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Another death from Covid-19

Four more test positive; 2 Bangladeshis die in US, one in Italy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A second person died from coronavirus in the country and four others were tested positive for the virus, Health Minister Zahid Maleque said yesterday.

Officials have so far confirmed 24 infections in the country, but admitted that the actual number could be much higher.

The deceased, aged over 70, had underlying health conditions and might have contracted the disease after coming into contact with a relative who returned from abroad, the minister told a press conference at Directorate General of Health Services in the capital.

At least 30 neighbour families of the victim have isolated themselves in the capital's Mirpur.

The first coronavirus case was confirmed in the country on March 8 and the first death on Wednesday.

Of the confirmed cases, three have recovered and 19 others are in hospitals.

Around 50 people are now in "institutional quarantine" and over 14,000 are in home quarantine across the country, the minister said.

Meanwhile, two Bangladeshis in the US and one in Italy have died after being tested positive for Covid-19. Besides, renowned mountaineer and activist Wasfia Nazreen has tested positive in the US.

The authorities are struggling to ensure that thousands of people who returned from abroad do not defy the quarantine order.

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Officials sitting inside an empty polling booth in New Model University College in the capital's Dhanmondi during yesterday's by-election to Dhaka-10 constituency. Despite calls for postponing the by-polls over Covid-19 concerns, the EC pressed ahead. The turnout was 5.28 percent yesterday. Story on page 16

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

'Don't hoard anything'

Urges PM, says country has enough food in stock

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has urged all not to hoard food grain and other essential items out of panic as the country has enough stock of everything.

"Some people are scared... they are buying food items indiscriminately and piling up stocks at their homes... I want to clearly say that we have no food problem," she said.

Hasina, also the Awami League president, was speaking to journalists yesterday morning after casting her vote in the Jatiya Sangsad by-polls to Dhaka-10 at the Dhaka City College polling centre.

She said there was about 17 lakh tonnes of food grain in government silos alone. The amount of wheat is 3.5 lakh tonnes and the private rice millers have a huge stock in addition to that of big farmers.

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Put all suspected cases in institutional quarantine

Speakers at The Daily Star-Unilever roundtable urge the govt, observe self-quarantine is not working

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government needs to gather evidence-based data on the current Covid-19 situation immediately to understand the trend of the outbreak in the country, experts told a roundtable yesterday.

This would help the future course of action, they added.

They urged the government to identify and bring all the suspected cases under institutional quarantine, saying the home-quarantine strategy is futile in the Bangladeshi context, and suggested mobilising all government wings and resources in this regard.

The experts also suggested increasing

OTHER KEY SUGGESTIONS

- Equip healthcare professionals with proper PPEs
- Expand and decentralise test facilities
- Check spread of rumours and misinformation
- Protect livelihood of people in case of any emergency

the number of tests for coronavirus detection and decentralising the testing facilities. Currently, such tests are carried out only at the IEDCR in the

capital's Mohakhali.

Besides, they pointed out that providing doctors, pathologists and other healthcare professionals at the frontline with adequate protective gears should be a top priority now.

The Daily Star organised the discussion, titled "Corona Pandemic: Tasks Ahead", in collaboration with Unilever Bangladesh Limited at The Daily Star Centre in the capital.

"The government needs an immediate estimate on how many people may get infected, how many will need hospital care, including ICU and other special interventions, and supply of protective gears for

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Flights to 10 countries suspended

China, Thailand, UK, HK routes remain open

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has suspended air communications with 10 countries from yesterday noon until March 31 as precautionary measure to stop the spread of coronavirus in the country.

Passenger flights to and from Bangladesh with Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Oman, Turkey, Malaysia, Singapore and India will remain suspended, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen said.

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CORONAVIRUS TESTING CAPABILITIES

Some pvt hospitals feel they too can

ZYMA ISLAM

While the government still maintains grip on Covid-19 testing, some private hospitals feel they should be allowed to test patients for coronavirus.

Both the two deaths from coronavirus reported in the country happened in private hospitals, not in any of the designated government hospitals for coronavirus patients.

The person who died on Wednesday was a 70-year-old diabetic with a stent in his heart. He had come in contact with a recent returnee from Italy that saw one of the worst coronavirus outbreaks. The other person -- a 73-year-old man -- died yesterday.

Reportedly, the Institute of Epidemiology Disease Control and Research (IEDCR), the sole coronavirus infection testing authority in the country, is only testing patients who either recently returned from a country with

corona epidemic or came in contact with such a person.

Meanwhile, in the capital, patients with flu symptoms continue to flock to hospitals, where Covid-19 tests are not available.

Only patients with the above-mentioned criteria are being reported to the IEDCR for the tests, informed health professionals of several city hospitals.

Experts, however, say that from a pandemic perspective, the only way to beat the disease is to find out how many people already have it, so as to predict how many others might be infected.

"The IEDCR is making a mistake. They need to listen to clinicians," opined Prof Mahmudur Rahman, a former director of IEDCR. Prof Mahmudur was also the former chairman of the World Health Organization's Pandemic Influenza Preparedness (PIP) Advisory Group and is

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Women wearing protective face masks chat as they sit on benches in Milan as the spread of coronavirus disease continues.

PHOTO: REUTERS

CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

A billion confined to homes

Death toll above 12,000; WHO says young people 'not invincible' against virus; outbreak shuts more US cities; Italy reports 793 dead in one day

AFP, New York

Close to one billion people worldwide were confined to their homes yesterday as the global coronavirus death toll shot past 12,000 and US states rolled out lockdown measures already imposed across swathes of Europe.

The pandemic has completely upended lives across the planet, restricting movement, shutting schools and forcing millions to work from home.

While President Donald Trump insisted the United States was

COVID-19 UPDATE

12,957 DEATHS

303,094 CONFIRMED CASES

"winning" the war against the virus, individual states dramatically ramped up restrictions, with New York and Illinois joining California in ordering residents to stay home.

The virus death toll surged past 12,000 worldwide, with over 6,000

alone in worst-hit Italy where the daily number of fatalities has shot up relentlessly over the past week.

An estimated 900 million people are now confined to their homes in 35 countries around the world -- including 600 million hemmed in by obligatory government lockdown orders -- according to an AFP tally.

While the elderly and those with pre-existing medical conditions are the hardest hit by the virus, the World Health Organization warned that young people were also vulnerable.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

Unilever pureit

পিওরইট-এর যেকোনো সেবা নিতে
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আর জরুরি অবস্থায় থাকুন নিরাপদ।

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