

"When the new curriculum will be implemented, there will be no separate groups before grade 11 for students."
EDUCATION MINISTER DR DIPU MONI. (PAGE 5)



"It was a great comeback for Joe Biden, an incredible comeback when you think about it."
TRUMP HAILS RIVAL AFTER HE GAINS BIG ON SUPER TUESDAY. (PAGE 9)



"When we saw the accused were family members of an influential political leader in Narayanganj, the investigation came to a halt."
RAFIUR RABBI, FATHER OF TANWIR MOHAMMED TAQI KILLED ON THIS DAY SEVEN YEARS AGO (PAGE 20)



Response slack, inadequate

Experts say, cite lack of coordination, bureaucratic tangles, flaws in govt's plan on tackling possible COVID-19 outbreak

MOUDDUD AHMED SUJAN

Bureaucratic tangles and lack of coordination among government bodies pose a major challenge in implementing the government plan to tackle a potential coronavirus outbreak.

Also, experts said the plan itself has some flaws and will fall short of containing the spread of the virus.

The national advisory committee to determine the risks of coronavirus was supposed to hold its first meeting on Tuesday. But the key officials spent the entire time talking about how to prevent a potential dengue outbreak, insiders said.

The 31-member committee headed by Health Minister Zahid Maleque has not been able to hold any meeting since it was formed by the health ministry on Sunday.

Regarding the treatment of people who might be tested positive with the virus, the Directorate General of Health

Services (DGHS) announced that 10 ICU beds would be readied in a week at Kuwait Bangladesh Moitree Government Hospital in the capital's Uttara. However inadequate, that measure is yet to be taken, officials said.

Besides, the government is yet to allocate a specific budget for coronavirus response. DGHS officials, meanwhile, prefer not to spend from their regular budget.

"We are saying many things, but not getting much done. Since the health ministry does not seem to be particularly keen on taking the measures, many DGHS officials are reluctant to do anything," an official of the directorate told The Daily Star, requesting anonymity.

Moreover, the Centre for Disease Control (CDC) of DGHS floated tenders two weeks ago to purchase five thermal scanners for different airports, and land

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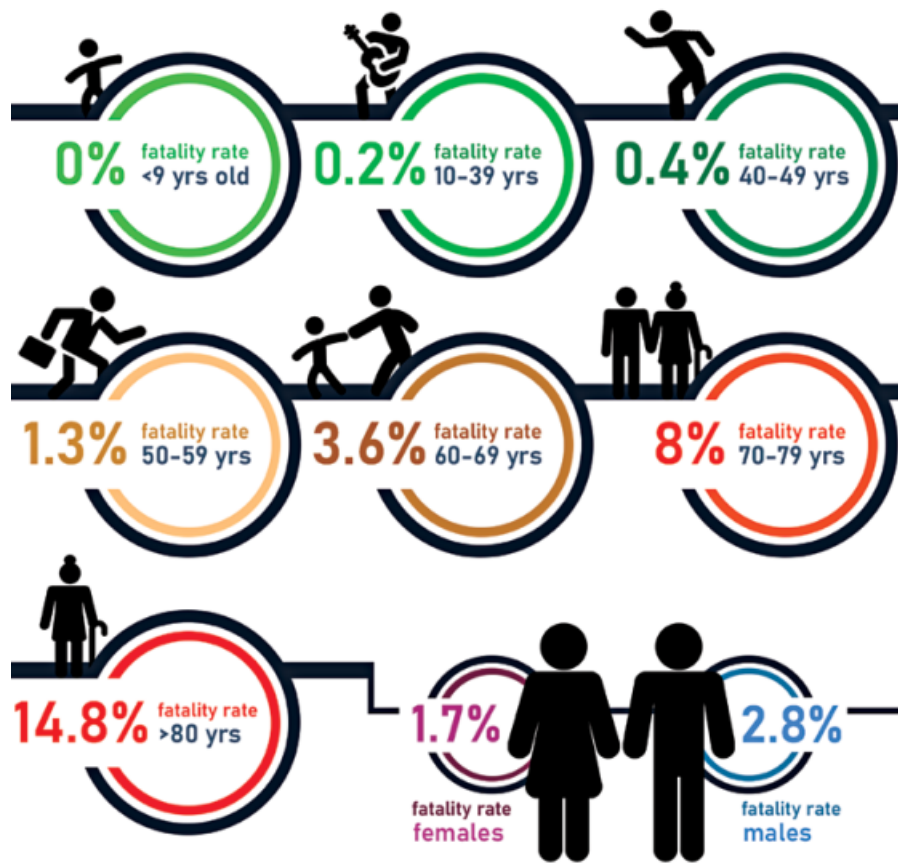


Holding a child with one hand and using the other to balance his body weight, a pedestrian jumps over a median strip to cross the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway in the capital's Azampur of Uttara. Although there is a footbridge yards away, many cross the busy road this way every day, putting lives at risk. The photo was taken around 9:30am yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Who are more vulnerable to coronavirus?

Source: Chinese Center for Disease and Prevention



BANGLADESHI WORKERS Kuwait won't require health clearance now

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

About 100 Bangladeshi expatriates were in uncertainty all day yesterday over being able to return to Kuwait as they could not get medical clearance certificates for entering the Gulf country.

Kuwait on Tuesday imposed restrictions on the entry of people from 10 countries, including Bangladesh, over coronavirus fears.

The civil aviation authorities of Kuwait said any passenger coming from the 10 countries must produce a certificate, issued by an authorised medical centre in his own country, showing that he was not infected with coronavirus.

However, the restriction was withdrawn by the Kuwait council of ministers last night.

The Bangladeshi expatriates went to the Kuwait embassy in Dhaka and the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) in Mohakhali, but could not manage certificates as the two offices said they were not responsible for issuing those. This made them worried as their dates of departure were getting closer.

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290.5m students out of school

Primary schools in Delhi shut till March 31; California declares emergency; Bosnia, S Africa report first cases

AGENCIES

Almost 300 million students worldwide faced weeks at home with Italy and India the latest to shut schools over the deadly new coronavirus, as the IMF urged an all-out global offensive against the epidemic.

More than 96,000 people have been infected and over 3,300 have died worldwide from the virus, which by yesterday had reached some 84 countries and territories.

Twenty-nine cases have been confirmed inside India, including three who have recovered. Many of the cases are linked to a group of travellers from Italy, Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said.

Authorities in the country have advised caution, but have not raised the alarm. The government has begun screening all passengers arriving in the country for coronavirus and shut all primary schools in New Delhi until the end of March.

In California, Governor Gavin Newsom declared an emergency following the state's first coronavirus fatality -- raising the US death toll to 11 -- and a cruise ship was kept offshore after passengers and crew

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COVID-19 UPDATE	3,300 DEATHS	80,557 confirmed cases in mainland China	The virus spread to at least 84 countries
	96,414 confirmed cases		



Modi confirms trip to Dhaka

Postpones Belgium visit amid coronavirus concerns

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has confirmed his visit to Bangladesh to attend the "Mujib Borsho" celebration on March 17 and hold a bilateral meeting with Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

The formal announcement, by Indian External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Raveesh Kumar, was made at the weekly media briefing yesterday, three days after Indian Foreign Secretary Harsh

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Captain Mashrafe's last hurrah today

MAZHAR UDDIN from Sylhet

The focus was on Bangladesh ODI skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza ahead of the three-match ODI series against Zimbabwe and, if possible, the spotlight has only intensified as the third and final ODI at the Sylhet International Stadium today will be the last

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Chaktai canal has shrunk at this point near Mariner's Drive Road in Chattogram city due to the construction of a regulator to control water flow. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Independence of judiciary questioned

Experts, rights bodies express concern over stand release of Pirojpur judge

STAR REPORT

Legal experts and rights organisations have expressed concern over the stand release of District and Sessions Judge of Pirojpur Md Abdul Mannan after he denied bail to a former Awami League lawmaker and his wife.

Rights body Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) yesterday said the incident posed serious questions about the independence of the judiciary.

"ASK believes that the incident will severely damage the efforts of establishing the rule of law and justice," said a press release.

Law Minister Anisul Huq's comments on the issue "were very disappointing", it said.

In his explanation, the minister on Wednesday said the judge was withdrawn to bring under control the situation that developed over seeking bail by Awal and his wife Laila Parvin in three corruption cases.

Anisul also commented on the judge's behaviour. People's doubt about the government's influence over the judiciary has become stronger with the immediate withdrawal of the judge, the rights body added.

The ASK urged the government to ensure an impartial investigation into the incident and take appropriate actions by identifying those involved so that "such unfortunate incidents are not repeated".

Noted jurist Shahdeen Malik said it would not be

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