household in monthly disposable income.

BSRM's activities in forest conservation make it the ideal candidate for the opening edition of the award.

DUTCH-BANGLA BANK BEST CSR IN EDUCATION

Since 1995, Dutch-Bangla Bank has been providing one of the country's biggest CSR-funded scholarships. So far, a total of 62,752 meritorious students in need of financial support received Tk 427.2 crore from the fund.

Each awardee receives monthly tuition fees and an annual grant for study materials and uniforms from the HSC until Masters graduation.

An expert CSR panel at Dutch-Bangla bank assesses the academic performance, financial status and physical condition of the applicants before awarding the monthly stipend, which is subject to renewal each year.

As much as 90 percent of the scholarships are given to students from rural and remote areas as part of the efforts to encourage education at the grassroots level.

And half of the recipients in each batch are female, while 10 to 15 percent of the fund is awarded to physically challenged students.

So far, 15,245 students have finished their university degrees and are well set in their careers.

Its sustained effort in empowering the underprivileged in Bangladesh with the gift of education by way of its CSR activities makes Dutch-Bangla Bank the top contender for the award.

NESTLÉ BEST CSR IN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In 2008, Nestlé took up the "Sustainable Sourcing for Farmers" programme to build capacity and agricultural knowledge of farmers in rural communities with the eventual aim of shifting to 100 percent local sourcing of their products.

This would give farmers access to international-quality harvests that give them a safeguard for their income, and is one of the initiatives the local arm of the Swiss multinational behemoth has taken to enhance its community engagement.

Its other initiatives include sustainable sourcing of rice, training and developing more than 200 local suppliers in Rangpur.

In 2011, it started local honey sourcing by developing vendors and providing training on bee colony maintenance and honey extraction.

The company also started local wheat sourcing and collaborated with a local dairy farm and spice processors with regulations of food safety, training and farmer/worker payment requirements in place.

Over time, more than 200 farms underwent training to supply the company's requirements for produce.

Thanks to the new agricultural practices introduced by Nestlé, the farmers saw their monthly incomes increase by 10 to 25 percent. This makes Nestlé the obvious choice for the award.

PRIME BANK BEST CSR IN HEALTHCARE

Eyecare ensures healthy and sustainable livelihood and is directly linked with the overall wellbeing of a person. With this in mind, Prime Bank in 2012 set up an eye hospital in the capital's Dhanmondi area with a clear mission to render affordable and quality eye care to as many people as possible.

Called the Prime Bank Eye Hospital, the hospital has been serving patients from all over the country with the same quality service, and in the last three years, has taken significant strides in reaching full financial sustainability. It is also playing a pivotal role in addressing avoidable blindness in Bangladesh. It carries out outreach camps at Narayanhat, Bhujpur, Fatikchari and Chattogram and provides free and subsidised treatments to communities in need.

As of 2020, the ophthalmology institute has served upwards of 135,744 patients, with most of them coming from the low-income segment of the population.

More than 12,000 patients have successfully undergone eye surgeries, of which 65 percent came from the organisation's outreach programmes.

The award is in recognition of Prime Bank's CSR activities that are improving the quality and affordability of healthcare in Bangladesh.

STANDARD CHARTERED BANK BEST CSR IN COVID-19 RESPONSE

In 2020, Standard Chartered Bank had the highest CSR spending among international banks in Bangladesh, making it the strongest candidate for the award.

When the pandemic set in, the British bank partnered with multiple public and development sector bodies to reach out to farmers and healthcare workers.

It provided relief packages to 120,000 individuals, delivering 3.6 million meals and personal hygiene materials through BRAC and Kumudini Welfare Trust.

In partnership with OBHIZATRIK Foundation, it connected 2,000 affected farmers to more than 200,000 people in need of food through "Bina Poyshar Bazar".

The bank supported full medical expenses of 560 critically-affected COVID patients in SAJIDA Foundation and Bidyanondo hospitals and contributed about Tk 2.6 crore to Red Cross programmes for providing frontline and healthcare workers with PPEs and medical equipment.

With schools closed, Standard Chartered provided Tk 11.1 crore to UNICEF in support of remote education, for preparing education materials over TV and radio and enabling schools with remote video class facilities.

It also partnered with UICEP Bangladesh for the Futuremakers initiative, which provided 300 youths from underprivileged backgrounds with employable technical skills, financial assistance and job opportunities.

WHO wants \$23.4b to conquer Covid

FROM PAGE 1
are needed to end this pandemic", Tedros told a press conference on Thursday.

"We are at a decisive moment, requiring decisive leadership to make the world safer."

The WHO-led Access to Covid Tools Accelerator is aimed at developing, producing, procuring and distributing tools to tackle the pandemic.

The \$23.4 billion needed to fund it "pales in comparison to the trillions of dollars in economic losses caused by

the pandemic and the cost of stimulus plans to support national recoveries", the WHO said.

"Fully funding the ACT-Accelerator is a global health security imperative for us all -- the time to act is now," said Tedros.

But the call to arms risks meeting the same fate as previous attempts to get wealthy countries to feel ashamed about the ever-growing gap between their own level of protection against the virus and that of the world's poorest nations. The WHO said only 0.4 percent of

tests and 0.5 percent of vaccine doses deployed so far had been used in low-income countries, which make up nine percent of the world's population.

The WHO said its plan would see ACT-A shift towards a more targeted focus on addressing the supply gaps in poorer countries.

"Nowhere is this inequity more apparent than on the African continent, where just eight percent of the population has received a single dose of Covid-19 vaccine," said South African

President Cyril Ramaphosa.

Just five of 54 African countries are projected to meet the WHO's year-end target of fully vaccinating 40 percent of their population.

ACT-A gave birth to the Covax facility, designed to ensure poorer countries could access eventual vaccines, correctly predicting that richer nations would hog all the doses coming off the production lines.

So far, Covax has delivered 425 million doses to 144 territories -- way

below where it hoped to be.

WHO chief scientist Soumya Swaminathan said more than a billion donated doses had been pledged to the scheme -- but only around 15 percent have actually materialised.

She also said 62 countries had started administering boosters and more states are considering the move.

Swaminathan said that close to a million booster doses were being injected per day -- triple the amount of vaccines being administered in low-

income countries.

The WHO wants a moratorium on boosters until the end of the year to free up jobs for poorer nations.

The UN health agency has authorised six vaccines for emergency use during the pandemic.

Mariangela Simao, the WHO's access to vaccines chief, said the agency was assessing eight candidate jobs, including that of India's Bharat Biotech, on which it is hoping to finalise the process next week.