

Make health sector more robust

Says president to tackle Covid-like crises

UNB, Kishoreganj

President Abdul Hamid yesterday said Bangladesh has done better than even some developed countries in successfully tackling the pandemic.

However, the country still needs to build a robust health sector to tackle similar crises in future, he said.

The president said this while speaking to foreign students studying at President Abdul Hamid Medical College at a programme at Shilpakala Academy in Kishoreganj.

“Although we have achieved tremendous success in health sector, the pandemic has exposed some loopholes in the system. We are still in need of more skilled resources, especially specialist doctors, nursing staffs and medical technologists” he said.

Hamid praised the health sector manpower, including doctors, nurses and technologists.

He said Bangladesh ranked first in South Asia

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Low on quality, high on price

DU hall canteens hit all-time low on all fronts after reopening



Food at these canteens are often left lying at the least hygienic places. The photos were taken from the university's Bijoy 71 Hall yesterday.

SIRAJUL ISLAM RUBEL

It has barely been a month since Dhaka University has reopened, but students have already started to find themselves pinched by various problems. One of them, increasing food prices at the university's canteens, is becoming a particular headache, students said.

Juel Mia, a residential student of Muktioddha Ziaur Rahman Hall, was complaining to this correspondent last week. “I live on a tight budget. I cannot afford to go beyond it, but I've already spent more than my estimated food cost for the month, and there's still half-a-month to go,” he said in frustration.

Before the pandemic, three meals a day would cost around Tk 100, but now, the cost has gone up to Tk 150, Juel told The Daily Star.

Beef and rice cost Tk 55-60, while poultry chicken costs Tk 40-45 per piece. A piece of fish costs Tk 40 and students have to whip out

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Tk 35 for egg curry.

However, they claimed that despite the price hike, the quality of the food has not increased an ounce.

“We have to spend extra money on each meal, but food quality has not improved at all. Moreover, our income has not increased either,” said Md Feroz, a sociology major, echoing the sentiment of many residential students.

But canteen officials have their own account

over the matter. “We had to raise our prices due to the price hike of essential goods in the market,” said Jahangir Alam, canteen manager of Shaheed Sergeant Zahurul Haque Hall.

Asked about this, Prof Delowar Hossain, provost of Shaheed Sergeant Zahurul Haque Hall, said, “We haven't received any complaint till now. But if we're informed, and if needed, we will subsidise the food.”

“If canteen owners are found to be causing suffering for the students, we will take steps against them,” he said.

‘NOT EVEN MINIMUM LEVEL OF HYGIENE’ Upon visiting many hall canteens in the university, this correspondent found that most of their kitchens are run without a minimum level of hygiene. At 11:30am last Sunday, right after lunch had been cooked, the food was kept without covers, with flies buzzing around over the rice pot.

When this correspondent started to record

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Govt to set up int'l standard vaccine centre: PM

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday in parliament announced that her government is planning to set up an international standard vaccine institute aimed at producing vaccines in the country.

She said this while replying to a tabled question from Awami League lawmaker Anwar Hossain Khan of Laxmipur-1.

Highlighting the benefits of the institute, she said once it is established, it will ensure vaccine production, training on related research and technical assistance as well as enhance the capacity of local vaccine producing firms.

Moreover, the management of vaccine production, application and standards will be further time-befitting, she said.

Hasina said the institute will also ease the production of newly developed vaccines in the country, which will ensure the availability of vaccines at cheaper rates.

She further said establishing the institute will also pave the way for attaining WHO-prequalification for the new vaccine that might help in expanding foreign market of the vaccines produced in Bangladesh.

DREDGING MASTER PLAN

The premier said her government has made 10,000km of waterways navigable through dredging 178 dried up or almost dying rivers. Besides, they have collected 38 dredgers and 168 dredging auxiliary vessels, she said.

She added that the government has adopted a dredging master plan to smooth operation of water vessels. The PM also said 3,000 kilometers of river routes have come under navigability through dredging 47 rivers across the country.

UNDERGROUND METRO IN DHAKA

In reply to a query, she said a feasibility study is underway for construction of underground metro in the capital.

The overall progress of the survey project till October is 80 percent. It is expected that its implementation work

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Speakers at the discussion at The Daily Star Centre yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

‘Morality of victims irrelevant in rape cases’

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rights activists have demanded amendment of section 155(4) of the Evidence Act to protect rape victims from being demeaned during cross-examination before court.

They also asked the government to ensure compensation for rape victims and protection of witnesses.

They made these demands at a discussion titled “Legal Reform to Ensure Justice for Rape: Compensation, Witness Protection and Prohibition of Character Evidence”

organised by Rape Law Reform Coalition at The Daily Star Centre in Dhaka yesterday.

The coalition consists of 17 rights organisations that have been working to reform the relevant laws to ensure justice for rape victims.

According to section 155(4), when a man is prosecuted for rape or an attempt to rape, “it may be shown that the prosecutrix was of generally immoral character”.

During his presentation, Taqbir Huda, advocacy lead of Gender Justice and

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Brutal, barbaric DB arrests man for raping, killing 5-yr-old nephew to frame rivals

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

On November 10, 2019, police found the body of a five-year-old boy near a police box in the capital's Paltan area. The child's uncle then persuaded the mother to file a murder case against members of a group the uncle had a rivalry with.

Two years after probing into the incident, Detective Branch (DB) of police found that it was the uncle who sedated, raped and strangled his nephew to frame his rivals.

A DB team arrested the man -- Chan Mia -- from Paltan early yesterday. AKM Hafiz Akhtar, additional commissioner (detectives) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, told a press briefing at DMP Media Centre.

The DB official said the child went missing on the night of November 9, 2019. The mother could not find him and informed Chan Mia the next morning. The next night, the boy's body was found near Paltan Police Station.

Persuaded by Chan Mia, the mother later filed a murder case with the police station against Langra Russell, Pintu, Jewel, Kalam, Payel and Hira.

After investigating the incident, DB found a different story.

Describing the incident, Akhtar said Chan Mia mixed sedatives with juice and made the child drink it around 10:30pm. He then took him to a secluded place in Gulistan Park area.

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PM mourns death of Afsar Uddin Ahmed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday expressed deep shock and sorrow at the demise of former state minister Afsar Uddin Ahmed Khan.

The prime minister also prayed for the salvation of the departed soul and conveyed her condolences to the bereaved family.

Advocate Afsar Uddin died at his Dhaka residence on Tuesday, aged 81.

Younger brother of Tajuddin Ahmad, the first prime minister of Bangladesh, Afsar Uddin left behind two sons, a host of relatives and well-wishers.

He also served as lawmaker from Gazipur-4 constituency.

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Satkhira's Friendship Hospital selected for RIBA int'l prize



PHOTO: COURTESY

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The architectural design of Friendship Hospital in Satkhira's Shyamnagar has recently been selected as one of three entries for the prestigious Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) International Prize 2021.

The 2021 winner of the “RIBA International Prize” along with “RIBA International Emerging Architect” will be announced in early 2022, reads a post on the RIBA website.

The RIBA International Prize will be awarded to a building that “exemplifies design excellence, architectural ambition and delivers meaningful social impact”.

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MORE NEWS

Dengue claims another life

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least one more dengue patient died while 103 were hospitalised in the last 24 hours till 8am yesterday of whom 19 are from outside Dhaka, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

With the new cases, the number of dengue rose to 26,000 while 2,242 were diagnosed during the running month. Of the total infected, 3,937 are from outside Dhaka.

According to DGHS, 98 people have died of dengue this year.

116 Bangladeshis return from Libya

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 116 Bangladeshis yesterday returned home in a chartered flight from Libya.

Of them, 84 had been in a detention centre for about a year, after being nabbed by law enforcers on charges of entering the country illegally, said Gazi Md Asaduzzaman Kabir, labour welfare counsellor at the Bangladesh embassy in Libya.

They tried to cross the Mediterranean illegally to reach Europe, Kabir said.

CU turns 56

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Chittagong University (CU) is going to celebrate its 56th founding anniversary today.

CU Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Shireen Akhter will inaugurate the programmes on the university's Central Shaheed Minar premises at 10am.

Later, teachers and students will bring out a procession on the campus.

Information Minister Dr Hasan Mahmud will be present as the chief guest at a discussion to be held at 12pm there.

SANJOY KUMAR BARUA, Ctg

Chattogram city's historic Rother Pukur pond is truly a part of history books now.

Located in the city's Nandonkanon area, the once-vibrant water body is now non-existent, following rampant construction of residential and commercial buildings on it.

Like Rother Pukur, Dewanipukur in Dewan Bazar, Rajapukur in Anderkilla, Maillerpukur and Munshipukur in Bohaddarhat, Moulvipukur in Chandgaon and more have met similar fates over the years, becoming victims of encroachment, unplanned urbanisation, and lack of proper monitoring, said locals and experts.

Meanwhile, the historic Ashkar Dighi of Jamal Khan, Bhelua Shundorir Dighi of Pahartoli, Agrabad Dhebar Dighi, and Ranir Dighi at Enayet Bazar are in serious danger due to encroachment, earth filling, and pollution.

According to records and surveys, in just 10 years, the city has lost more than 3,000 water bodies since 2005.

This has serious implications for the port city. “Ecological balance collapses when such big dighis are filled up, while the refilling of ground water is also seriously hampered,” said Dr Md Atiqur Rahman, associate professor of geography and environmental studies department at Chittagong University.

“The water bodies which were lost and those that are being filled up could have relieved city dwellers from recurring issues, such as waterlogging,”

Md Abu Issa Anshary, deputy chief town planner of Chattogram Development Authority (CDA), said, “In 2005, we conducted a survey across 41 wards of Chattogram town and found 4,523



PHOTO: STAR

ponds.”

But in a satellite survey in 2015, researchers found drastically fewer water bodies in the Chattogram City Corporation area.

Morshed Hossain Molla, PhD researcher of Chittagong University's Department of Geography and Environmental Studies, said, “Under the supervision of Prof Mohammad Abu Taiyeb Chowdhury, we identified a total of 1,352 water bodies in the area.”

“Based on this information, we conducted a field survey in 41 wards of Chattogram town and found a

total of 1,249 water bodies,” he said.

This has led to not only environmental degradation, but also a loss in the city's scenic beauty. “The panoramic beauty of Bhelua Shundorir Dighi [in Pahartoli] has been completely lost, as grabbers continue to construct houses and shops, encroaching the dighi,” said Ali Ashraf, a resident of the area.

“A festival of encroaching the Bheluar Dighi has been running for almost three decades,” said local Md Ilias Mia. “Locally influential politicians and businesspeople are behind this indiscriminate grabbing,” he alleged.

The historical Askar Dighi in Chattogram used to be a place of serenity for city dwellers. However, as much of it has been encroached, this panoramic beauty is barely alive today. Inset, the historic Rother Pukur has it worse. Faced with indiscriminate grabbing, it doesn't even exist now.

Some identify the premises of the Playground, Open Spaces, Gardens, and Water Bodies Conservation Act, 2000, as paving way for this sorry state of the water bodies.

Though the act specifies the fine and imprisonment term for the violation of any of its provisions, it does not direct the government to recover the original characteristics of a water body if someone fills it up. The act also does not have any provision to recover disappearing water bodies that were once marked in survey records and exist in government documents.

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DEMOS & DEMANDS

‘Set up RT-PCR lab at Chattogram airport’

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Nagarik Udyog yesterday formed a human chain in front of Shah Amanat airport's entry point, demanding RT-PCR lab there to test passengers travelling to Middle Eastern countries for Covid-19.

The Middle Eastern countries are not allowing expatriates to enter unless they show an RT-PCR negative report. Chattogram's expatriates have to go to Dhaka, as there is no such lab at the Chattogram airport.

Ensure rights of tea workers: speakers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Coordination between organisations fighting for workers' rights is imperative to ensure rights of tea workers, said speakers at a workshop yesterday.

The workshop was jointly organised by International Labour Organization (ILO) and Indigenous Peoples Development Services (IPDS) at a seminar hall in Sylhet city.



PHOTO: STAR

JU-based Deep Ecology and Snake Rescue Foundation staged a “puppet show” on the campus yesterday, protesting the recent killing of elephants. The event was held with assistance of Kaktaruya Puppet Theater.