

The way world is reacting

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Italy: Italy has 15,113 cases and 1,016 deaths related to the virus, mostly in the north. The number of cases there has jumped significantly in recent days. On Monday, the Italian government announced extraordinary measures to contain the virus that first spread there in late February. Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte declared all of Italy a "red zone" — meaning people should stay home except for work and other emergencies. Public gatherings have been banned and freedom of movement sharply curtailed. All domestic sporting events, museums, cinemas and theaters in the country have been suspended until April 3. Schools and universities are closed too. Yesterday, Conte announced that Italy would shut all stores except for pharmacies and food shops to curb the disease.

Iran: Iran has reported 10,075 cases and 429 deaths from COVID-19. Public gatherings, including Friday prayers in Tehran and other major cities, have been canceled. Schools have been closed and crews of cleaners have been dispatched to disinfect trains, buses and gathering places in all cities. Around 70,000 prisoners have been given leave from jail and hospitals are only admitting patients requiring urgent treatment and those suspected of having Covid-19. About 300,000 medical teams, joined by the elite Revolutionary Guards, have started checking on every household across the country. Medical teams and police are stationed on roads and have the power to stop people who have fever and quarantine them for 14 days.

Spain: Spain has reported 2,968 cases and 84 deaths. Authorities in regions with the most cases — Madrid, Basque Country and La Rioja — have ordered closure of all schools, universities, museums and daycare centers for two weeks. Authorities have ordered disinfecting public transport daily. Flights between Spain and Italy have been suspended and large gatherings canceled in the three regions. Soccer matches for Spain's La Liga has been suspended. Spanish Health Minister Salvador Illa encouraged companies to reduce working hours and travel and to support remote work.

South Korea: South Korea has seen 7,869 cases and 66 deaths. People in cities across the country have been encouraged to stay home, some offices have closed, and many events are postponed. The nation's schools are closed until March 22. The country's largest outbreak is in country's fourth-largest city of Daegu, which accounts for more than 90 percent of cases. South Korea, where the number of new cases has been on the decline, has been a model of coronavirus testing. The country has 50 drive-through screening clinics where people can get a medical exam and have a sample taken in just 10 minutes. Health workers are processing up to 15,000 tests every day.

France: France has reported 2,281 cases and at least 48 deaths so far. The country announced a nationwide ban on gatherings of more than 1,000 people. The government has placed additional restrictions on four zones with clusters of coronavirus cases: Morbihan in Brittany, Haute-Savoie in eastern France near the Swiss border and the départements of Oise and Haut-Rhin in north east France. In these places there is a ban on all public gatherings including markets, community groups and church services. President Emmanuel Macron has advised citizens nationwide against visiting older people, to avoid spreading the disease to those most vulnerable. France has not taken a blanket approach to closing schools. It has requisitioned all of the country's surgical masks for distribution to those who need them. The government also has capped the price of hand sanitizer.

United States: The United States has recorded 1,101 infections and 28 deaths since it announced its first case in January. Cases have been found in more than 37 states and

the District of Columbia. President Trump announced on Wednesday night that he was taking action to stem the spread of the coronavirus by suspending travel from Europe to the United States for 30 days, beginning on Friday. The restrictions do not apply to Britain. The limits take effect Friday at midnight and will exempt American citizens and permanent legal residents and their families. Later on Wednesday night, the State Department issued an advisory telling Americans to "reconsider travel" to all countries because of the global effects of the coronavirus. It is the department's second-strongest advisory, behind "do not travel." Before the announcements, restrictions or containment measures have mostly come from state and local authorities. A growing number of colleges and universities across the US have canceled in-person classes.

Japan: Japan has reported nearly 600 cases and 19 deaths in mainland. Japan has put into place tougher border control measures that essentially ban travelers from China and South Korea until the end of March. Visas for people who haven't yet arrived in Japan are invalidated; people who have already arrived from those countries, whether they are Japanese or foreign nationals, are asked to undergo a 14-day quarantine. But the situation in Japan might be worsening. Health authorities are warning local governments to prepare for a surge in cases. The health minister says the epidemic in Japan is entering a new phase, which suggests that the country will need to take tougher measures.

Germany: Germany has recorded 2,078 cases of the coronavirus and reported four deaths. Chancellor Angela Merkel on Wednesday warned that up to 70 percent of Germans could be infected by the virus. The country's health minister encouraged cancelling events that draw more than 1,000 people. The city of Berlin has called off performances at all opera houses, state theaters and concert halls. Germany's soccer top league, the Bundesliga, announced that for the first time ever, a number of its matches will take place with no fans in attendance.

India: The country has reported 73 cases so far with one death. India has suspended all tourist visas until April 15 and said it would quarantine travellers arriving from China, Italy, Iran, Republic of Korea, France, Spain and Germany. India's visa suspension begins March 13 at 1200 GMT. Diplomatic visas and visas for international organizations, employment and projects are exempted from the ban. The government has also "strongly advised" Indians against non-essential foreign travel. The state government in Delhi yesterday declared coronavirus an epidemic and shut all cinemas, schools and colleges.

Gulf countries: Gulf countries have responded to the coronavirus outbreak by introducing travel bans, stepping up screening measures at important entry points and rescheduling - and in some cases cancelling - significant sports and cultural events. The six-member bloc is made up of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman and Qatar and all members have reported infections. Most of the countries have closed schools and universities, in a series of measures to contain the fast-spreading coronavirus.

Latin America: The continent still has only around 150 registered cases and two deaths. However, the countries in the region have stepped up measures to slow the advance of the coronavirus, announcing a slew of restrictions on travelers from the worst-affected countries and shutting down major sports events. Argentina, Colombia and Peru announced that travelers from China, Italy, Spain and France would be isolated on arrival. El Salvador banned entry to all foreigners for a period of 21 days.

Bangabandhu accepts

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Talking to journalists, the leader of the Japanese delegation says that the main purpose of their visit to Bangladesh is to convey the message of goodwill and congratulations of the people of Japan to the people of Bangladesh on their triumphant victory in the war of liberation. The delegation, during its three-day visit, will explore the possibility of finding ways to help the war-torn economy of Bangladesh, he adds. He informs further that Japan will provide urea fertilisers worth over one million dollars to Bangladesh as a gift to help develop its agriculture.

VV GIRI SEEKS STRONG, FRIENDLY BANGLADESH

Indian President VV Giri, addressing a joint session of the Indian Parliament today, declares that a strong, peaceful and friendly Bangladesh will add to the strength and stability of the subcontinent as well as of India. He also says that India looks forward to uninterrupted growth of cooperation in all fields between the two countries. President Giri, describing the emergence of Bangladesh under the leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as a landmark in the history of the subcontinent, goes on to say that indeed this is a landmark in man's quest for freedom.

LABOUR LEADERS CALL ON BANGABANDHU

Bangabandhu assures labour leaders who call on him today at his official residence that unhindered opportunities will be provided for carrying out trade union activities according to the law of the land.

Bangabandhu also assures them that the government will make an enquiry into the Tongi labour unrest and asks them to maintain the existing status quo and to observe the rules regarding bargaining agents. It is agreed that the bargaining agents of the trade unions elected before March 25 last year will maintain their status quo. In this connection he tells the labour leaders that labour policy of the government will be announced soon. After the announcement, fresh elections of the trade unions will be held nationwide, according to the rules laid down in the policy.

SWITZERLAND ACCORDS RECOGNITION

Switzerland has recognised Bangladesh, the Swiss Embassy in New Delhi informs the Bangladesh Mission today.

SOURCES: March 14, 1972 issues of Dainik Bangla, The Daily Ittefaq, Azad, Morning News, The Bangladesh Observer and Purbodish.



Migrants walk between Pazarkule border crossing and Karaagac district, near the Turkish-Greek border, in Edirne, Turkey yesterday. Europe fears Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's decision to allow migrants to head to the Greek border will trigger a repeat of the 2015 refugee crisis. PHOTO: REUTERS

2 FSTI teachers extort money

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money from students threatening them with low marks and failures in exams.

Talking to The Daily Star on condition of anonymity, they alleged that at the end of every semester, each student has to pay Tk 5,000 to each of the duo to pass the exam.

The money is taken in the name of tuition fees, the students said, adding that the admission fee for FSTI is only Tk 2,000.

Students also accused the duo of not taking regular classes or teaching properly in class, leaking question papers, allowing students to take exam scripts home and writing the answers at home.

POWER AND MONEY

To obtain a FSTI diploma, a student has to complete 164 credits, which carries a total of 2,530 marks. Of the total, 1,030 marks are allocated for theory and 1,500 for practical exercises comprising field trips, class tests, quizzes and attendance.

The practical marks, awarded by the institute's teachers, depend on how much each student pays Amal and Delwar before each semester final result, alleged the students.

The teachers, as chosen by the director of the institute, also check the exam scripts of the first three semesters.

From the fourth semester, scripts are sent to the Technical Education Board, sources informed, adding that FSTI teachers also help the Board prepare questions.

According to students and sources at the FSTI, Amal and Delwar control everything in the institute even though it has a director and a third teacher.

Contacted, Amal did not deny the allegations. He instead asked this correspondent to verify the facts before writing a report. "If you get evidence based on the footage, you can take action," he said.

Meanwhile, there are also allegations that Delwar obstructed installation of CCTV cameras in exam halls, when the institute obtained funds to set up the apparatus across the campus.

When contacted, Delwar denied all allegations, calling them false and fictitious.

Director of FSTI Mohammad Ali, who joined the institute eight months ago, maintained that these are old allegations that have been resolved. The two teachers had a problem with the previous director but everything is alright now, he added.

He claimed that a group among the students are trying to create tension.

Since last May, a number of students of FSTI have written three letters to high-ups of the Forest Department, informing it of the alleged irregularities.

Following the last letter sent in December, a five-member committee — including FSTI Director Mohammad Ali — was formed to review the lessons imparted by the institute's teachers on January 26 by the office of Chief Conservator of Forest.

Gobinda Roy, deputy chief conservator of forest (education and training wing) and head of the committee, told The Daily Star that they have received a number of complaints, when asked about the allegations against the two teachers.

He said, "We are investigating these and departmental action will be taken against those found guilty."

Gobinda, who joined the education and training wing in October, said that he has been bringing in external examiners and guest lecturers to improve the quality of education at the institute.

Mohammad Ali could not answer why the committee was required, even though he is a member. He instead asked this correspondent to meet him

at his office.

FSTI started its journey in 1994 at Chattogram's Nasirabad under the Forest Resources Management Project with 10 teachers and a yearly intake of 50 students.

When the project ended in 2001, funds dried up and the teachers' number was reduced to three.

The current intake per batch is about 30 and the institute has around 130 students.

The forest department recruits their foresters only from FSTI diploma-holders, who have to ace a competitive job exam to join the department at the field level.

Currently, the forest department needs 10,000 foresters to maintain the vast swathes of forest across the country.

Govt cancels

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blackout will be observed on the night, according to the revised programme document.

Soon after sunrise the following day (March 26), the president and prime minister, along with a limited number of invited guests, will place wreaths at the National Memorial in Savar.

In the early hours of March 26, a 31-gun salute will be fired in Dhaka and all district and upazila headquarters to mark the day with due respect.

The national flag will be hoisted at all offices of the government, non-government and autonomous bodies across the country, which will all be adorned with lights.

District and upazila level headquarters across the country will hoist the flag formally with a limited number of participants.

Food and sweets will also be distributed across the country. The place and time of the event will be decided by the concerned authorities, the document said.

PM opens country's first expressway

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1981. But the expressway would cut the travel time significantly.

Officials familiar with the project said with the construction of the expressway, the Dhaka-Gopalganj travel time would reduce to around three hours. After the opening of the Padma Bridge, it is expected to be reduced to a little over two hours.

The PM said the expressway would boost the country's socio-economic development and increase the living standard of the people in the southern region.

She said her government was currently constructing the Padma Bridge with its own fund. "The decision of building the Padma Bridge with our own finance has boosted our image in the international arena."

Hasina expressed gratitude to the army and the people concerned for constructing the expressway. She expressed willingness to go to

Gopalganj using the expressway this month.

The expressway will connect the country's southwestern part with the capital. People from 22 districts in Dhaka, Barishal and Khulna divisions will directly be benefited from it.

According to project details, the expressway has five flyovers, 19 underpasses, four railway overpasses, 25 bridges, four main bridges, 54 culverts, and two inter-changes.

It has two parts -- from Jatrabari intersection in the capital to Mawa in Munshiganj (35-km) and from Panchar to Bhanga (20-km). The two parts of the expressway will be linked by the Padma Bridge. The government has a plan to open the bridge to traffic by June 2021.

The expressway has been built at an estimated cost of Tk 11,003 crore. The Roads and Highways Department and Bangladesh Army jointly had started the implementation of the expressway project in four districts -- Dhaka,

Munshiganj, Madaripur and Faridpur -- back in 2016.

The project work was completed three months ahead of the stipulated time frame of June 2020.

Hasina also opened the eight-km-long six-lane approach road under the third Karnaphuli bridge (Shah Amanat Bridge) project.

The road was constructed under the supervision of the Roads and Highways Division at a cost of around Tk 397 crore.

At the function, the PM exchanged views with the beneficiaries and stakeholders of the project through videoconferencing.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader and Chief of Army Staff Gen Aziz Ahmed also spoke on the occasion.

Railways Minister Nurul Islam Sujan, PM's Political Adviser HT Imam, and State Minister for Women and Children Affairs Fazilatun Nessa Indira were present.

Garment makers ring warning bells

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Trump has announced sweeping travel restrictions on 26 European countries in a bid to combat the spread of the coronavirus.

The ban applies to travellers from countries which are members of the Schengen border-free travel area.

The UK, Ireland and other non-Schengen countries are unaffected. US citizens are also exempt.

"A buyer from Portugal cancelled work orders of garment items worth \$1 million yesterday because of the coronavirus," said Shahidul Haque Mukul, a managing director of a Mirpur-based export-oriented garment factory.

Mukul declined to mention the name of his factory.

"So I am in big trouble now as I will have to pay the workers," said Mukul, also a director of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA).

"Although I will not be able to ship the goods to my buyers, I will have to pay the bank interest," Mukul told The Daily Star by phone.

Mukul is also worried as he will need money to pay 1,000 workers in his factory during the upcoming Eid-ul-Fitr. March and April are the time to receive the work orders from the western buyers for the summer season, he said.

Many of the local manufacturers and exporters have been receiving emails from their longtime buyers either for work order cancellation or holding on the ongoing orders due to the coronavirus outbreak.

But Ziaur Rahman, country manager of Swedish retail giant H&M, said until now his company is running normal as no work order was cancelled and production in any of its affiliated factories was not held up due to coronavirus.

"We are observing the situation.

If the coronavirus situation worsens, our European markets will be badly affected," Ziaur told The Daily Star over phone. H&M procures more than \$4 billion worth of apparel items a year from Bangladesh.

"We are facing a grave situation. The brands are reducing their orders and are asking us to hold on to uncut fabric," said Rubana Huq, president of BGMEA.

"And those who are producing are being asked to hold their shipments as global consumption is coming to a halt," Rubana also said.

"This will have serious consequences as we see an imminent liquidity crisis which will lead to financial disruption at the manufacturing units," the BGMEA chief said.

"And right before Eid, when we will have to pay bonus as well, falling exports and failing shipments are the worst possible challenges that the industry can face," she added.

A death

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He was kept at the police station until March 1 when he was sent to jail by a court, said Arif.

After Altaf was released on bail on March 7, he lost his appetite and couldn't sleep, Arif said.

"My father returned home and said he was tortured mercilessly at the police station and due to the severe torture, he could not eat or sleep," alleged Arif.

But the family couldn't afford to take him to a hospital, said Sirajul Islam, brother-in-law of Altaf.

"As his condition deteriorated, we were taking him to Muktagacha Upazila Health Complex but he died on the way," said Sirajul.

The family took the body to Mymensingh Press Club yesterday evening.

"My father was the breadwinner. Who will feed us?" Arif lamented at the press club.

The family members demanded proper investigation into the incident.

Officer-in-charge (Investigation) of Muktagacha Police Station Jahangir Alam said Sub-Inspector Abul Khayer and Assistant Sub-Inspector Hamidur Rahman raided the Jaamgara area and arrested Altaf on charges of defrauding some people in Muktagacha. Altaf also allegedly snatched away phones and Tk 165,000 in cash from them, he added.

Asked whether police demanded Tk 85,000 from his family, the OC said police asked Altaf on the spot to return the money to the people he had robbed.

Refuting the allegations of torture, the officer said the court or the jail authorities wouldn't have accepted him if he was sick or injured and added that the allegation was baseless.

2 Rohingyas

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in the area around 1:00am where a group of robbers were preparing to commit a robbery, said Company Commander of Rab-15 in Teknaf Shahed Mahtab.

Sensing the presence of law enforcers, the robbers opened fire, forcing Rab men to fire back, the Rab official said.

At one stage, Saiful and Nur were caught in the line of fire, while the others managed to flee the scene, he said.

Later, Rab recovered the bullet-hit bodies of the two.

Three Rab men were also injured in the gunfight, the Rab official said.

One pistol, 11 cartridges and one gun were recovered from the spot, Rab claimed.

Rois Uddin

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the cabinet issued the new list.

The recipients are: Jute and Textiles Minister Golam Dastagir Gazi, Commander Abdur Rouf (posthumous), Md Anwar Pasha (posthumous) and Azizur Rahman for their contribution to the Liberation War; Prof Md Obaidul Kabir Chowdhury and Prof AKMA Muqtadir for medical science; Kalipada Das and Ferdousi Mazumder for culture; and Bharateswari Homes for education.

Imam held

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mosque yesterday morning. Nazir took her to an isolated place nearby and raped her, the SI said.

Though the perpetrator threatened the girl not to disclose the incident to anyone, she narrated everything to her family after returning home, SI Aklima said.

Guatemala find

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National Palace of Culture on Tuesday. "The great importance of Stela 87 is that it is an early example of the development of writing in Mesoamerica," said Grube, speaking by video-link from Mexico.

"Tak'alik Ab'aj was a place of experimentation with writing," he said.

Experts are still trying to decipher the hieroglyphs on the stone, but Grube said that while it provided no "linguistic reading", it showed evidence of a ruler and his titles in "an early Mayan text."

Tak'alik Ab'aj was a city originally inhabited by Olmecs from around 1,500 BC to 100 AD.

Guatemalan archaeologist Christa Schieber, the park's technical director, said Tak'alik Ab'aj was a "laboratory" for "experiments" in early Mayan writing that later evolved.

Archaeologists announced the discovery there in 2012 of the tomb of a powerful king, who may have led the transition from Olmec to Mayan culture between 700 and 400 BC.

President Alejandro Giammattei told Tuesday's ceremony that he would petition Unesco to declare it a world heritage site.

The Maya civilisation reached its height in what is present-day southern Mexico, Guatemala, and parts of Belize, El Salvador and Honduras between 250 and 950 CE.