



A Muslim woman (C) shouts at security personnel that patrol on the streets in Shaheen Bagh area after removing demonstrators continuously protesting against a new citizenship law, while the government imposed a lockdown as a preventive measure against the COVID-19 novel coronavirus in New Delhi, yesterday.

64 migrants found dead in cargo container in Mozambique

AFP, Maputo

More than 60 suspected undocumented migrants from Ethiopia were found dead yesterday in a cargo container in Mozambique's northwest Tete province, a senior hospital official said.

"A truck transporting illegal immigrants from Malawi, suspected to be Ethiopians, was stopped at the Mussacana weight bridge in Tete, and 64 people were found dead. Only 14 survived," the official, who asked not be named because he does not have the authority to speak to the media, told AFP.

"The cause of death is presumed to be asphyxiation."

The victims were discovered in a blue cargo container loaded on to a haulage truck, according to pictures seen by AFP.

Mozambique is generally seen as a smuggling corridor for migrants seeking to make their way to South Africa.

South Africa -- the continent's most industrialised country -- is a magnet for poor migrants not only from neighbouring countries such as Lesotho and Zimbabwe, but even nations further afield, such as as Ethiopia.

South Africa's virus cases surge past 500

AFP, Johannesburg

South Africa reported more than 150 new coronavirus cases yesterday, taking the new tally to 554, the highest in Africa, a day after it ordered a three-week lockdown.

"As of today, there are 554 cases of coronavirus in South Africa," Health Minister Zweli Mkhize, told a news conference.

"For the next week or two we still expect the numbers to go up. This is a disease pattern we cannot predict."

He said in the next week or two the numbers "would probably have gone three or four times or so".

"This is just one man's guess, it's not even a projection."

In a bid to stem the spread of the deadly virus, South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa announced a 21-day military-patrolled lockdown would be enforced from Thursday.

The pandemic had been slow to spread in Africa compared with other regions but the number of deaths and infections have started to increase, sparking concerns about the continent's vulnerability to contagious diseases.

Tokyo Olympics

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the Tokyo Games "must be rescheduled to a date beyond 2020 but not later than summer 2021, to safeguard the health of the athletes, everybody involved in the Olympic Games and the international community".

"The leaders agreed that the Olympic Games in Tokyo could stand as a beacon of hope to the world during these troubled times and that the Olympic flame could become the light at the end of the tunnel in which the world finds itself at present.

"Therefore, it was agreed that the Olympic flame will stay in Japan. It was also agreed that the Games will keep the name Olympic and Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020," the statement concluded.

Orders flood online outlets

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other items online since the outbreak, delivery workers have been working tirelessly from morning till night.

According to some delivery workers this correspondent interviewed, they would earlier make around 18 to 25 deliveries daily. In the past ten days, they have been doing between 30 and 40 home deliveries a day.

"The situation has changed massively. Now, customers are madly buying online to avoid public gathering at the supershops and bazaars," said Md Shaown Hazari, a Chaldal delivery worker.

The rise in demand means Arif Hawlader, another Chaldal delivery worker, leaves for work at 7:00am and returns home at 10:00pm.

The coronavirus outbreak has also forced delivery workers and customers to maintain cleanliness and hygiene standards in their interactions.

Deen Islam Imran of Chaldal is wearing a mask while delivering orders, and sanitising his hands after handling cash. "Our office has provided safety kits and has been monitoring whether we are strictly maintaining these standards," he said.

According to Chaldal's CEO, the platform has taken precautions to prevent the risk of the virus passing on to their delivery workers. From March 16, they have formed an internal

policy.

"Bike handles, bike seats, and steering wheels should be disinfected with hexisol or Savlon by the respective driver at the beginning of every shift. Deliverymen should maintain a distance of at least one metre from customers when delivering orders," mentioned the policy provided by the Chaldal CEO.

Supershop Shwapno is also providing hand sanitisers, gloves, and masks for its delivery workers.

Delivery and logistics businesses in general have also taken new policies to reduce risks of the virus spreading by giving customers the option of contactless delivery.

Pathao, for example, is promoting contactless delivery by dropping off items at doors and asking users to pay digitally.

"We have also taken extra precautions for the safety of users and delivery agents and distributed over 5,000 safety kits to foodmen, couriers, and delivery agents," said Syeda Nabila Mahub, director of marketing and public relations at Pathao.

Recently, it also started Pathao Tong service, a shopping service where users could buy daily necessities and get those delivered to their doorsteps, to deliver groceries in Gulshan and Banani.

However, contactless delivery is not a standard, as many customers choose

to pay cash on delivery. "It is not possible to avoid contact especially when we need to give change," said Arif.

In spite of this, riders notice a visible change in customer behaviour. "Many customers want to make sure that we are wearing masks. Some also offer us handwash or sanitiser before entering their house," said Deen.

Promi Islam, a Dhanmondi resident, said she keeps a hand sanitiser and deodorant at her door. "At first, I sanitise the parcel with the deodorant containing alcohol and then we offer hand sanitiser to the deliverymen after they touch our money," she said.

But the question of the riders' safety still remains. According to the riders, their job involves interacting with a lot of customers every day.

"Most often, we need to enter their house to leave the products. My family worries about whether I end up making deliveries to a home where someone has the virus," said a Shwapno delivery worker in the Mirpur area.

"Contactless delivery can be a great way to reduce our risks of being infected, especially in the days to come as we don't know what is going next," he stated.

"We have been caring for the customers, and we hope, they too will assist us for the safety of both parties."

Turks fight virus with secret weapon

AFP, Istanbul

In Turkey, sprinkling hands with cologne has long been a ritual for a visit to the barber, a meal at a restaurant or even a trip on the bus.

It is seen as a symbol of hospitality, as well as an aid to hygiene, in a country that sets great store by both.

Now Turkish cologne -- found in almost every household, either in the fridge or a closet -- is seeing unprecedented demand as a weapon in the fight against the novel coronavirus.

Many Turks believe cologne, which has a high alcohol content, is effective in keeping hands and faces clean and thus warding off the risk of COVID-19.

Long queues could be seen outside cologne shops in Istanbul's busy spice market, in the historic Eminonu district, in early March before Turkey announced its first confirmed case.

Now shops and pharmacies have put up signs reading "cologne sold out".

People are commonly seen sprinkling cologne into their hands in the middle of the street, while taxi drivers offer doses to their clients.

An association in the northwestern city of Izmit is delivering free cologne as well as bread to the elderly, local media reported.

Eyup Sabri Tuncer, a leading traditional cologne maker, said it has received tens of thousands of orders in recent weeks.

"In order for a healthy delivery to the customers... we have temporarily suspended further online orders," company official Atilla Ariman told AFP.

Bottles of cologne have flown off the shelves since Health Minister Fahrettin Koca urged Turks to use the liquid as an alternative hand sanitiser against the virus.

One user, Ilyas Gocdu, said he is using cologne three times more than before. "I believe it is more effective against germs as it contains alcohol," he said.

Demand is so great that a black market has developed for both cologne and other hand sanitisers, with Istanbul police raiding a manufacturing plant last week to confiscate products made "unhealthily".

Announcing his government's economic stimulus package last week, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said face masks as well as cologne would be handed out free to people aged 65 and over.

Turkey has so far recorded 37 coronavirus-related deaths and 1,529 cases.

Trump says unproven virus drugs could be 'gift from God'

APR, Washington

US President Donald Trump on Monday said antimalarial drugs that are under investigation to treat the new coronavirus could be a "gift from God" despite scientists warning against the dangers of overhyping unproven medicines.

Trump announced last week his administration was working to dramatically expand access to hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine, a related compound, following promising early studies in France and China that found the drugs helped patients suffering from the COVID-19 illness.

Many scientists including Anthony Fauci, the United States' leading infectious disease expert, have urged the public to remain cautious until larger clinical trials validate the smaller studies.

But Trump demonstrated no such restraint at a White House press briefing on Monday.

"The hydroxychloroquine and the Z-Pak, I think as a combination

probably is looking very, very good," he said.

"There's a real chance that it could have a tremendous impact, it would be a gift from God, if that worked it would be a big game changer," he added, quoting the example of a patient who was ill but recovered after taking the drug.

NBC reported that a woman in Arizona, who heard Trump talk about chloroquine, ended up in hospital and her husband died after they took a form of chloroquine she had used to treat her koi fish.

"I saw it sitting on the back shelf and thought, 'Hey, isn't that the stuff they're talking about on TV?'" NBC quoted the unnamed woman as saying.

Prime minister

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Control and Research (IEDCR).

With this, the number of deaths from Covid-19 stands at four and the number of infected people at 39.

Dr Meerjady Sabrina Flora, director of IEDCR, said this to the media through videoconferencing.

Bangladeshis still coming

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with the UK, China, Thailand, and Hong Kong at a time when the country's road, rail, and water communications have been suspended to contain the spread of the virus.

Air Vice Marshal M Mafidur Rahman, chairman of civil aviation authority of Bangladesh, last night said it was true that some people could enter Bangladesh from different European countries via the UK.

"We are observing the situation, and if London is locked down, we will suspend our flight operations," he added.

On March 14, the government instructed all airlines not to carry passengers to Bangladesh from any European countries, except the UK, from Monday.

The government on March 21

suspended air communications with 10 countries until March 31 as a 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 would remain suspended.

Europe, especially Italy, is the new epicentre of Covid-19 after China, said the World Health Organisation.

Earlier this month, the WHO said Europe had become the new epicentre of the virus, experiencing new cases at a higher rate than anywhere else in the world. Countries such as Italy, France, Spain and Belgium are in lockdown.

Biman has suspended its flight operations to 15 out of the 17 international destinations it serves.

Man runs

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through this pandemic, who he feels are "doing an extraordinary job."

Although Nochomovitz has run 36 marathons, he said his balcony marathon was the most challenging.

Due to the short length of the balcony, Nochomovitz was unable to gain any momentum or speed as he had to constantly turn back and forth. He said he ran about 3,000 laps.

Luckily, Nochomovitz said his girlfriend was there to support him, feeding him M&M's and Coca Cola to help him refuel as he ran.

Though his balcony is nothing like the streets of Barcelona, where he was supposed to run the marathon on March 15 before it got cancelled, Nochomovitz said the experience was worthwhile. Some people, he said, even reached out to say they were inspired by him.

French Prime Minister Édouard Philippe announced on March 14 that the country would be closing all places that are not essential to French living, which includes restaurants, cafes and clubs.

France banned all gatherings

across the country last week, and the country closed its borders on March 17 in order to contain the coronavirus outbreak.

US delays 'Remain in Mexico' migrant hearings due to virus

AFP, Washington

The US Department of Justice said it was delaying court hearings for asylum seekers ordered to stay in Mexico while their cases are being decided, due to the coronavirus.

The "Remain in Mexico" policy unveiled in December 2018 by the Trump administration calls for non-Mexican asylum seekers to remain in Mexico while their cases are under consideration.

Cases listed up to April 22 will be rescheduled, the DoJ's Executive Office for Immigration Review and the Department of Homeland Security said in a joint statement on Monday.

Bangabandhu recalls

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million people of Bangladesh who came together on this night (25 March) a year ago to resist the Pakistan occupation army. The Rayer Bazar Awami League members bring out a big torchlight procession to mark the occasion of organising resistance.

GOVT TAKING STEPS TO BRING DOWN FOOD PRICES

The government has arranged for increased supply of rice through modified rationing in areas not covered by statutory rationing. This month, an additional 11 lakh maunds of rice have been released for distribution through modified rationing, informs Minister for Food Phani Bhusan Majumdar. The price of rice in the country has now started showing a downward trend, although it remains beyond the capacity of the commoners, he adds.

The minister further says that

all-party vigilance committees will be formed in border areas to check smuggling of food grains.

GOVT TAKES OVER MANAGEMENT OF ABANDONED PROPERTIES

Bangladesh Ministry of Commerce in an order today brings the management of abandoned properties -- abandoned shops, business establishments and ventures and petrol pumps -- in the country under its control. However, abandoned tea estates and abandoned jute trading organisations will not come under this order. Committees on national, district town and group levels will be formed with representatives of the people, government, labour and the Bangladesh Bank to administer these abandoned properties.

\$45M CANADIAN GRANT FOR FOOD IMPORT

Canada has agreed to give a 45-million-dollar grant to meet the immediate requirements of Bangladesh for

food imports and implementation of different national projects. An agreement in this regard has been reached between the high-powered Canadian International Development Agency team currently on a visit to Dhaka and the Bangladesh Planning Commission.

VENDETTA AGAINST BANGALEES

A campaign of persecuting Bangalee army officers and men stranded in Pakistan has been mounted in Pakistan. It is reported that Bangalee army men are being herded in concentration camps, tortured, implicated in false cases and imprisoned. The vendetta against Bangalees in Pakistan has taken a sharp edge since the appointment of "Butcher of Bengal" Tikka Khan as the chief of the Pakistan army.

SOURCES: March 26, 1972 issues of Dinik Bangla, The Daily Ittefaq, Azad, Morning News, The Bangladesh Observer and Purbodesh.

2 workers die from toxic gas

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LPG tanker owned by a Hong Kong-based company, was brought by Khawaja Shipbreaking Limited, a sister concern of Kabir Steel Re-Rolling Mills (KSRM), in 2018.

Porimol Chandra Nath, manager of the yard, told The Daily Star that toxic gases emanated when the workers were drilling a hole at a compartment of the ship.

As the two workers fell unconscious, they were taken to Chattogram Medical College Hospital where doctors declared them dead, he said.

Asked if the workers were equipped with proper safety gears, the manager replied in the positive.

But when asked how the workers could expose to the poisonous gases if they were in protective gears, he abruptly hung up the phone.

Karim Ahmed, deputy managing director of the yard, also refused to make any comment in this regard, when contacted.

Mohammad Ali Shahin, a

Tofazzol Hossen, director of Explosive Department, Chattogram said the accident might have happened due to the sudden emission of hydrogen sulfide gas.

The authorities could clean out the compartment by using shallow machines instead of doing it manually, he said, adding that their negligence led to the deaths.

A K M Shamsul Arefin, additional secretary of the industries ministry, told this newspaper that they had suspended all kinds of operation at the yard until further notice.

"We formed a committee which will inspect the yard and submit a report. We will take further action based on the report.

According to Young Power Social Action (YPSA), an NGO working for the safety and security of shipbreaking workers, eight workers died in the line of duty at this shipyard in the last three years.

Mohammad Ali Shahin, a

coordinator of YPSA, said being a business conglomerate, KSRM must be more careful about its workers' lives.

Mob beats

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Stand to Alokdia.

On their way, the trio tried to snatch the three-wheeler from its driver. Hearing the driver scream, locals rushed to the spot and beat the three. Shahin died on the spot while rest of the two sustained injuries, the OC said.

The injured are Kobirul Islam, 25, of Ghatail upazila, and Bablu Miah, 26, of Madhupur upazila, he added.

On information, police recovered the body and sent it to Tangail General Hospital for autopsy. The body was later handed over to his family members, he further added.

Two cases were filed with Madhupur Police Station in this regard.