



The Daily Star

SECOND EDITION

www.thedailystar.net

REGD. No. DA 781

VOL. XXX No. 63

CHAITRA 2, 1426 BS

Your Right to Know

RAJAB 20, 1441 HUIJI

20 PAGES PRICE: Tk 12.00

"It almost felt like footballers in England were being treated like guinea pigs."

FORMER ENGLAND FOOTBALLER WAYNE ROONEY SLAMS GOVERNMENT AND FOOTBALL AUTHORITIES OVER CORONAVIRUS CRISIS



"The goal here is to protect life, the measures have to be sustainable. We will stop at nothing to fight this virus".

UK HEALTH SECRETARY MATT HANCOCK DEFENDS HIS COUNTRY'S RESPONSE TO CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC. (PAGE 8)



"The war in Syria marks yet another shameful milestone today"

UNICEF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR HENRIETTA FORE AS BRUTAL WAR ENTERS 10TH YEAR. (PAGE 8)



Beaten up, threatened with 'crossfire'

Says Ariful after bail; Kurigram DC to be removed over midnight raid of journo's home



Sultana Pervin

Nazim Uddin

STAR REPORT

"You will be put in a crossfire. Your time is up. Recite the kalima. I thought they were taking me somewhere to kill me. I broke down in tears."

These were the words of journalist Ariful Islam as he described being held and tortured by Senior Assistant Commissioner Nazim Uddin of Kurigram.

Ariful said he was picked up by Nazim and two magistrates from his home late Friday night.

The incident was widely reported in the media and the authorities yesterday decided to withdraw Kurigram Deputy Commissioner Sultana Pervin, who, according to

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1



Passengers who returned from Italy, the European country worst hit by the coronavirus pandemic, leaving the Ashkona Hajj Camp yesterday morning as they had been sent on self isolation. Inset, relatives waiting outside the camp for their loved ones.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Saarc unites to combat COVID-19

Forms voluntary emergency fund; Hasina calls for collective strategy

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

In a significant move to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus, the Saarc countries yesterday agreed to work together, create an emergency fund and share expertise, data and best practices.

They also agreed to hold a health minister-level videoconference at the earliest and take forward the initiative, fearing the COVID-19 could result in serious consequences if a coordinated and collaborative approach is not taken at the critical juncture of time.

"We all agree that we are facing a serious challenge. We do not as yet know what shape the pandemic will take in the coming days. It is clear that we have to work together," said Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi through a videoconference titled "Together we can fight #COVID19" among the leaders of the Saarc nations.

He proposed creating a COVID-19 Emergency Fund based on voluntary contributions from all the Saarc countries, and said India can start with an initial offer of \$10 million for this fund.

"Any of us can use the fund to meet the

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

Panic, neglect and a young life cut short

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and ZYMA ISLAM

A young female patient with gastrointestinal complications died at Dhaka Medical College Hospital on Saturday afternoon.

But the final hours before her death were filled with negligence of doctors and other medical staffs because they suspected that she was infected with coronavirus, alleged the patient's family.

As DMCH is not equipped to test patients for coronavirus and the medical staff did not have protective suits, they refused to approach the patient until it was too late.

Nazma Amin, 24, was an undergraduate student at the business school of University of Regina in Canada's Saskatchewan province. She flew back to Dhaka last Monday and started complaining of stomach aches.

Her family members said she was not able to eat at all -- every time she tried to eat, she was either nauseated or had terrible stomach aches.

On Friday night, she had unbearable pain and so her family took her to a hospital near their home in Mohammadpur.

"The hospital said she needed to be transferred to an

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5



Nazma Amin

349 Italy returnees allowed to go home

They were advised self-isolation; 4 others hospitalised with fever; suspected COVID-19 patient runs away from hospital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Despite growing concern over people moving about freely in self-quarantine, the government allowed 349, who returned home from Italy over the last two days, to go home.

"None of them showed any coronavirus symptoms during screening. For this reason, we have sent them to home quarantine under the supervision of local administrations," Prof Meerjady Sabrina Flora, director of Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research, told The Daily Star.

Local administrations and public representatives have been assigned to ensure that all the returnees stay in self-quarantine, she added.

Forty-eight of those who came back home from Italy on Saturday were sent to a makeshift quarantine centre in Gazipur's Pubail.

Gazipur Civil Surgeon Khairuzzaman

said four of them were hospitalised in the capital yesterday as they had fever. Forty-four others were sent to home quarantine.

According to the IEDCR, 2,314 people are in self-quarantine across the country.

Besides, 10 people were kept in isolation at different hospitals, said the IEDCR director.

However, many of them in self-quarantine at home reportedly are not following the rules for quarantine and coming into contact with family members and locals, increasing the risk of spreading novel coronavirus.

A Bangladeshi expatriate from Saudi Arabia was fined Tk 10,000 by a mobile court for violating his home quarantine conditions in Manikganj yesterday evening.

"Many are thinking they are not infected as they spent 14 days in quarantine in foreign countries. The reality, however,

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

COMMENTARY

Farce of quarantine

Aren't we taking too big a chance?

MAHFUZ ANAM

Europe, according to WHO, is the new epicentre of COVID-19 pandemic today. Of that epicentre, Italy is the worst affected followed by Spain. In an unprecedented measure, the former, known to be one of the most gregarious, warm and people-friendly country, closed itself down and urged people to remain confined to their homes.

This virus is reported to have come to India from a group of Italian tourists. Visitors from Europe, especially Italy, have been banned in the US and some other countries. Bangladesh will do the same effective March 16 midnight, according to our foreign minister.

Two new COVID-19 cases surfaced on Saturday in Dhaka, one coming from Italy and the other from Germany. And yet, on the same day, 142 returnees from Italy, the country worst affected by coronavirus, the country that has "locked itself" in, were allowed to go home from the Ashkona Hajj camp on the condition of self-isolation after a protest breaking all health protocols set by the government.

Why? Because they refused to stay after being taken

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

Spain, France in lockdown

COVID-19 death toll tops 6,000

AFP, Paris

Cafes, shops and restaurants shut down across France and Spain yesterday and travellers faced chaos at US airports as governments stepped up their fight against the coronavirus pandemic which has now reportedly killed more than 6,000.

France ordered the closure of all non-essential businesses, while Spain went a step further and banned people from leaving home except to go to work, get medical care or buy food. Cases also spiked in Germany and sources told AFP that the government planned to shut its borders with France, Switzerland and Austria on Monday.

Spain and France are among the worst-hit countries in Europe

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

69 Indians enter country despite restrictions

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The day Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen claimed that the government had blocked entry of Indians into Bangladesh, our correspondents reported that at least 69 Indian citizens entered the country through different land ports.

The foreign minister yesterday said the government has blocked entry of Indian citizens to stop the spread of coronavirus in the country.

He was speaking to reporters after a seminar on "Bangabandhu's Unfinished Memoirs: A Review", organised by the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) at its auditorium.

At least 108 people tested positive for the novel coronavirus and three of them died in India as of yesterday, according to the media.

Our correspondents

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2



Tourists usually throng the Kuakata beach in Patuakhali this time of the year but the picturesque expanse of sand and sea bears a deserted look yesterday. Many are choosing to cancel their holidays following the outbreak of coronavirus worldwide.

PHOTO: SOHRAB HOSSAIN

Tourism takes a beating

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY and RASHIDUL HASAN

As the number of coronavirus cases continues to rise globally, so too does its impact on the country's tourism sector.

Many local and foreign tourists have been calling off holiday plans amid cancellation of international and domestic flights.

As the outbreak has already turned into a pandemic, industry insiders said never had they suffered so badly before, and if the crisis prolongs, the industry would incur a huge loss.

The number of inbound tourists came down to almost zero in the last month. Grippled by the fear of getting infected, many local visitors have also cancelled their holiday plans to popular tourist destinations, forcing airlines operators to cut down their flights.

"We had faced setback after the Holey Artisan attack and political unrest during 2014-15, but the situation was never so grave," Md Rafeuzzaman, president of the Tour Operators Association of Bangladesh (TOAB) said.

A fresh panic gripped people after two more people were diagnosed with COVID-19 in Bangladesh on Saturday, hours after the authorities announced that the first three cases were tested negative.

Over 3,000 were in home-quarantine with eight on isolation at different hospitals till yesterday, authorities said.

The government has taken several precautionary measures, including suspension of on-arrival visas for all countries and travel to and from Europe, except for England, until March 31. Besides, authorities asked people to avoid the crowd and public transports.

Talking to The Daily Star on Saturday, Rafeuzzaman said they were yet to assess the total loss of business but asked

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1