



An elderly man gives in and sits in the middle of a long queue in front of an OMS truck in the capital's Mohammadpur Bus Stand area yesterday. It has now become common for people to stand in line for hours for these trucks as prices of daily essentials have been skyrocketing in markets.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## They brave queues, chaos

People throng TCB trucks to buy essentials at reasonable prices

MAMUNUR RASHID

The queues and chaos in front of TCB trucks have only been growing recently due to reduced earnings of low- and middle-income groups and price hikes.

In one such queue, some 200 people were waiting for their much-anticipated TCB truck on Manik Mia Avenue around 11:00am yesterday.

The trucks of Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) offer daily commodities at a lower price.

Mujibur Rahman, who rents out four to five rickshaws for income, was one in the queue.

He said he was waiting in the line for two hours as he could not afford everyday essentials from retail markets.

"I will purchase 2 litres of oil, 2 kilogrammes of sugar and lentils each and 3 kilogrammes of onions," he added.

About the chaos there, he said, "The truck comes at 10:00am on one day and at 11:00am on another. It does not even show up on some days.

"Although it is troublesome, I still have to wait here as I do not have enough money to buy commodities from a grocer at a higher price."

Seeking anonymity, a woman who works at BTCL's (Bangladesh Telecommunications Company Ltd) telephone exchange building, said

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## Star HEALTHLINE

### ICU DOCTORS' WELLBEING during pandemic

DR MEHNAZ FERDOUS

Even though each professional had to adapt to their new way of life, doctors had to adapt to the Covid-19 pandemic in an unprecedented manner. Response to the pandemic has been a challenge of huge magnitude that physicians have not faced perhaps in a lifetime. With wave after wave of Covid-19 hitting the globe, the pandemic appears like a marathon rather than a 100m sprint.

Pandemic's potential impact can be profound and long-lasting, especially given the triggers seen by ICU physicians daily. Witnessing suffering is not an alien concept to those working in the ICU, but the speed and scale of Covid-19 led to a constant sense of flux which created anxiety, exhaustion and inevitable burnouts.

Also, unrelenting fatigue, mental trauma and social stigma could result in a drop in performance. Junior doctors taking up more responsibilities due

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## ACC officials protest firing of colleague

TIB asks if he was sacked for exposing the corrupt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Officials of Anti-Corruption Commission yesterday protested the termination of a deputy assistant director of the commission in Patuakhali.

On Wednesday, the ACC terminated Sharif Uddin under the section 54(2) of Anti-Corruption Commission (Servants) Service Rules 2008.

About 50 ACC officials formed a human chain in front of the ACC headquarters in the capital's Segunbagicha.

They said Sharif was a hardworking and skilled officer who filed 52 corruption cases while he was in Chattogram. Because of his stance against corruption, the corrupt threatened him with life, they said, adding that firing him with no room for self-defence was tantamount to supporting corruption.

Talking to the Daily Star, Sharif said he was a victim of injustice. "I responded to [queries of] departmental probes ... To the best of my knowledge, some of the probe reports went in my favour," he said.

However, top ACC officials claimed that Sharif was engaged in various activities that violated ACC rules.

"There were three departmental proceedings and seven to eight allegations against him. On several occasions, the High Court expressed

discontent over his activities," said a top official.

In June last year, Sharif was transferred to Patuakhali from Chattogram. A human rights organisation had then filed a writ challenging the transfer order. The HC dropped the matter from the causelist but a fake order stating that 'the High Court stayed his transfer' was circulated.

When the matter came to the fore, the HC asked the ACC to take action against Sharif.

The HC in December last year once again expressed its discontent when it came to its notice that Sharif did not deposit about Tk 94 lakh, seized from a surveyor of Cox's Bazar to the public exchequer.

Sharif said that he handed over Tk 94 lakh to his boss when joining the Patuakhali office. "It was evidence. We need to do inventory before submitting evidence to the court. During the pandemic, there was no official activity and it was not possible for me to write down serial numbers of the notes," he said.

Regarding the fake HC order, Sharif said he has no relation with the writ petitioner. "They filed it on their own."

Yesterday, at the human chain, his colleagues said they face various challenges and threats while carrying out duties. "We hope the ACC will take measures to address these," they said, seeking reinstatement of Sharif.

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A crimson sunbird perched on a Mandar tree branch for lunch from a flower at the Satchhari National Park in Habiganj's Chunarughat recently. Breeders in tropical southern Asia, the birds generally feed on nectar.

PHOTO: REHANA BEGUM



## Experts slam draft policies on new media

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The proposed regulation and policy for social media and streaming services will be alarming for journalism and the free flow of information, experts said yesterday.

Since registration is being made mandatory to distribute content online, there is scope for scrutiny by intelligence agencies for the final approval for the licence, they said, adding that it will allow them to choose who to give a licence to.

The observations came at a virtual seminar organised on Draft Policy on Regulation of Digital Media, Social Media, and OTT Platforms 2021 last evening by the Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust.

The ICT Division has formulated a draft called Over The Top Content-Based Service Providing and Operation Policy 2021 while the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) prepared another draft regulation for Digital, Social Media and OTT Platforms.

"There is no need for such guidelines -- it is an unlawful exercise of power," said lawyer ZI Khan Panna, a human rights activist.

The guideline has been formulated to suppress progressive people, not the religious fanatics who spread hate online, he added.

Rights activists, as well as free thinkers, will face obstacles in getting the licence as intelligence agencies are given the authority to pick and choose, said Supreme Court Lawyer Hamidul Misbah.

"They will not choose the persons who talk against the ruling party or are not like-minded."

The policy will also harm small companies and individual content creators since the licence fee is fixed at Tk 5 lakh, he said, adding that the long procedures of getting a licence will create bottlenecks.

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## Role of transport workers

ABDUL AWAL BHUIYAN

I had about 10 taxis on the Dhaka-Narayanganj route. There was no strike on that route on the morning of February 21. At that time, I was in Narayanganj. The transport strike actually began in the evening, shortly after the shooting.

In the morning of February 22, some youths of Bangshal set fire to the office of 'Morning News'. They procured petrol from the stock of Dhaka transport owners. They did it spontaneously without any outside effort. When I was in Khosmahal Restaurant, a procession was going down Nawabpur Road towards Sadarghat. At the junction of Bangshal Road and Nawabpur Road, near Nishat Cinema Hall, police tried to stop the procession. They opened fire on the procession in front of Khosmahal restaurant, without firing any tear gas or charge truncheons. One died on the spot and several others were injured.

At 10:00am on February 23, District Magistrate Qureshi convened a meeting of transport owners at his office. All the major transport owners were present, including Lashkar, Moti Sardar and I.

The transportation system completely collapsed due to the successful strike. Qureshi wanted to end the strike with our help and resume normal travel. He threatened to cancel our licences and benefits if we did not comply.

Moti Sardar, who was probably the only

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