



## GoB to Take Money for Corona Test: Health Services Lost Universality

Free coronavirus testing is no longer available in government hospitals and labs. Whether one has corona symptoms or not, one has to pay a fixed fee to get the sample tested. If you go to government hospitals and booths and test samples, you will have to pay a fee of Tk.200. And if the samples are collected from home, you have to pay a fee of Tk.500. The Ministry of Health has fixed this fee with the consent of the Ministry of Finance.

A notification issued by the Public Health Management-1 branch of the Health Services Department of the Ministry of Health said that most people are taking the opportunity to get the test without any symptoms as the government has given them the opportunity to get the test for free. Fees have been set to avoid unnecessary tests in this situation. However, even the corona examination fee is fixed for the general public but all medical facilities for government officials and employees will remain in force under the Medical Facilities Rules, 1974. The cost of sample testing of hospitalized patients will also be Tk.200 and this fee will be applicable for all government hospitals.

Since April 2020, the Department of Health has allowed a number of private hospitals and organizations to provide commercial testing services at the private level due to low corona testing rates in Bangladesh compared to other countries due to various reasons including lack of capacity and insufficient test kits. From these places, only the able-bodied have got the opportunity to test the corona for Tk.3500-5000. More recently, there have been allegations of irregularities and false reports in corona testing against some hospitals and agencies. A significant number of those who usually come to government hospitals for check-ups are working class people. At a time when people are struggling to survive due to corona, the newly imposed medical expenses will discourage them from testing corona. In these circumstances, on the one hand, uncertainty at the private level and on the other hand imposing of fees for public hospital examinations could further reduce the number of test rate!

Adding that working people were the most affected by corona Joint Coordinator of the Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad (SKOP) Joint Coordinator Naimul Ahsan Jewel said, it is not possible for workers to be tested for corona with money. The earnings of most of the workers working in the formal and informal sectors have become very uncertain. In this situation, it is impossible for a worker to pay for a corona test at a government hospital where he is unable to meet his basic needs for survival. The corona test rate in our country is much lower than in neighboring countries. There are also reports of fake tests, irregularities and misreporting in various places. On top of that, the people are losing their confidence as a result of imposing fees for corona testing on working people. The government should provide free corona test and increase the test rate. In this case, if the area-based corona test is arranged through the office of the ward commissioner of the local government, the suffering of the people will be reduced and it will be possible to arrange the treatment of the victim by providing quick test results. The government will have to take steps to streamline the entire health system at this time of the Corona epidemic to ensure the health protection of the working people and the public.

### News Link:

<https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1665818/%E0%A6%AC%E0%A7%81%E0%A6%A5%E0%A7%87-%E0%A6%95%E0%A6%B0%E0%A7%8B%E0%A6%A8%E0%A6%BE-%E0%A6%AA%E0%A6%B0%E0%A7%80%E0%A6%95%E0%A7%8D%E0%A6%B7%E0%A6%BE%E0%A7%9F-%E0%A6%B2%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%97%E0%A6%AC%E0%A7%87-%E0%A7%A8%E0%A7%A6%E0%A7%A6-%E0%A6%9F%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%95%E0%A6%BE-%E0%A6%AC%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%B8%E0%A6%BE%E0%A7%9F-%E0%A6%A1%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%95%E0%A6%B2%E0%A7%87>

<https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1665818/%E0%A6%AC%E0%A7%81%E0%A6%A5%E0%A7%87-%E0%A6%95%E0%A6%B0%E0%A7%8B%E0%A6%A8%E0%A6%BE-%E0%A6%AA%E0%A6%B0%E0%A7%80%E0%A6%95%E0%A7%8D%E0%A6%B7%E0%A6%BE%E0%A7%9F-%E0%A6%B2%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%97%E0%A6%AC%E0%A7%87-%E0%A7%A8%E0%A7%A6%E0%A7%A6-%E0%A6%9F%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%95%E0%A6%BE-%E0%A6%AC%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%B8%E0%A6%BE%E0%A7%9F-%E0%A6%A1%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%95%E0%A6%B2%E0%A7%87>

<https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1665818/%E0%A6%AC%E0%A7%81%E0%A6%A5%E0%A7%87-%E0%A6%95%E0%A6%B0%E0%A7%8B%E0%A6%A8%E0%A6%BE-%E0%A6%AA%E0%A6%B0%E0%A7%80%E0%A6%95%E0%A7%8D%E0%A6%B7%E0%A6%BE%E0%A7%9F-%E0%A6%B2%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%97%E0%A6%AC%E0%A7%87-%E0%A7%A8%E0%A7%A6%E0%A7%A6-%E0%A6%9F%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%95%E0%A6%BE-%E0%A6%AC%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%B8%E0%A6%BE%E0%A7%9F-%E0%A6%A1%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%95%E0%A6%B2%E0%A7%87>

<https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/article/1665818/%E0%A6%AC%E0%A7%81%E0%A6%A5%E0%A7%87-%E0%A6%95%E0%A6%B0%E0%A7%8B%E0%A6%A8%E0%A6%BE-%E0%A6%AA%E0%A6%B0%E0%A7%80%E0%A6%95%E0%A7%8D%E0%A6%B7%E0%A6%BE%E0%A7%9F-%E0%A6%B2%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%97%E0%A6%AC%E0%A7%87-%E0%A7%A8%E0%A7%A6%E0%A7%A6-%E0%A6%9F%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%95%E0%A6%BE-%E0%A6%AC%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%B8%E0%A6%BE%E0%A7%9F-%E0%A6%A1%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%95%E0%A6%B2%E0%A7%87>

# Labour News Flash

July 16-23, 2020

## Ship breaking workers are at risk of losing their jobs

During Countrywide general holiday and unannounced lock down, the ship breaking sector was open as usual except for the first week of April 2020. But in April and May only 60-70% of the workers were at work. The employers employed only 60-70% of the workers of total work force. The rest of the workers were unemployed. Here most of the workers work under contractor and if there is no work they do not get paid. As a result 30-40% of the workers are unemployed for a long time and have no income. In the mean-time unemployed jute workers have also turned to the ship-breaking industry as the government jute mill has been declared closed. Due to this reason, the current shipbreaking workers are facing difficult challenges for their livelihood. Currently, there is a tendency among employers and contractors to reduce the wages of workers. So shipbreaking workers are at risk of losing their jobs as well as income.

This is to be mentioned that in 2018, the minimum wage of workers in this sector was announced at 16,000 taka, but it has not been implemented yet. Even Workers were never provided with appointment letter, identity cards and service book according the labour law prevailing in the country. They were never been paid any sorts of leave with pay. This is also a bearing example to avoid the existing labour rights on behalf of the employer and contractor. Occupational health and safety are not maintaining properly. So accidents are a regular occurrence here.

The convener of Ship Breaking Workers Trade Union Forum, Tapan Datta said that even though the workers in this sector works with the risk of their lives but their jobs are not guaranteed. It is really a very short-sighted decision of the government to close of the Jute Industry during corona epidemic. Currently unemployed jute workers are jumping to the ship breaking industry. Unfortunately the owners and contractors of the industry are looking at it as an opportunity to reduce workers' wages. Which is harmful to the future of the industry. He called upon the government to take immediate steps in this regard.

## Inhuman torture on child domestic worker Asiya at Rupnagar, Dhaka

A child domestic worker named Asiya (10) has been subjected to inhuman torture at Rupnagar in the Capital. Police rescued her on July 19, 2020 and admitted her to the hospital. At this time, various signs of blisters and torture were seen in different parts of the child's body. She would have been inhumanely tortured for a trifle offence or for a minor mistake at work. There are signs of torture on her body. If the little child made mistakes at work, then cruel torture would come down on her. At various times she has been scalded with hot sticks.

Abul Kalam Azad, Officer in Charge of Rupnagar Police Station, said that Asiya was working on the third floor of house No. 16, Road No. 9, Rupnagar residential area. The owner, Sajjadul Bashar, works in a clinic, and his wife Shahnaz is a house wife. Asiya hailed from Hatiya Upazila of Noakhali District and had been serving as a live-in domestic worker for four years.

House owner Sajjadul Bashar and his wife Shahnaz Begum were arrested in the raid. During the preliminary interrogation, they found guilty and proved their involvement with heinous torture. The child's relatives have been informed. If they come, there will be a case in this incident.

After getting the news, Mirpur HUB based Social Mobilizer and the concern of the focal person of Domestic Workers Rights Network (DWRN) jointly come up with a street demonstration and have communicated with Rupnagar Thana regarding this issue.

Hamida Khatun, who is the member of “Domestic Workers Rights Network”, and Convener of the “Nationalist Domestic Workers Federation” expressed her wrath against the inhumane torture of child domestic worker Asiya. She urged the government to bring the accused person of Sajjadul Bashar and Shahnaz Begum under the law and ensure exemplary punishment.

Acting Coordinator of “Domestic Workers Rights Network-DWRN” and advisor of National Domestic Women Workers Union (NDWWU) Abul Hossain has remonstrated about the incident. He said that violence against women and girls during the COVID-19 pandemic period has increased tremendously, especially on domestic workers. These indicate that the existing rule of law of the country is in fragile condition. Law enforcement agency has been engaged in their all-out effort in order to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic that paved the way for an influential person to play a more dominating and oppressing role on the weak, especially on women. Without good governance and accountability, there is no way in establishing and protecting the right of domestic worker.

News Link:

<https://www.samakal.com/capital/article/200730868>

# Labour News Flash

July 16-23, 2020

## Fake COVID-19 test, Migrant workers Crisis and Bangladesh

Recently some hospitals are sealed and two accused persons were arrested for selling fake Covid-19 test reports. Law enforcement organization suspects and they got evidences that shows they were involved with this disgraceful crime and other crimes.

On this, present days Bangladesh is worldwide known for fake COVID-19 test reports. It's little tough to get the test easily on the other hand both negative and positive test reports have high demand here. Some need the positive test reports to have the benefit packages from Govt. as well as some need negative reports to join the workplace and to go abroad. As most of the countries are very strict to permit any foreigner without the test reports. Therefore, our migrant workers who are going back to their destination country they need negative test reports. In this situation, some corrupt persons took the advantage and started selling fake test reports.

Our migrant workers are the worst victim of this incident. After exposing this news in the international media, they suspended our most of the flights. Even one of them landed in Italy but they did not allow our people to cross the immigration and sent back the flight. Almost all the renowned international media covered the news and worldwide our migrant workers are being humiliated. Every country is avoiding migrant workers from Bangladesh especially the European countries.

As we all know these migrant workers are one of the strong pillars of our economy. According to the central bank, nearly \$19bn sent to Bangladesh by an estimated 12 million migrant workers last year. During this pandemic huge number of these migrant workers are being laid off or being unemployed. In this critical moment, this fake test incident put the other in trouble who at least have scope to join their work again. Not only that, huge number of students in different countries are also facing humiliation and trouble due to this incident.

However, our Govt. has taken immediate action regarding this issue. Once Europe stopped our all flights but now they agreed to have flights from this August. On the other hand, Law enforcement organizations are dealing with this issue with very serious note. Maybe we get rid of this situation with a very short time but we have to suffer for this incident in long run. Huge number of our migrant workers has to face humiliation as well as it would be great embarrassment for our entire country.

### **News Link:**

1. <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2020/07/12/fake-coronavirus-test-certificates-invite-disaster-for-bangladesh>
2. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/07/bangladesh-arrests-hospital-owner-fake-coronavirus-results-200716033249660.html>
3. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/16/world/asia/coronavirus-bangladesh-italy-certificates.html>



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