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ISOLATION UNITS IN PUBLIC HOSPITALS

Poor supply of PPE worries doctors

STAR REPORT

Many public hospitals across the country have set up isolation units for possible coronavirus patients, but a lot of them lack adequate resources and equipment to provide necessary services.

Visiting hospitals in 20 districts in the last three days, The Daily Star correspondents found that there were not enough safety gears for doctors and nurses. The physicians and nurses said they were worried about the risk of being infected themselves.

The medical staff there didn't receive training on how to deal with coronavirus patients. The authorities in those districts were not conducting public awareness activities either.

Take Infectious Disease Hospital in Rajshahi for an example. The hospital has set up a 10-bed unit for suspected novel coronavirus patients, but it does not have adequate logistics.

"We have eight sets of PPE [personal protective equipment] which were never used in the last five years. We are likely to have new ones soon," said Dr Mamun Kabir, in-charge of the hospital.

There was no N95 masks, gowns, gloves, specialised boots and sanitiser for the three doctors and 12 staff members of the hospital. None of them was trained on treating coronavirus patients, Mamun added.

Sabina Yasmin, a resident of Rajshahi's Charghat

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BESPECTACLED BEAUTY

A rare Phayre's leaf monkey, locally known as chhosma pora honuman, atop a tree in Lawachhara forest in Kamalganj upazila of Moulvibazar. These primates, a species of old-world monkeys, have decreased in number due to habitat loss and food crisis. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: MINTU DESHWARA

3 by-polls still on for tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission yesterday announced that by-polls in Dhaka-10, Bagerhat-4 and Gaibandha-3 constituencies would be held tomorrow, ruling out the public health concerns over coronavirus.

Md Alamgir, secretary to the Election Commission (EC), made the announcement after an emergency meeting at its Agargaon office in Dhaka.

The EC discussed both aspects of merits and demerits of holding and not holding the by-polls on the scheduled date and then came to the decision, he said, adding that electronic voting machines (EVMs) would be used Dhaka-10 constituency.

Asked if the EC would take responsibility in case of further coronavirus outbreak for the by-polls, he said, "You [journalists] say that the voter turnout in the elections is low. What is the problem then?"

All the polling centres will have facilities to wash and sanitise hands for the voters as preventive measures. The EC will also hang banners inscribing dos and don'ts to avoid the virus contact, he said.

The EC made the announcement at

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BNP DEMANDS POSTPONEMENT OF POLLS - PAGE 3

FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

Moscow to strengthen ties with Bangladesh



A group of students from Motijheel Government Girls' High School hands over Tk 350 to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as donation towards the Prime Minister's Relief Fund. The students raised the amount by selling booklets.

MARCH 20, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

BREZHNEV OUTLINES SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS SOUTH ASIA

Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev today affirms his country's desire for good relations with all sides on the Indian subcontinent. Moscow will continue to



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2 indigenous RMG workers raped in Bandarban

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Two indigenous female workers of a readymade-garment factory were raped by two men in Bandarban on Wednesday night.

The victims are now undergoing treatment at Bandarban Sadar Hospital, said Shahidul Islam, officer-in-charge of Bandarban Sadar Police Station.

The victims are 19- and 23-years old and both from the Tanchangya community. They worked at the Lumbini garment factory in Bandarban, the OC said.

According to a case statement, when the victims were returning home from their workplace, which is situated in Meghla tourist spot, on a jeep, the two drivers of the vehicle, Uba Ching Marma, 23, and Sujon Barua, 27, forcibly

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CORONAVIRUS BATTLE Thai hospitals deploy robots to protect staff



AFP, Bangkok

Thai hospitals are deploying "ninja robots" to measure fevers and protect the health of overburdened medical workers on the frontlines of the coronavirus outbreak.

First built to monitor recovering stroke patients, the machines have been quickly repurposed to help fight the disease, which has so far killed nearly 9,000 people around the world.

They have helped staff at four hospitals in and around Bangkok to reduce their risk of infection by allowing doctors and nurses to speak to patients over a video link.

"They can stand outside the room and communicate with patients inside through the robot," said Viboon Sangveraphunsiri of Chulalongkorn University.

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Melania Trump to star in coronavirus awareness ads

REUTERS, Los Angeles

First lady Melania Trump will urge Americans to wash their hands and keep their distance from one another to fight coronavirus in a new TV ad campaign produced with major U.S. broadcast networks, the White House said on Wednesday.

ABC, CBS, NBC and other networks will air the public service announcements, which will also include other Trump administration officials and

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PRAYER TIMING MARCH 20

Fazr Juma Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 5:00 12:30 4:30 6:14 7:45
JAMAAT 5:35 1:15 4:45 6:18 8:15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

No soap, no water

Billions lack basic protection against virus

AFP, Paris

As nations around the world fight the coronavirus pandemic with mass lockdowns and travel bans, UN experts warn that some three billion people lack even the most basic weapons to protect themselves: soap and running water.

The outbreak has infected some 200,000 people and killed 9,000, scorching through populations across the globe after emerging in China late last year.

While Europe has become the centre of the battle against the virus, closing borders and sequestering millions of people in their homes, concerns are rising for developing nations with fragile healthcare systems.

Countries across Africa and Asia have heavily restricted travel, imposed quarantines and closed schools, with fears for impoverished communities

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People throng stores at the capital's Karwan Bazar kitchen market yesterday to buy daily essentials. Many are stockpiling essentials fearing possible lockdowns due to the coronavirus outbreak.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Prices soar in kitchen markets

People start buying in bulk after first death from coronavirus

NILIMA JAHAN and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Although Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi yesterday urged the public to avoid panic buying amid the looming coronavirus threat, the news of the first death from Covid-19 in Bangladesh aggravated the buying spree among consumers for rice, potatoes, lentils, onions, garlic and ginger.

The Daily Star visited five retail and wholesale markets in the capital -- East Shewrapara Bazar, Kazipara Bazar, Ibrahimpur Bazar, Kachukhet Bazar, Kawran Bazar and found consumers stocking up grocery items.

Md Shaheen, a tea stall owner, was found buying two sacks of rice from Ahnaf Enterprises of Ibrahimpur Bazar in Mirpur. He bought a sack just last week.

"I have actually bought these due to the coronavirus outbreak. We usually need 25kgs of rice per month. But since this has become a crisis now, I'm buying the extra amount so that I don't need to come to the market until Eid-ul Fitr. Also, if my relatives face any shortage, I can help them," he said.

A woman was found buying two sacks of Miniket rice, one sack of onions, one sack of potatoes, and 20 kgs of garlic with money she had borrowed from her relative. "I'm buying these large amounts so that my family members and I don't need to come to market during the outbreak," she said.

Noor Islam, a hardware shop owner of Kawran Bazar, said he never buys more than one kg of any grocery items since he comes to Kawranbazar every day. "But this time, due to pressure from my family, I had to buy five kgs of every item."

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