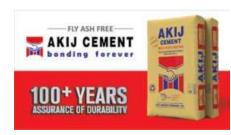
#### DHAKA FRIDAY MARCH 27, 2020







Chaitra 13, 1426 BS

Your Right to Know

#### Shaban 1, 1441 Hijr

**"No one will go hungry."** INDIAN FM NIRMALA SITHARAMAN SAYS AFTER DECLARING \$23B STIMULUS TO HELP POOR HIT BY LOCKDOWN

## In stillness of shutdown

Streets deserted, shops shuttered, families stay indoors on first of the 10 days

#### WASIM BIN HABIB

It was truly unprecedented for the Dhaka dwellers.

On the first day a 10-day shutdown, imposed to slow the spread of coronavirus, they woke up yesterday to a city that they never had seen before.

An eerie silence gripped the entire capital usually overflowing with chaos and noise. Gone were the wallto-wall traffic, the overcrowded alleyways, the bustling footpaths, the roadside teastalls, and the crowded mosques, which are key features of the city with a population of nearly 20 million.

Almost all the city dwellers stayed indoors while only a handful of them went out but for emergency purposes.

Except a few kitchen markets and groceries, all markets, malls, commercial establishments, factories and most restaurants staved closed.

Public transport remained off the roads which looked deserted. The cacophony of honking vehicles was missing. On intervals, rickshaw bells, however, pierced through the silence. The bustling bus terminals and train stations were

empty as well. All construction activities also remained halted.

The eeriness intensified in the evening and reached its peak at night.

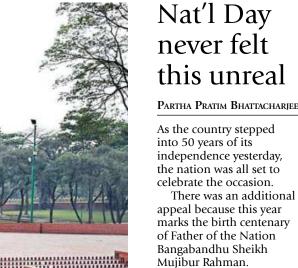
The situation was almost similar elsewhere in the country. The highways were empty. Police closed shops and dispersed all sorts of gatherings at local markets. SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

"We call on all countries to use this time to attack the coronavirus. You have created a 2nd window of opportunity." WHO DG TEDROS ADHANOM GHEBREYESUS ON LOCKDOWN MEASURES ACROSS GLOBE



"This human crisis requires a global response. The world counts on us to come together and cooperate in order to face this challenge.' SAUDI KING SALMAN URGES G20 LEADERS AMID CORONAVIRUS CRISIS





Sadly, there were no fireworks, parades, cultural events or any discussion on the day due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Celebration was limited to a 31-gun salute and hoisting of the national flags

The thoroughfares or the public offices were not decorated with lights and no national anthem was heard from loudspeakers. It seemed that silence had gripped the capital. The streets were eerily empty. No Independence Day had been observed this way in the country's history. Normally, people from all walks of life would SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

visit the memorial in droves to pay homage to Liberation War martyrs, but not a single person was allowed entry yesterday. The authorities took the decision to avoid gathering as part of efforts to contain the spread of coronavirus.

## Not much protection for police

They live in crammed rooms amid risk of virus spread; most don't have PPE

The National Memorial in Savar on the outskirts of the capital was completely empty on Independence Day yesterday. Every year, people

## Grim faces dot empty roads

Vendors see losses; buying craze over as customers mostly stay home amid Covid-19 fear SOHEL PARVEZ

### MONITORING MEDIA Info ministry scraps circular amid outrage

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

In the face of a huge outcry, the information ministry last night cancelled its circular assigning 15 officials to monitor if private television channels were running any propaganda or rumours about the novel coronavirus outbreak. In the latest circular, the ministry said it cancelled the March 24 circular "following the authority's directives as it contains errors". However, a cell has been formed to monitor and assist the authority and the media whether any rumour or misinformation is being circulated on the social media and different other media outlets, the ministry said.



# Scarce ICU beds a big worry

Govt hospitals have 508, private ones 737; only 10 available for coronavirus patients in the capital

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

General Hospital, Sheikh Russel Gastro

Inadequate intensive care facilities across the country remain a major concern in treating elderly Covid-19 patients who are deemed most vulnerable to the deadly virus, say experts and health officials.

According to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), there are 508 ICU beds in government hospitals and 737 ICU beds in private hospitals.

In the capital, only 10 ICU beds are available for coronavirus patients at Kuwait Bangladesh Friendship Hospital. The process of installing another 16 is underway, Aminul Hasan, director of Hospitals and Clinics of DGHS, told The Daily Star.

"Ninety more ICU beds will be set up for Covid-19 patients at Kurmitola Hospital, Dhaka Medical College Hospital, Mugda

314

267

People in isolation

Completed isolation

Liver Hospital and several other hospitals.

But there are no intensive care facilities dedicated for coronavirus patients at hospitals outside the capital, said Aminul.

Contacted, Brig Gen Md Shahidullah, director of Central Medical Stores Depot that supplies medical equipment to public hospitals, said they now have 164 ventilators after recently providing 36 ventilators to the ICUs at several hospitals in the capital.

If infected with coronavirus, a person may develop pneumonia as the virus attacks lungs and in some cases impedes the victim's ability to breathe. Ventilators, which deliver air to the lungs through a tube placed in the windpipe, are crucial to keep such patients alive.

people with pre-existing Elderly SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and MUNTAKIM SAAD

At least 30 beds for as many policemen are crammed into a dorm room of about 450sqft at Mohammadpur Police Camp in the capital.

The beds are not even three feet apart from each other.

Amid the coronavirus outbreak, little has been done for social distancing and improving hygiene there.

"If anyone gets the virus, the whole camp would be affected. We are worried, a policeman of the camp told The Daily Star, wishing anonymity.

The policeman said measures for washing hands and spraying disinfectants on uniform and boots were taken, but SEE PAGE 10 COL 1 The roads are empty. People are hunkering down at home and not coming out other than for essential needs at the kitchen markets, supershops, and pharmacies.

Yet Monirul Islam has little choice in heading out every day.

He leaves his home early in the morning to sell vegetables on the street that have lately been deserted as the number of coronavirus positive patients climbed and five died in the country as of yesterday.

The 30-year old was aware that Dhaka had thinned out; large numbers of people left the city for their village homes after the government announced a shutdown from March 26 to April 4 to slow the spread of the virus.

On Wednesday, Monirul invested Tk 1,000 to buy leafy vegetables from the wholesale market and set up his open van to sell these on Indira Road in the Farmgate area.

He sells red amaranth, spinach, and malabar spinach among other vegetables. SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

Signed by Nasrin Parvin, deputy secretary of the ministry, the previous circular said each official, with ranks between deputy SEE PAGE 2 COL

#### **INFECTION IN** BANGLADESH (Confirmed cases) Mar-08 Mar-10 Mar-24 Mar-25 -26 Mar-09 Mar-13 -12 Mar-21 Mar-Mar-**COVID-19** World toll on March 26 at 1100 GMT Countries and territories affected infected in 24 hours Deaths Including new 44 21,873 1,230 Total infection New since March 25 at 1900 GMT Deaths Including Worst affected countries Total recovery 7,503 ITALY 4,089 SPAIN Death 3,287 CHINA (MAINLAND) 2,234 IRAN 47,361 Isolation separates sick people with a (<u>8</u>) People in quarantine 1,331 FRANCE contagious disease from people who 1,046 UNITED STATES 16,593 are not sick. Ē 463 BRITAIN **Completed quarantine** 356 NETHERLANDS 220

Quarantine separates and restricts the movement of people who were exposed to a contagious disease to see if they become sick.

SOURCE: DGHS, LAST UPDATE YESTERDAY AFTERNOON



182

Cases Including new

Cases

74.386

56,188

81,285

29,406

25,233

69,197

9,529

6,412

6,235

36,508

9,241

9,714

481,300 31,608

655

6

157

219

\_\_\_\_

42

49

5

198

131

103

Source: AFP count based on official to a

BELGIUM

GERMANY

SOUTH KOREA

SWITZERLAND





## CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC **Countries** wasted time to respond

Says WHO, urges world not let go 2nd window of opportunity; G20 to support developing nations

#### Agencies

World Health Organization has chided some countries for wasting time in marshalling resources to combat the coronavirus pandemic that has now killed more than 21, 000 people worldwide as G20 leaders yesterday pledged support for developing countries to cope with the economic fallout.

We have been saying to the world that the window of opportunity is narrowing and the time to act was actually more than a month ago, two months ago," Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO director-general said.

"But we still believe that there is opportunity. I think we squandered the first window of opportunity. This is a second opportunity which we should not squander and do everything to suppress and control this virus."

Meanwhile, leaders of the G20 most industrialised nations met by videophone yesterday as calls mounted for an action plan to tackle a crisis that UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres described as "threatening the whole of humanity."

After the emergency summit, G20 nations pledged "united front" in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic, and said they were injecting \$5 trillion into the global economy to counter the impact of the crisis.

"We are injecting over \$5 trillion into the global economy, as part of targeted fiscal policy, economic measures, and guarantee schemes to counteract the social, economic and financial impacts of the pandemic," the leaders said in a statement.

#### **NEWS**

## **IEDCR reports** five new cases

Three of them contracted coronavirus thru' community transmission

#### STAFF CORRESPONDENT

2 | The Baily Star

The Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research yesterday reported five new cases of Covid-19. Three of the five were cases of community transmission.

This takes the total confirmed cases in the country to 44.

Yesterday, the IEDCR urged people who left Dhaka in recent days to be in home quarantine.

"Of the five patients, one recently returned from abroad, three got infected locally. We are unsure how the fifth person got infected," Prof Meerjady Sabrina Flora, director of IEDCR, said in her daily briefing via videoconference.

Out of the 44 coronavirus patients in the country, 11 recovered and were released from hospitals. Five died and 28 are being treated.

#### **TEST FACILITIES EXTENDED**

Prof Flora yesterday said coronavirus infection testing facilities were now available at Institute of Public Health (IPH), Dhaka Shishu Hospital, and Bangladesh Institute of Tropical and Infectious Diseases in Chattogram.

"Such facilities will be initiated within days in divisional headquarters too," she added.

INFECTED ABROAD

At least 65 Bangladeshi expatriates living in different countries have been infected and five of them have died.

The five Bangladeshis died in four countries, including the US.

Of the infected, most were in Italy and Spain

#### 2 DEÂTHS SPARK PANIC

Covid-19 symptoms yesterday They had not been tested but panic

gripped the localities following their deaths, reports our correspondents there.

A 45-year-old man died in Khulna Medical College Hospital (KMCH) with fever and breathing difficulties. He was from Helatala area in the city.

ATM Monzur Morshed, director of KMCH, said the patient had been in the same ICU of a hospital in Dhaka where a coronavirus patient had died.

The patient was advised to be in home quarantine after being released from the hospital in Dhaka.

Monzur said the patient did not follow the advice and had tried to hide the information from doctors at the KMCH.

He said they were in touch with the IEDCR about having the deceased tested. Over 15 doctors, nurses, and helping hands of KMCH were sent on home quarantine.

In Khagrachhari, a 20-year-old worker of a Chattogram ship-breaking yard died with coronavirus infectionlike symptoms at Matiranga upazila early Wednesday.

Panic gripped the area after his death. Family members buried him within hours of his death instead of cremating him according to his religion.

"We asked other family members and locals of the area to be in home quarantine," said Bivishan Kanti Das, Matiranga upazila nirbahi officer.

"We couldn't collect his blood sample as we have no protective gear," said Khayrul Alam, Matiranga upazila In Khulna and Khagrachhari, two health and family planning officer.

## **A CITY IN SLUMBER**



Dhaka is now a different city altogether. With educational institutions, offices, shops, and cinemas closed to slow down the spread of coronavirus, its roads are almost empty and the kitchen markets hardly see any customers. Clockwise from top left, the Moghbazar-Muchack flyover is devoid of traffic. Two delivery men of online stores carry products on bicycles on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue. A worker takes a nap at Karwan Bazar. A volunteer uses a megaphone to instruct people not to come out of home. A trader sits idle at his shop at the wholesale chicken market in FDC area as there is no customer around. The photos were taken yesterday. PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON, ANISUR RAHMAN, FEROZ AHMED

Nednesday.

outbreak.

lawyer by profession.

#### In stillness of shutdown Grim faces dot empty roads FROM PAGE 1

"We've never seen the capital so still. It's scary. It looks like a ghost town. We don't know how this will stay so," said Moazzem Hossain, a man who came out to buy eggs, told The Daily Star in the capital's West Razabazar area around 10:30am.

Police and army personnel patrolled the city streets to ensure people stay indoors and maintain social distancing, as part of measures to tackle the coronavirus situation.

If they found anyone outside, they asked them why did they come out of their home.

Some incidents of police excesses, however, were reported at a few places. Some law enforcers beat up people with sticks to force them go home.

Novel coronavirus continues to take its toll on the world with more than 4,81,300 cases of infection and 21,873 deaths as of yesterday.

Bangladesh has so far reported 44 cases and five deaths. But many fear things may deteriorate quickly mainly

food and newspaper and cargo vessels are also out of the restrictions.

But before the shutdown came into effect, a huge number of people left the city for their village homes, ignoring the government advice to stay home and exposing themselves to the risk of contracting the virus and spreading it to others.

At different signals and roads of the city yesterday, vehicles, including police cars and ambulances, were seen moving very cautiously.

Police put up barricades on many points to check whether more than two people were travelling in one vehicle.

Police personnel and Dhaka city corporation staffers were seen asking people to go home and not to move around in groups.

The busiest areas of the city like Farmgate, Karwan Bazar, Shahbagh, Motijheel, Gulshan, Banani, Mohakhali, and Mirpur were eerily silent.

"The reason for this stillness of the city is that people in their thousands have left it while the others preferred to stay indoors," said Yasin Ali, who went to Karwan Bazar kitchen market to buy groceries. He was wearing gloves and face mask to protect himself from coronavirus infection.

FROM PAGE 1

By 3:30pm, he was unable to recover his costs -- a contrast to previous days, when he saw a mad rush to buy vegetables as many city dwellers stockpiled food.

By the same time on Tuesday, he had had many customers crowding his van and had earned Tk 300 on top of his investment of Tk 1,200 for the vegetables.

This is the worst day in the past week. Now I am worried whether I will be able to realise my investment," said Monirul on Wednesday while waiting for customers. He earned only Tk 900 from sales and a good quantity of vegetables remained unsold.

"There weren't many people, even in the morning. People have gone home." As demand drops, it means a loss of income for small traders who depend on daily customers buying fresh produce.

"People are not buying," said Babul, who was selling vegetables on a van on at Karwan Bazar kitchen market He

The price of onions, on the downturn Chowdhury, while shopping at Unimart r the past several weeks after arrival of at Satmasjid Road in Dhanmondi on for the past several weeks after arrival of a fresh harvest, edged up.

Farmers completed the potato harvest in February. Yet, its price too went up amid rising customer demand along with prices of staples rice, flour, edible oil, and lentils.

"The market had earlier been on the upward trend because of higher number of purchases by customers. Prices have now stabilised," said Dhiren Chandra Ghosh, owner of Madaripur Rice Store at the Mohammadpur Town Hall kitchen market.

Ruhul Amin, who mainly sells onions and potatoes, said customer flow dropped from Tuesday.

"We bought onions at higher prices and it appears that we will have to incur losses if the customer demands continue to remain low," he said.

Customers are decreasing day by day, said Delwar Hossain Kusum, a seller

#### Nat'l Day FROM PAGE 1

pour onto the streets across the country

to celebrate the day. In yesteryears, the national memorial in Savar became the main centre for celebration. Hundreds of thousands of people gathered there to pay homage to the martyrs of 1971.

Yesterday, the main gate of the memorial remained closed and the authorities refused entry to people who gathered there in the morning.

No floral wreaths were placed in remembrance of the heroes who laid down their lives for the country. All state functions were suspended to prevent public gatherings.

On March 26, 1971, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Bangladesh's declared Rahman independence following a crackdown on unarmed Banglalees at midnight by the Pakistani occupation forces.

After the nine-month Liberation War, Bangladesh achieved its cherished "Most of the customers are buying independence on December 16, 1971, with the supreme sacrifices of three million peop

people died reportedly showing

due to densely populated localities, a lack of hygiene and a poor healthcare system.

Public health experts said the reportedly low number of detected cases was a result of limited testing facilities.

The IEDCR, the lone authority to do the tests, have carried out 924 tests so far, partly due to a shortage of kits. It, however, has started decentralising the testing facilities.

In its fight against the Covid-19 outbreak, the government recently announced a 10-day shutdown and suspended all passenger transport services. It also closed down public and private offices.

colleges and other Schools, educational institutions are also closed till April 9

The government asked the people to stay indoors and maintain social distancing. People were requested to go out only for emergency purposes, like buying groceries or medicines.

Hospitals, drugstores and other emergency services, meanwhile, remain open. Ambulances, vehicles carrying worried Sumon Mia.

health conditions such as diabetics

and hypertension are very vulnerable

to coronavirus infection. If they get

infected, a large portion of them will

Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, the

country has a population of 16.46 crore.

According to a 2018 report of

There has been concern over

treatment facilities for elderly Covid-19

patients in the country as all the five

persons who died from the virus were

contracted the disease after coming into

contact with a returnee from abroad.

He had chronic obstructive pulmonary

disease, hypertension, heart disease and

diabetes. He died at the ICU of Apollo

been suffering from various medical

care facilities should be arranged

for coronavirus patients because an

infected person cannot be kept with

Maleque said a hundred ICU beds

would be installed in public hospitals

to deal with coronavirus patients.

On March 21, Health Minister Zahed

The minister further said 300 more

other patients in hospitals.

The other four victims had also

Experts say dedicated intensive

The first was a 70-year-old man who

need intensive care and ventilation.

Of them, 1.30 crore are above 60.

aged between 60 and 75.

Hospital.

complications.

Many also woke up to the fact that they were left with no job during the 10-dav shutdown. A large number of people in the city live from hand to mouth, depending on their daily income for survival.

Solaiman Mia, a vendor, goes from door to door selling different food items in Mohammadpur area. His income has dipped drastically in the last few days. "Feeding my family has become difficult," he said.

Forty-five-year-old rickshaw puller Sumon Mia, 45, lives in a small room he shares with four others at Boubazar in Farmgate area. He said he was overcome with anxiety over his earning in the next few days.

"I have a family back home. They depend on my income. I don't know how will I send money to them," said a

however, did not give any time frame.

Be-Nazir Ahmed, former director

(disease control) of the DGHS, said

there is a huge gap between demand

and supply in terms of intensive care

ICU management in the country is very

admitted to ICUs contracted new

diseases while receiving treatment, he

the ICUs in private hospital are not

up to the mark for a lack of necessary

immediate steps to increase intensive

care facilities across the country, and

set up a specialisedhospital with 100-

200 ICU beds to treat coronavirus

adviser (Southeast Asia region) at

the World Health Organisation, said

Covid-19 patients should be treated in

a designated hospital, and ventilation

and other facilities at the ICU should be

in the country was set up at the National

According to the DGHS, the first ICU

Prof Muzaherul Huq, former

equipment and skilled manpower.

told this newspaper yesterday.

"But the most important thing is that

There have been reports that patients

The former DGHS director said

He said the government should take

facilities.

poor.'

patients.

there.

1980.

#### Zakir Hossain Road of Mohammadpur. By early afternoon on Wednesday, he was unable to sell half of the potatoes and onions he had sold on Tuesday.

Traders at the Mohammadpur Town Hall kitchen market and Karwan Bazar kitchen market had similar experiences. Shopper turnout has declined -easing pressure on the stock of essential commodities in the market and thus, on prices.

Since early this week, panic buying and stockpiling by many residents fearing possible supply disruption and an imminent lockdown pushed up the prices of most essential foodstuffs except of packaged salt.

### Countries wasted time

FROM PAGE 1

They also pledged to work swiftly with multilateral bodies such as the the Scarce ICU beds a big worry ICU beds would gradually be set up. He, developing nations.

With the disease tearing around the globe and three billion people locked down, countries are desperate to find ways to stop its terrifying spread and deal with an economic shock that could surpass the Great Depression.

Cases continued their upward piral Thursday, with Europe, now the hardest hit continent, clocking over 250,000 infections and nearly 15,000 deaths while fatalities in the US hit the four-figure mark.

With a third of the world's population under lockdown, air travel practically halted and borders shut, economists say the restrictions could cause the most devastating recession in recent history.

some 3.3 million people in the US filed unemployment claims last week -the highest number ever recorded -- the Labor Department reported yesterday. The US has close to 70,000 cases and 1,050 deaths, and numbers are rising dailv

Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases in been told to stay home too, just days

himself didn't venture to the market yesterday as a result.

Shoppers' presence at superstore retail chains such as Meena Bazar and Shwapno was also limited.

Yet both retail chains had put limits on sale of some key commodities, in a measure that was introduced by retailers recently in order to discourage stockpiling seen earlier in the week.

For example, a customer is able to buy 15kg of rice and five kilogrammes of onion in one go at Shwapno.

"It is madness to try to survive by hoarding. I know I won't be able to hoard anything enough to survive for an indefinité period," said Hasan Tarique

groceries and hygiene products," he

Grocery corners and shelves of items such as hand sanitiser and liquid hand wash, which salespersons struggled to keep replenished in stores early this week, were seen fully stocked on Wednesday.

He said he could not buy a single

"Ultimately the tendency of stocking

"But the good sign today is that

there is no mad rush among my fellow

shoppers to buy in large quantities. It

appears to me that the global spread

of coronavirus and its massive effect

Rasad Kabir, operations manager of

Unimart's Dhanmondi branch, said the

pressure of customers buying groceries

had been reduced on Tuesday from the

on our lives have stirred our values and

sense of humanity," he added.

situation earlier in the week

mask as others had bought masks in

large numbers, in the early days of the

hurts me as a customer," said Hasan, a

But for small vegetable sellers like Monirul, the situation is dire.

He was looking for customers to buy and help him clear his remaining perishable stock, so that he could make back the money he spent that morning and have some left over for his needs.

For Monirul, staying at home to avoid the risk of infection by COVID-19 is not an option. But his customers, and so, his only source of income, is drying up.

A special munajat was held at the Baitul Mukarram National Mosque vesterday after Zohr prayers to mark the day. Pravers were offered seeking eternal peace of the departed souls of the martyrs of 1971 and Bangabandhu and his family members who were killed on August 15, 1975.

Prayers were also offered seeking relief from the coronavirus pandemic.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina addressed the nation on Wednesday on the occasion of Independence and National Day 2020.

The reception at the Bangabhaban marking the day and the Swadhinata Padak award ceremony were also cancelled this year.

## Info ministry

#### FROM PAGE 1

secretary and assistant secretary, would monitor two televisions.

If the officials find that any television channel is airing any propaganda or rumour regarding the coronavirus issue, they will immediately inform the ministry to stop the propaganda or rumour, read the circular.

decision to monitor The televisions came at the first meeting of a publicity-related committee to prevent coronavirus infection. The meeting was held on March 24, it added.

The move drew a huge criticism from the journalist community and social media users, with many demanding withdrawal of the circular.

Rejoanul Haq, chairman of Broadcast Journalist Centre, platform of journalists working at different television channels, strongly protested the government's move and demanded withdrawal of the circular.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Rejoanul said the mainstream media was actually working to thwart any propaganda.

For example, he said private channels television worked intensively when propaganda on shortage of salt was spreading in the country.

"Journalists are now working at the field level without any proper safety gears to make sure that people can get authentic information."

On the contrary, the government Star last night.

put the TV media under suspicion which is unfortunate, added Rejoanul, also the head of news of Maasranga TV.

Bangladesh Pratidin Editor Naem Nizam said journalists had worked with courage and sincerity during any previous disaster.

"We are now going through a hard time due to the coronavirus outbreak and the journalists are again working with sincerity and responsibility," said Naem, also the CEO of News24.

He said the mainstream media does not spread any propaganda.

the government's Terming decision unfortunate and unexpected, Naem hoped that the government would withdraw it.

In a statement issued last night, Broadcast Journalist Centre demanded withdrawal of the "monitoring cell". It also urged the information ministry to come out of such negative attitude towards the private TV channels.

Asked about the criticism before the issuance of the new circular, Mizan Ul Alam, additional secretary (broadcast) of information ministry, said there was a mistake in the circular and they were going to change it.

"In fact, the officials will not only monitor the private television channels, but also all other media, including the social media," Mizan, also the convener of the publicityrelated committee, told The Daily

#### Tourism-dependent Thailand has shuttered its borders while China, where the disease was first detected in December, said it was drastically cutting international flights as imported cases threatened to cause a

resurgence. European and leading Asian stock markets were back in the red amid fears of the economic impact yesterday despite US senators finally passing a gargantuan \$2 trillion stimulus nackage.

statistics office said.

of new infections.

nearly 75,000 infections.

behind Italy's curve.

But in Europe, the World Health

Organization offered a glimmer of

hope, saying there were "encouraging

signs" after Italy reported a lower rate

Italy now has the highest death toll

Though it has seen a slight drop in

in the world with 7,503 fatalities and

new cases in recent days, it is "still too

early to say whether the pandemic is

peaking" there, WHO Europe director

In Britain, the National Health

Service said London's hospitals are

facing a "continuous tsunami" of

seriously ill COVID-19 patients,

despite a lockdown imposed this week.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson has said

the country could be just a few weeks

Hans Kluge cautioned yesterday.

Singapore offered a major warning for the world, suffering its biggest contraction since the financial crisis during the first quarter, while France's lockdown has slashed economic activity by a huge 35 percent, its

In a sign of the economic impact,

The global lockdown -- which also hemmed in India's huge population this week -- tightened further yesterday as Russia announced it was grounding all international flights, while Moscow's mayor ordered the closure of cafes, shops and parks.

Tokyo's millions of citizens have

after the city was forced to postpone the 2020 Olympic Games for a year.

#### International Monetary Fund, World Health Organization and regional banks to deploy a "robust" financial package to support

# Cleaners left in the lurch

Conservancy workers of two city corporations expose themselves to Covid-19 as they work without protective gear; congested colonies also raise risks

#### MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

As Dhaka joins the rest of the world in the fight to contain the spread of novel coronavirus, some of its frontline respondents appear to have been left in the lurch.

While the city is in fast asleep, several thousand conservancy workers of the two city corporations take to the streets to clean up the waste produced in the day, with barely any protection from the virus that may arrive with someone's household waste.

Moreover, they must carry that threat to their congested colonies, where several thousand families are crammed into tiny living spaces.

However, city corporation authorities are apparently indifferent to the safety of the cleaners, one of key groups in the battle towards 🤶 decontamination.

"A single case of [Covid-19] infection can spread like a wildfire in these colonies," said Nirmol Chandro Das, secretary general of 🖬 🎾 Bangladesh Horijon Oikya Parishad -- an 🕉 organisation working for the interests of cleaners. ö

Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) [ has 5,250 cleaners, while Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) has 4,000.

"Death is inevitable if these colonies are infected. We've not seen any awareness campaign from authorities, let alone effective measures taken by them," he further said, adding, "We've repeatedly requested city corporations to provide gloves, masks and boots to cleaners, to prevent infection not only from coronavirus but also from other respiratory diseases; but no action has been taken.

The rate of death from respiratory diseases is high among cleaners, Nirmol claimed.

Two elderly persons from Mirpur's Tolarbag area died of Covid-19 infection on March 21 and March 22.

Khurshida, a cleaner of Tolarbag area that went under community lockdown following the deaths, told this newspaper on March 23 they are not given any mask or gloves from Dhaka North City Corporation.

"Sometimes I use a scarf, and sometimes my sari to cover my mouth," she said.



Conservancy workers under Dhaka South City Corporation pick up garbage in a truck, without any gloves or masks. The photo was taken from Motijheel yesterday morning.

comes out of her home at about 3am to sweep roads. "I've heard of corona. Our sirs [higher authority] told us how to clean our hands, but we were not given anything," said Rabeya, adding that she uses a scarf to cover her face while working. Rabeya's family lives with several hundred others at Ganaktuli Sweeper Colony, where they have shared bathrooms, toilets and kitchens. Many also sleep on the corridor adjacent to the staircase of the buildings. "If one of us gets infected, there will be a disaster," said a sweeper leader of the colony, preferring not to be named

Prof Mahmudur Rahman, a former director of IEDCR, said it is essential for cleaners to use masks and gloves. "Not only to protect them from Covid-19 infection, but also to reduce their exposure to other health hazards.

Rabeya, a cleaner from Dhanmondi area, Air Commodore Md Zahid Hossain told this taking measures to raise awareness among them.

newspaper that they had taken measures to provide masks, gloves and boots for cleaners. "We'll get 5,000 masks tomorrow [Tuesday],"

he said on March 23.

DNCC Additional Chief Waste Management Officer SM Shafiqur Rahman said they could arrange gloves and masks for about 60 percent cleaners.

We have directed them to wash their hands when they return to the station after work every day," he said, adding that they are procuring sets of gloves, masks and boots for 2,700 cleaners.

Asked what measures they have taken for cleaners' colonies, DSCC CEO Shah Md Imdadul Haque said they are busy with ensuring quarantine of returnees to prevent Covid-19 and did not have resources to focus on that.

DNCC Panel Mayor Jamal Mostafa said it is DSCC Chief Waste Management Officer not possible to relocate cleaners, but they are

## BRTA caught napping!

Regulator issues directives to contain Covid-19, but after govt decides to suspend vehicular movement

#### TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

It seems like Bangladesh Road Transport Authority's (BRTA) wake-up call has come too late.

Amid the coronavirus outbreak, BRTA headquarters on Tuesday issued a set of directives upon its field offices to ensure cleanliness of public transports and bus stoppages. But that very day, the government decided to close all public transports.

The government transport regulatory body issued the order, six days after the Health Services Division called for taking steps to clean public transports and bus stoppages to contain spread of novel coronavirus.

Bangladesh confirmed the first case of coronavirus infection of March 8, and first death on March 18. Five more people tested positive with coronavirus yesterday, taking the number of the confirmed cases to 44, including five deaths.

On Tuesday, the government announced suspension of all public transport services to slow the spread of novel coronavirus, inching closer to enforcing a lockdown.

Operations of all passenger trains, launches and domestic flights also came to halt on the same day.

In addition, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader, in a video message on Tuesday, declared "lockdown" on all public transport from yesterday.

As a result, buses, minibuses, CNG-run auto-rickshaws and human hauliers were not seen on streets yesterday.

However, freight trains, cargo vessels, trucks and lorries carrying goods, medicine, fuel and perishable items, will operate as usual, according directives from different ministries.

The measures came a day after the government announced closure of all public and private offices from March 26 to April 4 as part of its efforts to contain the spread of Covid-19.

It also declared general holidays for the period

But the order, signed by Deputy Director

Masud Alam and issued on assistant directors at metro and district circles, came on Tuesday.

It is now available on the website of BRTA

It called for taking steps to clean and disinfect all bus stations, ensure use of hand sanitiser and masks, clean and disinfect insides of all public transports and prevent people with fever, cough or cold from travelling.

After the first coronavirus case was confirmed, health authorities on several occasions have asked people to avoid public transports to avoid the infection.

But many people had no choice but to use public transports, including buses, minibuses, human haulers for communication.

In the given context, Dhaka Transport Coordination Authority and transport owners distributed some hand sanitiser bottles and masks, and set hand-washing facilities at different bus stoppages in Dhaka, although it was quite inadequate for the number of passengers. But the BRTA was not to be found in all this

In the meantime, the regulatory body however suspended all tests for issuing licence and registration of vehicles, citing coronavirus issue.

"We didn't see any visible steps taken by BRTA, but it should have done something in this regard," said Khondaker Enayet Ullah, secretary general of Bangladesh Road Transport Owners Association, yesterday.

Asked about Tuesday's order, he said, "It is too late, and has still remained only on paper.

Contacted, Masud Alam said: "When we received order from the [Road Transport and Bridges] ministry to give those directives, we issued it right away."

Besides, they have already informed transport operators in this regard, he told The Daily Star yesterday.

This correspondent could not reach BRTA's acting chairman Yousub Ali Mollah over phone, for comments about its poor response to the crisis.

#### Patients suffer as most Put human rights at the heart of doctors stop pvt practice

#### ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

For the last one week, Rumpa Saha, who has been suffering from waist pain, is trying to get appointment of a prominent nephrologist in port city.

But the doctor, who has his chamber on KB Fazlul Quader Road, stopped seeing patients there since March 15. Rumpa, a schoolteacher, asked the staff at the diagnostic centre when she will be able to see the doctor, but they also did not know.

On March 23, she went to the chamber of another nephrologist but found that locked. There was a notice on the door, which said the doctor would not attend chamber for the time being due to unavoidable reasons. Like Rumpa, many patients in Chattogram have been suffering as most doctors have stopped going to their chambers against the backdrop of coronavirus outbreak in the country. Meanwhile, Shamsunnahar, homemaker of Bakalia area, failed to get appointment of a specialist doctor as the physician, who has a chamber in OR Nizam Road area, has stopped tending to patients as well.

are of old age, they have children and parents at home... considering all these, they have decided not to attend chambers until the [coronavirus] situation improves," she said

According to Dr Faisal Iqbal Chowdhury, general secretary of Bangladesh Medical Association (Chattogram), number of registered doctors in Chattogram is around 7,000.

Of the registered doctors, over 70 percent usually attend chambers in the city and different upazila headquarters but under the present situation most of them have not been seeing patients at chamber.

Asked about the reason, Dr Faisal said

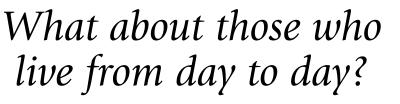
## Covid-19 response **Urges Amnesty International**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Amid the coronavirus outbreak, Amnesty International vesterday called upon the authorities in Bangladesh and other South Asian countries to put human rights at the heart of their responses.

Issuing a statement on its website, the global rights group urged the region's leaders to intensify efforts to protect marginalised and vulnerable groups at higher risk, including daily wage-earners, displaced people, health workers and prisoners.

"As the number of covid-19 cases in South Asia soars, the region's leaders must pay special attention to the most vulnerable and marginalised [communities] in this crisis, said the statement.





#### The Bally Star \mid 3

The staff members suggested her to go to the emergency of any government hospital. "If it was that simple, no one would have seen doctors at their chambers, spending hefty money," said a frustrated Shamsunnahar.

Admitting the fact, Prof Dr Shahanara Chowdhury, head of gynaecology department at Chattogram Medical College Hospital, told The Daily Star yesterday that many of her colleagues have not been tending to patients at their private chambers for personal safety.

Shahanara, however, said she attended her chamber till Wednesday. "Many doctors

self-protection. "Many doctors who are of old age do not want to take the risk of being contaminated," he said. "Also, most doctors are yet to get personal protective equipment (PPE); as a result they are afraid

to treat patients. "There are around one lakh registered doctors in Bangladesh and the government has supplied 2.85 lakh PPE," he claimed, adding, "Even I have not received any yet... so my question is: where are the PPE?

"Doctors, for example an eye specialist, have to check patients from a very close range... coronavirus-infected patients do not show symptoms in early days... so, if a doctor is contaminated, he would not only contaminate his family but also several hundred patients," said Dr Faisal.

The government should provide PPE not only to registered doctors in the city, even to the quacks in rural areas to prevent coronavirus transmission.

Asked, Dr Mujibul Haque Khan, president of BMA Chattogram, said he had been attending his chamber regularly. "I think, most doctors are doing the same except those who are old and have been suffering from respiratory problems," he said.

"They need to protect the workers for whom staying at home means losing their livelihoods, people who lost their homes in conflicts and now languish in overcrowded camps, prisoners squeezed into cells with several others, and, not least, the valiant doctors and nurses who have never had the resources they need and are now putting their own health at risk to save others," said Biraj Patnaik, South Asia director at Amnesty.

People living in rural areas, where literacy rates are low and access to healthcare severely limited, are particularly affected by a lack of reliable information about covid-19, the organisation said in the statement.

"States have a responsibility to provide information about covid-19 that is accurate and evidence-based... At the same time, there must be a concerted effort to counter misinformation about the virus that could harm people and to protect marginalised communities from stigmatisation," said Patnaik.

Amnesty International said authorities across South Asia have a responsibility towards not just their own citizens, but all individuals within their jurisdiction -- including refugees and asylum-seekers.

"There are limited medical facilities at the [Rohingya] camps [in Bangladesh] and no emergency services available nearby," it added.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



Youths spraying disinfectant on a street in the capital's Manipuripara yesterday. Under the initiative of "Manipuripara Tarun Sangha", they are also advising people over megaphones on how to stay safe from coronavirus. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Biman extends suspension of flight till April 15

#### STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Biman extended its suspension of all flights except for two routes -- London and Manchester -- until April 15 due to the global coronavirus outbreak.

Biman's flight suspension to Jeddah, Madina, Riyad, Dammam, Kuwait, Doha, Masqat and Bangkok have been extended till April 5; Abu Dhabi till April 7; Dubai till April 9; Singapore till April 11; Kathmandu till April 12; Kuala Lumpur till April 14 and Kolkata and Delhi till April 15, Mokabbir Hossain, managing director and CEO of Biman Bangladesh Airlines, said.

Biman had earlier suspended flights on all seven domestic routes for an indefinite period, said Senior Secretary to Civil Aviation and Tourism Ministry M Mohibul Haque.

Biman so far incurred a loss of Tk 450 crore in the last two months due to wholesale cancellation of flights, reduce of income from cargo and ground handling operations at Dhaka airport.

Meanwhile, 364 Malaysia and Bhutan nationals stuck in Bangladesh returned to their countries on different flights on Thursday.

Rabeya Begum used to sit with her son Raihan at Mirpur-10 roundabout every day from 7am to around 7pm. For people like them, the coronavirus hits doubly hard -their income dwindles and they have no choice but to expose themselves to the risk of contracting the disease. PHOTO: STAR

#### SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Nine-year-old Raihan is the only child of his family. His mother Rabeya Begum named him Omar Faruk Limon at birth, with Raihan as the nickname. Six years ago, his limbs became disfigured due to polio.

Raihan's father Hasan Mia was a truck driver. Two years ago, he died in a road accident. As long as Hasan was alive, the family were able to arrange for everything necessary for Raihan's recuperation. However, their hopes were extinguished by doctors who said he was never going to recover and would have to live like this all his life.

In spite of this, Raihan's parents left no stone unturned for his treatment. But all of this stopped after Hasan Mia's death. Today, the family earns their living by begging on the sides of Mirpur's busiest streets.

Rabeya Begum told this correspondent that everyday she takes Raihan to the footpaths of Mirpur 10 roundabout, lays him down and the two of them beg money from passers-by all day. They collect a meagre sum, but it's enough to cover their rent, food, and bear a minimum of Raihan's treatment costs.

They get out from their tiny room at Mirpur Jhutpatti slum every morning at SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

### Supplies arrive from China

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

China yesterday medical donated including supplies, 10,000 testing kits, 10,000 personal protective equipment (PPE) and 1,000 infrared thermometers to help Bangladesh fight the coronavirus outbreak.

A special flight carrying the supplies landed at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport at 4:23pm from Kunming, China, SN Wahidur Rahman, deputy director HSIA told The Daily Star.

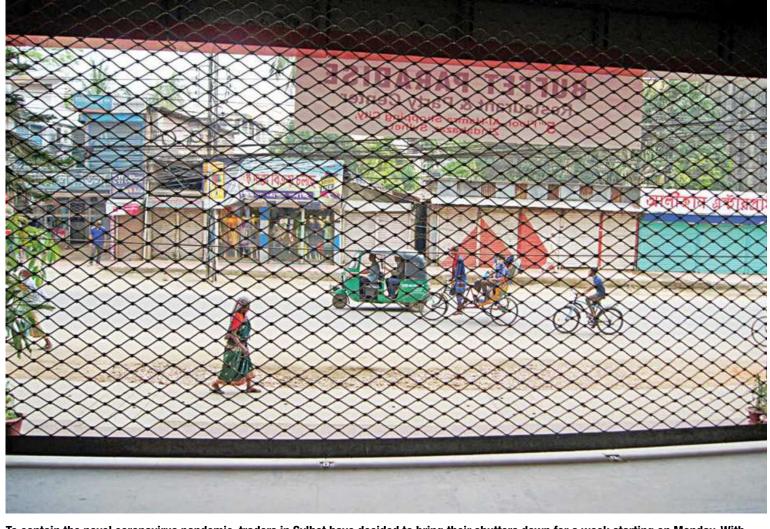


of The boat of love can climb mountains -reads a box. PHOTO: COLLECTED

Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh, Li Jiming, handed over the items to top officials of Health Directorate in a brief programme at the airport.

Speaking at the programme, the Chinese ambassador reiterated its strong commitment to helping friends in need and building a community of shared future for mankind. "We are together," he said.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen on Sunday said the government is working to make an adequate stock of medical logistics to deal with the situation. "We need to have enough stock," he said, adding that the government is also allowing private companies to import testing kits.



To contain the novel coronavirus pandemic, traders in Sylhet have decided to bring their shutters down for a week starting on Monday. With most stores closed, the streets of the city's busiest Zindabazar area have become deserted. PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

Rotary hands

out sanitisers

**Rotary International** 

District, Bangladesh has

started distributing hand

sanitiser among working

distribution programme.

outdoor. It is impossible

for them to provide family

with food if they do not go

"As there is not enough

public place to wash hands

in the capital, these people

are at high risk of getting infected with coronavirus,"

Considering the present

crisis in market and as part

of making people aware of

washing hands, Rotary is

distributing 30,000 bottles

of hand sanitiser among

distribution under direct

International with technical

supervision of Rotary

support from Gono

Rotary youth

Rotary clubs.

Savar.

Shwasthya University,

organisation, Rotaract, is

responsible for distributing

the product manufactured

with its own funds from 50

He said, "Our working

M Khairul Alam,

governor of Rotary,

people have to stay

inaugurated the

out for work.

he added.

people in Dhaka city, says a

citizens

STAR REPORT

ress release

## CORONAVIRUS SUSPICION 7-month-old in isolation ward

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A seven-month-old baby was put in an isolation ward at Kushtia General Hospital on suspicion of coronavirus infection yesterday.

Tapas Kumar Sarkar, resident medical officer (RMO) of the hospital, said family members brought the girl to the hospital on Wednesday. The infant has fever, cold and cough.

She was admitted to the pediatric ward for treatment. As the baby's condition worsened yesterday, doctors started treating her for pneumonia, he added.

The RMO said doctors and nurses repeatedly questioned the family members whether any of the relatives returned to the country recently but they denied.

Yesterday, the family, however, admitted that the baby's father was an expatriate who returned to Bangladesh from Singapore on March 9 and since then he had been living with his family, the RMO said. "So, we have taken the baby to an isolation unit," he added.

As the news spread, most family members of the baby, including the father, fled from the hospital premises.

Kushtia Deputy Commissioner Aslam Hossain said they are trying to put all the family members in quarantine.

Asked, Kushtia Civil Surgeon Anwar Hossain said they are also trying to trace the doctors and nurses involved in treating the baby since the period of her admission to the hospital. He said the hospital has a 20-bed isolation unit, PPE and other equipment for doctors and nurses to treat

working people. This handwash is being prepared for free

#### **BANGLADESHI MIGRANT WORKERS** KSA to extend 'iqama' among worried work permit for free STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Amid coronavirus outbreak, Bangladeshi migrant workers in Saudi Arabia will have an opportunity to extend their

work permits for three months without paying any fee. Bangladesh embassy in Riyadh on Wednesday issued a statement, citing the opportunity will be applicable for the work permits known as "iqama" with expiry dates between March 18 and June 30 this year.

The three-month extension will be done automatically and workers don't need to go to passport office. The opportunity will not be applicable for those employed in household jobs and as chauffeurs. The embassy, after being instructed by Saudi authorities, asked Bangladeshis who availed exit-reentry and final exit visas but could not leave KSA due to current situation, to cancel those.

## What about those

#### FROM PAGE 3

seven and stay out on the road for around 12 hours. They live their life on the edge, as around Tk 600 has to go behind Raihan's medicines every week - that's Tk 2,400 a month, a lot for a family that begs.

For the last two weeks, the family has been struggling to make ends meet due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. As most people have stopped plying the roads and started working from home, or going back to their hometowns, their [Rabeya] income has dwindled down by at least a third. Whereas they used to earn Tk 500-600 before, the best they can make now is around Tk 300.

But more importantly, Rabeya is now in panic over her son's health. As they pass their days on the street, with thousands of people passing them by, the duo is in increasing risk of contacting the novel coronavirus. In such circumstances, according to neighbours' suggestion, Rabeya now sits on their spot with masks on her and Raihan's faces. The strain this puts on her mental health is immense. But even here there's a complication. Raihan's medical condition makes it hard for him to breathe as it is. With a mask on top of his nose and mouth, it becomes extremely difficult for him to respire. When this correspondent asked her about it on Sunday evening, Rabeya said the best she can do now is remove the mask every now and then to help his son catch his breath.

## Healthcare at a halt

Doctors at KMCH reluctant to see patients without PPE; inpatients released urgently

#### DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

Due to lack of personal protective equipment (PPE), doctors at Khulna Medical College Hospital seem to be reluctant to treat people with coronavirus symptoms, causing sufferings or even death to the patients.

Babul Chowdhury from Bagerhat's Mongla can be taken for an instance. The 40-year-old was rushed to KMCH with fever, cough and breathing problems on March 19.

His attendants went to the emergency department from where a medical officer referred him to the medicine unit. From there, he was sent back to outpatient department without any service. His sufferings did not end there. Afterwards, Babul was resent to the emergency department.

It took nearly an hour in the process. Babul's torment ended with his death right there

Without any test, doctors thought he was infected with coronavirus, said Monowara Begum, Babul's sister who was with him.

Dr Ashrafur Rahman who was on duty at the emergency department at that time, said the patient was suffering from breathing complication while his body temperature was normal.

"As I am not a medicine expert, he [Babul] was asked to go to the department concerned," said Ashrafur.

He, however, admitted that he could be dealt with much care or be sent to the isolation ward. A suspected coronavirus patient should be put in home quarantine as per hospital's decision, he said.

"That's why the man was referred to the outpatient department later," said Dr Ashrafur Rahman.

KMCH Director ATM Monzur Morshed told The Daily Star, "Such a situation is prevailing at the hospital as it has no equipment to diagnosis coronavirus and the doctors have no adequate PPE."

To diagnosis such a patient a doctor need a set of PPE that includes gloves, cap, N-95 coded mask, gown and boot, the

#### director added.

"Only gown, surgical mask, shoe cover and cap were sent to KMCH," said the director.

'We requested IEDCR [Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research] several times to provide us with those and other equipment like PCR machine or scanner to detect coronavirus patient, but to no avail."

A 15-bed isolation ward was opened at KMCH to treat such patients, he said.

With coronavirus symptoms, two women from Batiaghata upazila were admitted to the ward early Wednesday, hospital sources said.

One of them is suffering from fever and the other took her to the KMCH, said Dr Shoilendra Nath. Both have been kept there, he added

However, most of the cases, "In most cases, we have to refer patients with the deadly virus symptoms to Dhaka," said Director Monzur Morshed.

#### PATIENTS' NUMBER DROPS BY HALF

Considering the current coronavirus situation, no patient is being kept at the hospital without urgent need. Those who have already been admitted are being discharged on emergency basis, hospital sources said.

A woman named Nilufa Begum (62), who was admitted to the surgery department, was released on Tuesday. Her attendants said she was asked to go to Birdem in Dhaka.

In this way, many patients are being discharged daily with exemptions and many have to go back without any treatment.

Dr Syed Md Mozammel Hossain, head of the surgery department, admitted the fact. "None except for cancer patients or those are in most urgent need is being kept at the hospital."

"We are not allowing anyone who can be cured with medication at home. We recommend everyone to stay at home," said Dr Mozammel.

Hospital records say, patients' number was 1,152 on March 18 but the figure came down to 540 on March 23.

## STAR REPORT

Le Reve, a leading fashion brand of Bangladesh, is using its own factories to make masks and PPE for volunteers, says a press

release The brand is fully utilising its production capacities in manufacturing aprons and masks, two important parts of personal protective equipment (PPE). "In the 49th year of independence, we are facing a catastrophe called coronavirus...," said Monnuian Nargis, CEO and design team head of Le Reve. She said Le Reve is trying to supply a small portion in the rising demand of PPE and masks. Their emergency masks will come with three layers -- including fusing and will provide a good coverage for mouth and nose.

## Le Reve making BYLC, Rangs Motors come forward to fight coronavirus

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In response to tackle deadly Covid-19, two private organisations have come forward to help the cause on humanitarian ground and as part of their CSR initiatives. Bangladesh Youth Leadership Center (BYLC) has

announced that its staff will contribute their one-day salary to fight the deadly coronavirus, says a press release.

While the restrictions to prevent the spread of Covid-19 will affect everybody, it will have the most impact on those who depend on daily wages for their livelihood. The leadership institute has pledged to contribute to alleviate their struggle by partnering with other organisations that work in the frontline to provide emergency goods, such

#### patients

"We have also informed the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR). They will collect the child's samples soon," the civil surgeon said.



#### **Bangladesh Academy for Rural** Development (BARD)

Development of Physical Facilities of BARD (1st Revision) Project No. 47.63.0000.033.14.41.19-694 Date: 25.03.2020

#### Extending Closing Date of e-Tender ID 438290

Due to closure of all Government offices from 26.03.2020 to 04.04.2020. the closing date of e-Tender ID 438290, Ref No. 47.63.0000.033.14.41.19-533, dated: 10 March, 2020, is hereby rescheduled to be on 13th April 2020 (11:01) instead of 2nd April, 2020.

GD-620

Kotbari, Cumilla, Bangladesh

Rotary is also planning to hold another programme to distribute food items among working people, according to Governor Khairul Alam.

Ranjan Kumar Guha Project Director

It would be easier if they could stay home for a couple of days, but this is a luxury the family cannot afford. "We do not know of any other way to live than to come here and live from day to day," Rabeya said, rather stoically.

To add to their woes, police yesterday evicted them from the footpath.

FROM PAGE 3

said Patnaik.

said Patnaik

overcrowded

The organisation also

raised concern over South

GD-615

Asia's prisons, saying those are notoriously as food and hygiene products, to those who need it most.

"In addition to one day's salary, we have also taken measures to support youths' mental health and well-being during this period of self-isolation through launching BYLC Youth Hotline, where youths can speak to their peers about their concerns," said Dewan Rabita Arefin, manager, People Development at BYLC.

Meanwhile, Rangs Motors Ltd (RML) has taken a CSR initiative, "Sochetonotai Hok Boro Shokti" by spraying disinfectant in bus terminal areas and the vehicles, says a press release.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Local Government Engineering Departmen Office of the Upazila Engineer মৃতিৰ Goalanda, Rajbar শেখ হাসিনার মূলনীতি www.lged.gov.bd গ্রাম শহরের উন্নতি Memo No. 46 02 8229 000 14 016 19-198 Dated: 25.03.202 Put human Corrigendum to e-Tender Notice No. 04 / 2019-20 This is the information of all concerned that due to an unavoidable circumstances the following changes have been made to the tender which was published in The Daily Zai Zai Din, The Daily Star, The Daily Prothom Alo, Date: 06/03/2020. It also said there is a need Modified Description of works Tender ID Original for specific measures aimed Document tender last selling 426497 28/03/2020 at 13.00pm 07/04/2020 at 12.30pm at people working in the 426498 (date & time) informal sector in line with 426499 02/04/2020 at 13.00pm 16/04/2020 at 13.00pm Tender closina/ openina 4264500 & (date & time) the right to social security. 434370 "No one should Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desl be forced to make the (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd) or (e-mail: ue.goalanda@lged.gov.bd & Cell No. 01708161405). pernicious choice between Md. Bazlur Rahaman Khan Upazila Engineer Goalanda, Rajbari starvation and infection... States must protect their Phone: 06423-56143 livelihoods as best as they GD-622 Email: ue.goalanda@lged.gov.bd can during this crisis..., Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Every one of South Office of the Regional Controller of Food Asia's eight countries has Barishal Division, Barishal one of the lowest number www.food barisaldiv.gov.bd Memo No. 13.01.0000.013.55.032.17.917 Date: 25/03/202 of physicians per capita, Corrigendum/Amendment Notice the statement mentioned, citing World Bank data. At the best of times, All concerned are hereby informed that the Amendment has been made into the e-Tender Notice No. 01/2019-2020 (LTM) (Works) there are too few healthcare Dated: 09/03/2020 under this office for the mentioned packages only due to unavoidable circumstances. workers with too few Amendment as per online Tender As per newspaper published date resources, it said. ID No. Tender/proposal document Tender/proposa Tender/proposal Tender/proposal "Frontline health last selling/downloading date closing and document last closing and opening workers are the heroes & time opening (date & (date & time) selling/downloadin we depend on in this date & time time) 30 March, 2020 436528 13 April, 2020 crisis...The very least they 29 March, 2020 12 April, 2020 can expect is to be given 17:00 14:00 17:00 14:00 437017 29 March, 2020 30 March, 2020 12 April, 2020 13 April, 2020 protective equipment." 17:00 14:30 "States have an obligation to ensure they This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) is required. are protected -- including Only enlisted contractor of Directorate General Food & those who are renewed in 2019-2020 fiscal year can participate appropriate training and tende psychosocial support, for them and their families,"

The fees for last selling/downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank's branches. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)

Mohammad Faruk Hossain
Regional Controller of Food
Barishal Division, Barishal
Phone: 0431-61012
E-mail: rcf.bsl@dgfood.gov.bd

#### গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার অধ্যক্ষের কার্যালয় চট্টগ্রাম কলেজ, চট্টগ্রাম

College Education Development Project (CEDP) College Road, Chawkbazar, Chattogram

Phone No. 031-615007, email: ctgcollege@yahoo.com

### **Corrigendum of Invitation for Tender**

#### Reference No. 532

GD-625

Date: 25.03.2020

<u>गुण्डून</u> गुज्रुन्ध्र 00

The undersigned has to inform that due to unavoidable circumstances tender last selling, closing and opening dates & time of Package No. W-01 and W-02 (Package Name: Refurbishment of Multiple Classrooms at Chittagong College, Chattogram AND Refurbishment of Classrooms (2 Nos.), Library, wash rooms and female common room (ground floor inside) at Chittagong College, Chattogram) are revised as follows:

IFT Serial No.	Description	Original date & time	Revised date & time				
	Tender last selling date	01.4.2020, 5.00pm	19.4.2020, 5.00pm				
ift101	Tender closing date and time	02.4.2020, 1.00pm	20.4.2020, 1.00pm				
	Tender opening date and time	02.4.2020, 3.00pm	20.4.2020, 1.00pm				
	Tender last selling date	06.4.2020, 5.00pm	19.4.2020, 5.00pm				
ift102	Tender closing date and time	07.4.2020, 1.00pm	20.4.2020, 1.00pm				
	Tender opening date and time	07.4.2020, 3.00pm	20.4.2020, 1.00pm				
Note: It is mentioned that if the tender closing and opening date is holiday in that case tenders will be closed and opened in next available working day at same place and same time.							

closed and opened in next available working day at same place and same time. All other things of published IFT (Reference No. ctgcol/cedp/idg/otm(w)/ift101, date: 18.3.2020 AND

ctgcol/cedp/idg/otm(w)/ift102, date: 23.3.2020) will remain unchanged.

#### Professor Mohammed Mujibul Hogue Chowdhury Principal, Chittagong College

## Two Abandoned Tangail Sub-Jails In Ruins **Plan for child dev centres in limbo**

#### MIRZA SHAKIL, Tangail

Lying unused for long, the buildings and lands of two former sub-jails at Delduar and Sakhipur upazilas in Tangail are decaying while a plan to set up child development centres by the Department of Social Service is yet to be implemented.

Construction of the sub-jails on about 2.5 acres of land each in the two upazila headquarters was completed in 1988, said sources at Tangail District Jail.

Those were used as upazila jails but their functioning stopped after three years when upazila court system was abolished in 1991.

The unused premises of the two subjails virtually turned into habitats of wild animals, locals said.

The set-ups were handed over to the Department of Social Services on May 11, 2003.

At one stage, some people illegally occupied lands of Sakhipur jail by constructing different structures, including shops and clubs. The upazila administration evicted the grabbers several months ago.

The Department of Social Services on March 13, 2007 wrote to the executive engineer of the Public Works Department (PWD) for estimates to renovate the structures at Sakhipur and Delduar for setting up a 50-seat child development centre and 50-bed Sarkari Shishu Paribar (government-run orphanage) respectively. But further steps could not be taken as the estimates were not given.

As per the decision taken on July 19, 2010, a proposal was sent to the Department of Social Services to set up training centres at the unused jails. But the matter did not proceed, said Md Shahidul Islam, deputy commissioner in Tangail.

The Department of Social Services finally took decision to turn the unused jails to child development centres, officials said.

There are total 400 seats at the child development centre at Tongi in Gazipur but over 900 children (remain in custody for involving with different crimes) are living there.

Pressure on the centre at Tongi will be reduced if child development centres are set up on the premises of former sub-jails in Delduar and Sakhipur, they added.

Md Shah Alam, deputy director of the Department of Social Services in Tangail, said initiative was taken to prepare estimates to repair the structures of the jails but engineers opined that the structures had already turned unusable.

Processes are underway to construct new buildings to start children development centres at the two spots, he added.



Present pictures of former sub-jails at Sakhipur and Delduar, *inset*, upazila headquarters in Tangail.

PHOTO: **MIRZA SHAKIL** 

## 1200 tea workers live miserable life for over 3 weeks

MINTU DESHWARA, back from Habiganj

More than 1000 tea workers' families have been living a miserable life since the authorities shut Rema tea garden in Habiganj's Chunarughat upazila following a clash with tea workers on March 5.

Around 1200 workers became unemployed after the tea garden remained closed. Of them, 395 are permanent tea workers.

On March 5, the tea workers met the manager of the garden and placed their longstanding 11-point demand including payment of arrears and festival allowances, said Tanu Munda, president of Bangladesh Tea Labour Union, Rema tea garden unit.

"At the time, the garden authorities bargained with us to meet the demands, triggering a clash," he said, adding that five people, including the manager, were injured during the clash.

After the incident, the authorities shut the tea garden and the workers became unemployed, said Tanu, adding that the dispensary inside the garden also remained closed since then.

Not only this, manager Dilip Sarkar also filed a case with Chunarughat Police Station against 25 tea workers leaders to harass them, he said.

They have been observing different demonstration programmes including protest rally and human chain on the garden premises demanding reopening of the tea garden since March 5, said Tanu. Many workers fell ill from starvation as they have been not getting their wages for the last 21 days, he said, adding that even the sick workers are not getting free medicine and treatment as the dispensary remained closed. The poor tea workers also stopped sending their children to school for want of money, said Dipali Baraik, another tea worker leader of the garden. Nirmal Chandra Deb, a local union parishad member, said the tea workers have been observing different demonstration progrmammes to meet their 11-point demand for the last six months. but the demands are yet to be realised. They also submitted memorandum to the Habiganj deputy commissioner through



#### Man killed for 'stealing mobile phone' Our Correspondent, Faridpur

A man was stabbed to death by some unruly youths allegedly on suspicion of stealing a mobile phone in Charbhadrasan upazila on Wednesday night.

The deceased, Sobuj Sheikh, 32, a mason, was son of Mangal Sheikh of Charsultanpur area in the upazila.

Locals, however, caught alleged killer Aklas Mollah, 23, of Char Salipur area, while he was fleeing the spot and handed him over to police.

Belal Sheikh, a member of Char Harirampur union parishad (UP), said Aklas and his two friends waylaid Sobuj and locked in an altercation, blaming the latter for stealing a mobile phone set from one of Aklas' relative's house three days ago.

At one stage of altercation over the issue,

## 3 sisters injured by 'extortionists' in Jhalakathi

They are daughters of a late language fighter in the town

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhalakathi

A group of youths allegedly led by an extortionist injured three daughters of late language fighter Layla Begum at Chandkathi Choumatha in Jhalakathi town on Wednesday night as the home residents declined to meet their demand.

The victims, Shahnaj Parvin, 50, and her sisters Shahin Parvin Nazma, 46, and Muslima Aktar, 35, were admitted to Jhalakathi Sadar Hospital.

"Mainul Hossain, joint secretary of Bangladesh Chhatra League's (BCL) Jhalakathi Sadar upazila unit, came to our house in the morning and demanded Tk one lakh as extortion. He threatened to grab our land in front of our house to build shops if we do not give the money," said Shahnaj Parvin, daughter of Layla Begum.

The language fighter died only two weeks ago.

"In the evening, he returned with a group and demanded the amount again. As we refused, they attacked us. They also snatched gold ornaments that we were wearing," she said.

Workers of Rema Tea Garden in Habiganj's Chunarughat upazila on Wednesday held a demonstration to meet their 11-point demand including payment of arrears and festival allowances. They became unemployed since the authorities shut the garden on March 5. PHOTO: STAR

Chunarughat upazila nirbahi officer in this regard, said Nirmal.

Tea labour union's leaders have recently arranged a meeting with the owner and officials of the garden to resolve the problem but it remained unsolved, said Nipen Paul, central joint secretary of Bangladesh Tea Labour Union.

Tea worker leader Dipali Baraik said "Some social organisations came to give us face masks, but I told them we need food not mask."

Tea worker Arun Das Painka said each permanent worker will get Tk 5100 arrears but

they are yet to get the payment.

This correspondent could not reach manager of the tea garden Dilip Sarkar for his comments despite repeated attempts.

Monjur Rahman, owner of the tea garden, said as the tea workers went on work abstention, they are not joining work. If the workers come to join work, the garden will remain open.

Habiganj Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Kamrul Hasan said they are trying their best to resolve the matter. They have already allocated three tonnes of rice for the tea workers.

the trio drag Sobuj to a nearby field and stabbed him indiscriminately with a knife.

Hearing Sobuj's cry for help, villagers rushed to the spot, and took him to a hospital where the doctors declared him dead.

They also caught Aklas along with the murder weapon and handed him over to police.

Officer in Charge (OC) of Charbhadrasan Police Station Abdul Gaffar said they were trying to arrest the two associates of Aklas. The three injured are out of danger, said Abul Hasan, resident medical officer of Jhalakathi Sadar Hospital.

Rupa Akter, granddaughter of Layla Bagum, said, "A written complaint was filed with Jhalakathi Sadar Police Station on Wednesday night for filing a case against Mainul and his gang. But police didn't take any action."

Contacted, Mainul said, "The Jhalakathi municipality set a basin in front of the house adjacent to Choumatha kitchen market for helping cleanliness of the market people. But the family vandalized the basin and we protested it. We didn't enter the house. The allegations against us are false."

Khalilur Rahman, officer in charge of Jhalakathi Sadar Police Station, said, "We got a written complaint on Wednesday night but I was too busy to take immediate action. I have sent a police officer to the spot this (Thursday) afternoon for investigation."

The spot is only a kilometre away from the police station.

#### Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Department of Public Health Engineering Office of the Executive Engineer, Research and Development Division DPHE Bhaban, 14, Shahid Captain Monsur Ali Sarani, Kakrail, Dhaka-1000



Memo No. 46.03.2600.083.07.008.19-227

#### Date: 25/03/2020

## e-Tender Notice

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<u>http://www.eprocure.gov.bd</u>) for the following package:

Tender ID No.	Package No.	Description	Online publication date and time	Online closing date and time
449151	SWTSP-RBF-11	Repair and Renovation of Research and Development Division as Project Directors Office under the Project Safe Water Supply through Treatment of Surface Water in Rangamati, Bagerhat and Faridpur District.	25-Mar-2020 22:00	12-Apr-2020 15:00

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<u>http://www.eprocure.gov.bd</u>) is required. The fees for last selling/downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered banks branches up to date & time. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

A.H.M. Khalequr Rahman
Executive Engineer (c.c.)
Phone: 02-9330061



In an attempt to prevent the spread of novel coronavirus in the locality, residents of bordering Bishnupur village in Brahmanbaria's Bijoynagar upazila set up this bamboo barricade on the entry point of the village. Only the villagers, people from surrounding areas and health workers will be permitted to cross the barricade on emergency circumstances. The photo was taken on Wednesday.

GD-621

### INTERNATIONAL

### Hospitals in London face 'tsunami' of patients

6 | The Daily Star

#### AFP, London

Hospitals in the British capital are being overwhelmed by Covid-19 patients, the head of an organisation representing bosses in the state-run National Health Service said yesterday.

The chief executive of NHS Providers, Chris Hopson, told BBC radio that London hospitals had seen an "explosion of demand... in seriously ill patients", likening it to a "continuous tsunami", with numbers predicted to surge in the next fortnight.

"They talk about wave, after wave after wave," he said. "The word that's often used to me is a sort of continuous tsunami."

According to the latest figures, 463 people have died from the virus and more than 9,500 people have been infected. London makes up a third of the UK total.

The government is opening a temporary 4,000-bed hospital at an exhibition centre in London next week to treat patients with the virus.

British media reported 10 similar facilities could be set up around the country.

Hopson said the problem of dealing with the increased number of patients was exacerbated by the "unprecedented absence rate" of medical staff.

"We're now seeing 30, 40 and even some places 50 percent sickness rates, he said, adding that there was also a "real problem" with ventilator capacity in hospitals.

Ĥis comments came as the government announced it had ordered 10,000 emergency ventilators to help tackle the pandemic from billionaire entrepreneur James Dyson.

In an email to staff, the inventor said his company designed the "CoVent" at the request of Prime Minister Boris Johnson, and promised to donate 5,000 to the international relief effort.

# 'No one will go hungry'

India outlines \$23b economic stimulus to help poor as cases tick up despite immense lockdown

#### per month for next three months to help them run their households.

The finance minister also announced increase in the daily wage for rural workers to Rs 202 a day from Rs 182, a move which is aimed at benefitting five crore families.

The government outlined plans for medical insurance cover of 5 million rupees (\$66,000) for every frontline health worker, from doctors, nurses and paramedics to those involved in sanitary services.

India's public health network, notoriously starved of resources, suffers an acute shortage of staff, so that sick people may often receive only hurried medical checks.

Among other financial relief, the government plans to release funds for the Employees' Provident Fund in some small firms in a measure aimed at covering 48 million workers.

The economic stimulus plan comes as a report said that the coronavirus impact could hit hard the tourism sector in India and render 3.8 crore people jobless, reports our New Delhi correspondent.

The Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism And Hospitality (FAITH) also said there should be a support fund for twelve months to support basic salaries with "direct transfer" to the affected tourism employees.

It is believed that around 70 per cent out of a total 5.5 crore workforce could get unemployed.

AGENCIES India yesterday announced a 1.7-trillion-rupee (\$22.6-billion) economic stimulus plan providing direct cash transfers and food security measures to give relief to millions of poor people hit by a nationwide lockdown over a coronavirus pandemic. People queued in some cities for essential items, with trucks stranded at state borders and public transport suspended two days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi ordered the 21-day lockdown to protect a population of 1.3 billion.

The government is working for those who are directly affected like migrants, labours, women etc. We are now announcing a package for poor and those who need immediate help. No one will go hungry," Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman told a news briefing.

Police have enforced the lockdown strictly, even though Modi said essential services would be maintained. India has recorded 649 virus infections

Relief to poor includes free distribution of grains, cash handovers

Announces \$66,000 insurance for every frontline health workers

**38** million people risks losing job



The government aims to distribute 5 kilograms of staple foodgrains wheat or rice for each person free of cost, with a kilogram of pulses for every low-income family, helping to feed about 800 million poor people over the next three months.

It also aims to hand out free cooking gas cylinders to 83 million poor families, in addition to direct cash transfers to some 200 million women and the elderly, over a similar period.

Under the scheme, 30 million poor senior citizens, poor widows and poor disabled will get an ex-gratia of Rs 1,000. Some 20 crore women would get Rs 500



### LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

**DEATH TOLL CROSSES 21,000** 

At least 21,867 deaths have been recorded since the virus first emerged in December, according to an AFP tally compiled at 1200 GMT Thursday based on official sources. More than 481,230 declared cases have been registered in 182 countries and territories. The countries with the most deaths are Italy with 7,503 out of 74,386 declared infections, Spain with 4,088 deaths out of 56,188 cases, mainland China with 3,281 deaths out of 81,218 cases, Iran with 2,234 deaths out of 29,406 cases, and France with 1,331 fatalities out of 25,233 cases. Since 1900 GMT Wednesday, the West Bank and Croatia announced their first deaths.

WHO SEES 'ENCOURAGING SIGNS' **IN EUROPE** 

At least 258,068 of those have been in Europe, the worst-hit continent. The World Health Organization's European office says it sees "encouraging signs" on the continent but cautions it is too soon to say whether the worst had passed.

#### LOOMING GLOBAL RECESSIONS

International ratings agency S&P Global warns the Covid-19 pandemic will push Britain and the euro area into recession this year, with their economies expected to shrink by as much as two percent. Austria's economy is predicted to shrink at least 2.5 percent in 2020. Singapore's economy shrinks 2.2 percent year-on-year in January-March, its biggest contraction since 2008 during the first quarter.

### **FRANCE CALLS ON ITS ARMY** The French military joins the virus fight

as President Emmanuel Macron launches "Operation Resilience", focused on helping people and public services in France and its overseas territories.

### CHINA CUTS INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS

China is set to drastically cut its international flight routes in a bid to blunt the number of imported cases of the new coronavirus, the civil aviation authority said. Flights out of China will be capped at just one route a week to each country, with international airlines also permitted only one route. China has not reported any new domestic infections from the deadly virus for two consecutive days, but imported cases have now surpassed 500.

#### **POPE FRANCIS TESTS NEGATIVE**

Pope Francis was reported to have tested negative for the novel coronavirus after a person in his residence was said to have contacted Covid-19. Several Italian newspapers with reputable sources in the Vatican said the Italian clergyman who got sick had lived for years in the pope's Saint Martha's residence. SOURCE: AFP

#### 9 doctors die from virus in Philippines

#### AFP, Manila

Nine doctors have died in the Philippines



Coronavirus could New Zealand mosque shooter

Customers stand on marked floor outside a grocery store to maintain recommended social distancing during a nationwide lockdown as a preventive measure against the Covid-19 coronavirus in Islamabad, Pakistan, yesterday.

and 13 deaths.

#### **Great Barrier Reef suffers** mass coral bleaching event

Australia's Great Barrier Reef has suffered "very widespread" damage after rising sea temperatures caused the third mass coral bleaching events in five years, authorities said yesterday. The planet's largest coral reef system is worth an estimated \$4 billion a year in tourism revenue for the Australian economy, but is at risk of losing its coveted world heritage status because warmer oceans brought about by climate change have damaged its health. Its northern reaches suffered an unprecedented two successive years of severe bleaching in 2016 and 2017, prompting the government agency overseeing the reef to downgrade its long-term outlook to "very poor".

#### Warring sides in Yemen back coronavirus truce

All sides in Yemen's long conflict yesterday offered support for the United Nations' call for a ceasefire to protect civilians from the coronavirus pandemic. The move came on the fifth anniversary of regional power Saudi Arabia's intervention in Yemen's civil war, at the helm of a military coalition supporting the internationally recognised government against the Iran-backed Huthi rebels. Yemen's broken healthcare system has not so far recorded a case of coronavirus but aid groups have warned that when it does hit, the impact will be catastrophic in a country already regarded as facing the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

#### **Rockets hit Iraq's Green** Zone

Two rockets slammed into the Iraqi capital's high-security Green Zone early yesterday, hours before US-led forces were set to pull out of a second base in the country. Some 7,500 troops are in Iraq as part of the US-led coalition helping local troops fight jihadist remnants, but those numbers are being significantly drawn down this month. The alliance is temporarily bringing some trainers home as a precautionary measure against the coronavirus pandemic and is also leaving other Iraqi bases altogether. Those bases and foreign embassies, particularly the American mission, have been targeted in more than two dozen rocket strikes since late October. The attacks, which the US has blamed on an Iran-backed armed group, have prompted fears of a proxy war on Iraqi soil. Before dawn yesterday, two rockets punched into an empty square near an Iraqi security headquarters in the Green Zone, where government buildings and foreign embassies are based, the Iraqi security forces said in a statement. SOURCE: AFP

#### Says top US scientist AFP, Washington

There is a strong chance the new coronavirus could return in seasonal cycles, a senior US scientist said Wednesday, underscoring the urgent need to find a vaccine and effective treatments

become seasonal

Anthony Fauci, who leads research into infectious diseases at the National Institutes of Health, told a briefing the virus was beginning to take root in the southern hemisphere, where winter is on its way.

"What we're starting to see now... in southern Africa and in the southern hemisphere countries, is that we're having cases that are appearing as they go into their winter season," he said.

"And if, in fact, they have a substantial outbreak, it will be inevitable that we need to be prepared that we'll get a cycle around the second time.

"It totally emphasizes the need to do what we're doing in developing a vaccine, testing it quickly and trying to get it ready so that we'll have a vaccine available for that next cycle.'

There are currently two vaccines that have entered human trials -- one in the US and one in China -- and they could be a year to a year-and-a-half away from deployment.

Treatments are also being investigated -- some new drugs and others that have been repurposed, including the antimalarials chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine.

people in the island of 21 million people.

PM, Muslim community express relief at surprise decision AFP, Wellington

changes plea to guilty

An Australian far-right extremist charged with murdering 51 Muslim worshippers in last year's mass shooting at two New Zealand mosques unexpectedly flipped his plea to guilty yesterday.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern the Muslim community and expressed relief at the surprise decision, which removes the need for a lengthy trial that authorities feared would be used to spout neo-Nazi propaganda.

Self-avowed white supremacist Brenton Tarrant, 29, had previously denied 51 charges of murder, 40 of attempted murder and one of terrorism but reversed his plea in a hurriedly arranged court hearing.

"Yes, guilty," Tarrant told Christchurch High Court via videolink from Auckland Prison as the charges were read out to him

Tarrant, wearing a grey top, stared intently at the camera while making his confession.

Neither the former gym instructor from the

PHOTO: AFP

Australian country town of Grafton nor his lawyers offered any explanation for the change, which makes him New Zealand's first-ever convicted terrorist.

PHOTO: AFP

The South Pacific nation does not have the death penalty but Tarrant faces the prospect of spending

the rest of his life behind bars. The terror and murder charges all carry life sentences, setting a minimum non-parole period of 17 years but giving the judge power to imprison without the possibility of release.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said the admission of guilt would provide some relief to the many people whose lives were shattered in the attack.

"These guilty pleas and conviction bring accountability for what

happened and also save the families who lost loved ones, those who were injured, and other witnesses,

Asked how she reacted upon hearing the news, Ardern replied: "I let out a huge sigh of

**SLAUGHTERING OF TAMIL CIVILIANS** 

Sri Lanka pardons,

coronavirus, the country's top medical association said yesterday, as hospitals were overwhelmed and medics complained about a lack of protection on the front lines. The announcement of the doctors' deaths heightened fears that the scale of the health crisis in the Philippines is much worse than is being officially reported, with the confirmed

## 5,00,000 tests

#### AFP, Berlin

Germany has boosted its coronavirus test rate to 500,000 a week, a virologist said yesterday, adding that early detection has been key in keeping the country's death rate relatively low. "The reason why Germany has so few deaths compared to the number of infected people can be explained by the fact that we carry out an extremely large number of laboratory diagnostic tests," said Christian Drosten, who heads the Institute of Virology at Berlin's Charite University Hospital.

#### Malawi vice president sues president

A court convicted him of murdering eight members of the

They were killed as they returned to their bombed homes to salvage what was left of their belongings, and their bodies were found buried in a mass grave near an

The Supreme Court unanimously rejected the officer's

But President Gotabaya Rajapaksa had now "instructed the Ministry of Justice to release Sgt Ratnayake from

November promising to free military personnel jailed for a string of offences during the previous administration.

He and his brother Mahinda, now serving as prime minister, are adored by the island's Sinhala majority for spearheading the defeat of separatist Tamil militants to end the country's 37-year ethnic war in 2009.

virus death toll at just 38. Germany to carry out

Malawian Vice President Saulos Chilima has filed a lawsuit against President Peter Mutharika after he refused to fire the electoral commissioners who oversaw last year's failed election, his lawyer said yesterday.

A battle has been raging for months between the opposition and head of state over the May 21 vote, which was tainted by irregularities. Mutharika has refused to promulgate laws to hold the new ballot and to fire members of the Malawi Election Commission (MEC), which was requested by the constitutional court in its historic judgment.

AFP, Colombo Sri Lanka's president yesterday pardoned and released an army officer on death row for slitting the throats of Tamil civilians, including four children, during the island's bloody civil war. Sunil Ratnayake was to be hanged for the December

2000 massacre in a case held up by previous Sri Lankan governments as an example of rare accountability over abuses committed during the conflict.

Tamil minority, including a five-year-old and three teenagers.

army camp on the Jaffna peninsula.

appeal and upheld the death penalty last year.

prison", a spokeswoman for his office said.

Rajapaksa, a retired army officer, came to power in



Sri Lanka's Special Task Force police commando officers distribute food to homeless people

20 as part of efforts to reduce the spread of the coronavirus which has infected at least 102

during a nationwide curfew, in Colombo, yesterday. The country is under a lockdown since March

## the ordeal of a trial," she said. relief".

releases soldier AFP, Blantyre

#### DHAKA FRIDAY MARCH 27, 2020, CHAITRA 13, 1426 BS

#### ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT





Elephant in the Room.

# **KAMRUZZAMAN SHADHIN** The tale of a socio-politically conscious artist



The Ascend.

#### ZAHANGIR ALOM

Celebrated visual artist Kamruzzaman Shadhin works on diverse media, including installation, video, sculpture and performance art. Born in Thakurgaon, his artistic research is predominantly based on socio-political, environmental issues and their overlapping affiliations. His art projects are often created through public participation and are exhibited in public spaces. He is the founder of Gidree Bawlee, a non-profit art organisation working for creating scopes for cultural and artistic exchange between artists and the rural and indigenous communities through collaborative approaches. He is also a part of of Chhobir Haat, an alternative open space for art and artists, which played an important role in the public art movement in Dhaka.

Shadhin's widely acclaimed work titled Haven is elsewhere (2017-2018, commissioned by Samdani Art Foundation) was showcased at the 4th Dhaka Art Summit, and in Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow. The work embodies the common quest of the most migrants and refugees; the search for a 'Safe Haven.' In his work, internally migrated people in Thakurgaon, created quilt from the used clothes of displaced people from Southern Bangladesh.



"I am interested in the various layers and dimensions of migration and how it is related to history and current ways of the world," said Kamruzzaman Shadhin. "Currently, I am developing a piece that explores the relationship of jute cultivation and migration in the colonial times of Bengal. Through my organisation Gidree Bawlee, I am working in my village to trigger an artistic movement through collaborative community art projects.

Many of these clothes and narratives of displaced people were collected over a period of time by the artist from people, who were illegally trafficked as forced

labourers into Thailand and Malaysia, while some of these were abandoned by the Rohingya refugees. These were then sewn together by the internal migrant community in Thakurgaon and embellished with the traditional Bengali Kantha embroidery techniques through a therapeutic ritual.

During the 2018 Dhaka Art Summit, these monumental quilts formed a projection surface for video documentation that attempted to capture the stories of displacement through these once-used clothes. These quests for freedom often continue as the new migrants and refugees become targets for illegal trade and trafficking, continuing a cycle where the safe haven shifts its axis further and further out of their reach.

Shadhin completed his BFA and MFA from the Faculty of Fine Art, University of Dhaka. His work maintains a satirical edge, dealing directly with the politics of environmental degradation and destruction, and its effects on communities across Bangladesh. Migration, social injustice and local history are recurring themes in his works. The traditional crafts of the region and their underlying relationship with the history of this land has become a major part of his artistic research and journey for several years.

His first solo exhibition 'Rooted in

Soil', was held at the Alliance Francaise de Dhaka, Bangladesh in 2016. He also participated in the prestigious exhibition 'Fabricated Fractures', organised by Samdani Art Foundation at Concrete, Alserker Avenue, Dubai in 2019.

Shadhin also participated in the first edition of Majhi International Art Residency Programme, presented by Durjoy Bangladesh Foundation in Venice, Italy. The residency took place at Combo, the former Convento dei Crociferi, where he worked and exhibited in 2019.

"I believe all artists - wherever they come from - belong to a single community. Together we think and create works," said the artist. "I don't know whether the output is good or not, but, for sure, we make a deep connection among us. This experience could lead us to developing new projects and ideas together."

Shadhin won the Grand Prize at the 17th Asian Art Biennale Bangladesh for an innovative installation titled Greed, showcasing the adverse impact of nature on the life of the Santal community. Previously, he won an Honourable Mention Award at the 16th Asian Art Biennale Bangladesh, for a video installation featuring the miserable life of the Palestinian people. He also bagged another Honourable Mention Award at the 18th Asian Art Biennale Bangladesh.

## The 'Rise' of Nishat Anjum

# Looking back at Aranyak Natyadal's

Even though a lot of talented female artistes have graced our

**ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK** 

## **glorious** journey

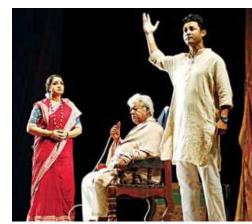


#### Bhongobongo

#### SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Theatre was one of the most powerful forms of expression in post-liberation Bangladesh. Popular theatre group Aranyak Natyadal has been actively staging plays for 48 years. Right after Bangladesh's liberation, Ekushey Padak-winning thespian Mamunur Rashid, along with noted theatre artistes Aly Zaker, Shubhash Dutta, Dr Enamul Haque and Nazmul Hossain, started the group on February 1, 1972. Mamunur Rashid spearheads the troupe.

Besides staging shows in the country, Aranyak Natyadal has staged many plays overseas as well. Their first show, Kobor, written by martyr Munir Chowdhury, was featured on February 20 in the year



#### **Mayur Singhasan**

of their establishment. It was directed by Manunur Rashid. Aly Zaker, Dr Enamul Haque, Nazmul Hossain, Babul Chowdhury, Mujib Haque and others acted in this play. Later, they brought Poshchimer Shiriti to the stage, under the direction of Mamunur Rashid, who wrote the play during the Liberation War. It was supposed to be staged in Kolkata, under Mustafa Monwar's direction. However, that did not

happen Aranyak Natyadal presented some of their finest plays on the stage of Mahila Samity. During the late 1970s, the group staged Gondhorbonogori. In the 1980s, their play, Kodom Ali, based on May Day, received a splendid response. It was first staged in the premises of Bangla Academy on May 1, 1981. Later,



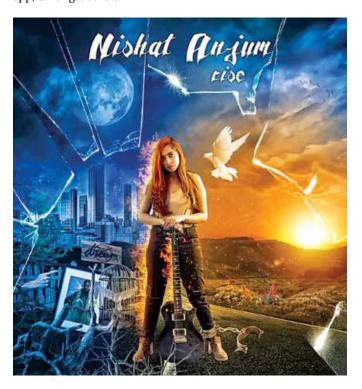
Rarang

PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

the play was translated into German. Another play, Iblish, also garnered immense popularity. Aranyak Natyadal carries the mission that plays are not only meant for entertainment; they are a tool for people to raise their voices. Some other remarkable plays produced by the group include Rarang, Khudiramer Deshe, Shinghashon Dukkho, Shekol, Joyjoyonti, Mayur Singhasan, Shongkranti, Kodom Ali, Bhongobongo and Kohe Facebook, among others. They have done both stage and street plays.

Azizul Hakim, Salahuddin Lavlu, Brindaban Das, Azad Abul Kalam, Tamalika Karmakar, alongside many other noted actors, have performed with the troupe for a long time. Aranyak Natyadal will celebrate their 50th anniversary in 2022.

music industry, Nishat Anjum distinguishes herself as one of the few to be able to play the insane riffs by Lamb of God or System of a Down. The talented artiste is on a journey that fulfills her dream of being a full-time musician, and her debut album, Rise, is a step towards the dream. "Rise is basically an experimental album, comprised of punk rock, pop and metal songs," says the artiste, who has written, composed songs and played in all the tracks. The album is available in physical form as well as online platforms such as Spotify, Google Play Music, GP Music, Gaan app, amongst others.





## Prachyanat postpones 'Lal Jatra'

The city dwellers are well versed with the scene of holding the fringe of a long red saree, bestowing rose petals and singing in the tune of DL Roy's iconic patriotic song, Dhono Dhanyo Pushpo Bhora as a part of Lal Jatra, by Prachyanat School of Acting and Design.

#### PRIYANKA CHOWDHURY

It is a performance that begins from the Swaparjita Swadhinata Chattar and ends at the Smrity Chirantan in Fuller Road. Owing to concerns over the coronavirus pandemic, Lal Jatra has been ostponed until further notice.

The annual performance, a orainchild of Rahul Ananda,

took a different shape this year. Ananda and other members of the group showed solidarity with everyone on social media, on staying at home. Ananda with his family performed a symbolic walk of the original Lal Jatra and others uploaded a candle-lit rendition of Dhono Dhanyo Pushpo Bhora, along with photographs and videos of

previous performances. For a decade, the theatre group has been remembering martyrs through Lal Jatra, where artistes of Prachyanat presented songs and street plays, among other things. Through their performance, they condemn the atrocities committed by the Pakistani occupation forces in the first hours of March 26, 1971.

#### **EDITORIAL**



DHAKA FRIDAY MARCH 27, 2020, CHAITRA 13, 1426 BS

## Urgent govt assistance essential for the economy

## Urban poor in informal sector also needs help

ITH the coronavirus forcing more shutdowns across the country as well as the world, businesses and the economy, which have already been negatively affected, are bound to be hampered further. We have seen governments in countries around the world, such as the United States and others rallying behind their businesses and coming up with largescale relief packages to support their economies. And that is something that our government must also do.

During her address to the nation on March 25, the prime minister announced a stimulus package of Tk 5,000 crore for the export-oriented industries to fight the adverse impact of coronavirus on the country's economy. We welcome the timely action and hope that it will provide some respite to our businesses and help them pay the wages of their workers on time. The Bangladesh Bank will also ease some restrictions on companies, such as refraining from declaring any customer a loan defaulter till June. The timeframe for realising export earnings has been increased to six months from two months, and the timeframe for meeting import expenses has been increased to six months from four months. Certain assistance from paying utility service related bills will also provide businesses with some breathing space.

The prime minister also announced that low-income people would be provided assistance under the "Return-to-Home" programme and VGD, VGF and rice for Tk 10 per kg programmes would be continued with free medicine and treatment. All of this will certainly help the people suffering heavily during this moment of crisis.

However, we must emphasise the need to ensure that aid is provided to the right people at the right time. Previously, we have seen instances of government aid going to the wrong hands, and we hope no one will try to take advantage of the proposed government schemes for their own benefit, at the expense of ordinary people, who are currently in desperate need of assistance. Should there be a need for further relief packages, we hope the government will not hesitate to provide them, especially to the poorer sections of society and people working in the informal sector such as day labourers and rickshaw pullers, who are surely the most vulnerable under the prevailing circumstances.

# Khaleda Zia's release from prison

A welcome move by the government

E welcome the government's decision to release Khaleda Zia from prison on humanitarian grounds. The government through an executive order released her for six months on conditions that she will stay at her home in the capital and not leave the country. The 74-year-old BNP chief landed in jail on February 8, 2018, after she was sentenced to five years in prison in the Zia Orphanage Trust corruption case. Later, the High Court raised her punishment to 10 years, of which she has served 25 months. Although her health conditions had deteriorated in prison, according to her family members, her party leaders could not get her released through legal fights. So, this is a positive development of the situation especially during the crisis that we are undergoing. However, we observed with frustration that hundreds of BNP leaders and activists crowded the entrance of the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University to welcome her-they had been there for a long time and were chanting slogans, disregarding the health directives given by the government. Party activists also crowded her residence to meet with her, oblivious of the risk of contracting and spreading the deadly coronavirus. We think the BNP leaders and activists should have restrained themselves from taking part in such risky activities. Having said so, we hope that there will be no barrier now to get her treated for her ailments according to her family's plans. We particularly commend the government for taking such a decision because the country has been passing through a big crisis due to the Covid-19 outbreak. We hope Khaleda Zia's release would create a positive atmosphere in the country and in our political arena during this gloomy time. We also hope that both the Awami League and the BNP will work together to overcome this national crisis.

# Navigating Covid-19 impacts on Bangladesh's external sector



economy of Bangladesh are diverse: export outflows are getting disrupted; import inflows are facing delays; outmigration has ground to a halt; tourist arrivals are virtually non-existent; business contacts are getting delinked; investment flows are facing growing uncertainties. The early signs of the adverse effects of the Covid-19-induced external developments are already being seen in the Bangladesh economy, at the levels of financial transactions and the real economy, and on business, commerce and consumers at the levels of enterprises, entrepreneurs and workers.

What is deeply worrying is that the virus-inflicted injuries are hurting the economy at a time when the external sector of Bangladesh is under stress on several fronts. Growth of export earnings over the first eight months of FY 2020 has been negative (-4.8 percent growth over the corresponding period of FY 2019). Bangladesh's flagship export sector, the RMG, posted negative growth over the first eight months of FY 2020 (-5.5 percent) compared to the corresponding period of the previous year. Indeed, barring jute and jute goods, all key items of export have experienced negative growth in the first eight months of FY 2020. It is already evident that the ambitious export growth target of 12 percent for FY 2020 will not be achieved, and the actual export earnings this fiscal year will possibly be less than that of FY 2019 (USD 40.5 billion). Growth in import payments has also been in the negative terrain (-2.2 percent growth in the first seven months of FY 2020). Indeed, the performance of the import sector is indicative of an economy experiencing demand depression, with likely adverse impacts on growth performance in FY 2020. Important import sub-components such as intermediate inputs (-2.1 percent) and capital goods (-8.3 percent) including capital machineries (-22.0 percent) have posted negative growth in terms of import payments in the first half of FY 2020, compared to the corresponding period of FY 2019. A welcome relief is that the remittance sector has registered robust growth (+21.5 percent) in the first eight months of FY 2020. However, growth in the number of workers going abroad has slowed down perceptibly (+4.2 percent

growth in the first eight months). The higher remittance flow has helped to reduce the deficit in the current account balance: the figure at the end of December 2019 was (-) USD 1.4 billion, an improvement over the matched figure of a year back which was (-) USD 3.4 billion. Over the first six months of FY 2020, no discernible change, however, was visible with respect to the flow of foreign direct investment (FDI) to Bangladesh: the net FDI figure was (+) USD 1.36 billion in FY 2020 compared to (+) USD 1.32 billion in FY 2019, a growth of a mere 2.6 percent. The cumulative effect of the movement of various components of the balance of payments (BoP) was that the overall BoP position remained rather weak on the eve of Covid-19: (+) USD 27.0 million in December 2019 as against

Bangladesh's external sector performance over the coming months of FY 2020, and most likely beyond even. Indeed, some of the repercussions are already becoming increasingly visible. On the export side, Bangladesh's major export destinations are some of the countries hardest hit by Covid-19: USA (accounting for 16.9 percent of Bangladesh's total exports), Germany (15.2 percent), UK (10.2 percent), Spain (6.3 percent). This observation holds true for other export items as well: for raw leather, Hong King and China together account for more than half of the export; for leather goods, USA (25.8 percent) and Japan (24.4 percent) are major markets; for jute and jute goods, Turkey is a key market (22.7 percent of export of the item); for exports of fish, China (16.3 percent) and UK (15.3 percent) are the most important destinations.

Already exporters are experiencing delays in the shipment of goods. RMG entrepreneurs are experiencing deferment of orders and delays in delivery as well as disruption in imports of machineries and equipment, primary and secondary inputs and accessories. Major brands are sending cautionary signals regarding possible cancellation of orders in view of the protracted shutdown of borders in oil-dependent developing countries could expect their oil and gas revenues to be slashed by up to 85 percent.

There is widespread apprehension that the havoc caused by Covid-19 on the global economy could lead to a global recession of the type seen in 2007-2008 in the aftermath of the economic and financial crises. The stock markets and futures markets, which have seen a significant erosion of market values in the recent past, transmit an ominous sign as regards such a possibility. The coronavirus has destroyed USD 23 trillion in global market value since mid-February, according to the Economist. As a matter of fact, the IMF, UNCTAD and the OECD are all projecting significant economic losses in 2020, the decline being to the tune of about 1.6 percent, 1.7 percent and 2.4 percent of global GDP, respectively. The ILO has warned that the pandemic may trigger a global economic crisis which could destroy up to 25 million jobs worldwide if governments fail to take coordinated efforts. As a consequence, there are likely to be demand-side repercussions for Bangladesh's key export markets.

In view of the emergent and anticipated near-term scenario, Bangladesh's external sector will need The interest rate on lendings from the USD-3.5-billion Export Development Fund may be revisited and lowered. Some quantitative easing may be pursued to inject additional money into the system to enable banks to meet the demand for credit at a time of liquidity crunch in the banking system. The policy rates in place and statutory reserves should be reviewed on a regular basis over the coming months.

Duties at the import stage will need to be monitored on a continuing basis so that availability of import items in the domestic market can be ensured at affordable prices, particularly in case of essential items. The NBR, in the meantime, has already taken the right decision to waive import duty, regulatory duty, supplementary duty, VAT, advanced VAT and advanced income tax on 12 medical items under 17 HS codes; this is to remain in force till June 30, 2020. If the situation demands, other essential items and medical equipment and ingredients should be added to this list.

A targeted rationing system may be introduced in the urban areas, particularly for workers and low-income people. The significant food stock at the disposal of the government (of about 1.7 million tons at present), as also the stock



The RMG sector is experiencing deferment of orders and delays in delivery as well as disruption in imports of machineries and equipment thanks to the disruptive influences of the coronavirus.

the EU and North America and the likely slowdown of the economies of importing countries. BGMEA has come up with evidence of this happening already.

While shipment from China is expected to pick up in the coming weeks, exporters and producers whose inventory drawdowns have already to be supported through appropriate policies, targeted measures and incentives and, if the situation demands, by putting in place a comprehensive stimulus package.

While fiscal deficit could exceed 5.5 percent of the GDP in the current FY 2020, this should not deter the policymakers from pursuing an expansionary macroeconomic stance, underpinned by higher public expenditure, quantitative easing, fiscal incentives and sector-specific targeted support measures. The Bangladesh Bank has already asked the commercial banks not to change the classification of loans between January and June 30, 2020 even if a business fails to repay its loan. In another positive move, the central bank has started to buy treasury bills and bonds to add to the liquidity in the banking system. In addition to this, the central bank can ask the dealing banks to reduce L/C margins and extend settlement of L/Cs from three months to six months. The government could also take an initiative to create a fund for onlending to exporters by the commercial banks at a reduced interest rate, preferably at 5 percent. Export-oriented micro and SME enterprises affected by Covid-19 should get priority in accessing this fund.

maintained by the private traders, should provide comfort to the policymakers in this regard. The government could also think of introducing the open market sale (OMS) programme, perhaps at a further reduced price, to cater to the needs of the low-income people.

A database of visiting migrant workers, who are not being able to join their workplaces, should be created. These people will need support from the government to tide over these uncertain times The upshot of the above discussion is that navigating the Covid-19impacted evolving scenario will call for a dynamic and prudent macroeconomic management on the part of Bangladesh's policymakers. And the government should be ahead of the curve in dealing with the health issues, meaning it will have to be proactive rather than reactive. While Bangladesh can rightly claim success in view of the sustained economic growth of the past decade, the coming days will test whether the economy has also the capacity to absorb shocks without undermining macroeconomic stability and by sustaining the growth momentum.

(-) USD 513.0 million a year earlier. If the identified transmission channels are examined in conjunction with Bangladesh's overseas partner countries, it will become quite evident that Covid-19 will have important implications for reached the limits are facing difficulties in keeping their production process going. Diversifying import sources, away from China, can only be a medium-term solution which, however, has tangible cost implications. China's increasing dominance as an import source of Bangladesh originated in the first place from the competitive price it is able to offer to Bangladeshi importers and enterprises.

Also, it can be noted that some of the countries most affected by the coronavirus are those where many Bangladeshi citizens live and work. The pandemic is likely to have a dampening impact on the robust remittance flows of the past several months. The already lower number of workers going abroad in recent times could fall further. The Middle East, which accounts for about two-thirds of the remittance flows, is having to deal with the dual challenges of the pandemic and the falling oil prices. Projections are that

PROJECT SYNDICATE

Toward a 2021 Tokyo Olympics

Professor Mustafizur Rahman is Distinguished Fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD).



## A unique phase of the pandemic

Over the last couple of days, I have noticed that the Letters to the Editor section of this daily was mostly about the coronavirus and how the pandemic is taking a toll on us and what steps need to be taken. While it is surely one of the worst outbreaks in the history of mankind, claiming thousands of lives worldwide already, ironically the contagion seemed to have a rather positive impact on certain things.

For example, the tension in Syria and Libya has eased down for now. Saudis are no longer bombing Yemenis. Iran has temporarily freed thousands of political prisoners. The US has decided to withdraw its troops from Iraq and Afghanistan. Israel has stopped bulldozing Palestine. Terrorists don't seem to be as frightening. Donald Trump does not talk about "walls" or "tariffs". Narendra Modi is no longer busy sharpening his CAA rhetoric. Religious clerics don't claim that Covid-19 is God's punishment for the evil-doers only.

Mankind, for some odd reason, seems to be united like never before as they join hands to fight their common enemy.

Mohammad Kabir, Dhaka



#### Bill Emmoti

telling the Diet (parliament) this week that the Tokyo Summer Olympic Games may need to be rescheduled, and ultimately reaching an agreement with the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to postpone the event until 2021. (The IOC had given itself four weeks to decide what to do.)

Until recently, Abe's reluctance to delay the Games was understandable. The 2020 Olympics and Paralympics have long been billed as a chance for Japan to demonstrate to the world how well it has recovered from the devastating earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear meltdown of 2011, and to showcase its diversity and openness to often-sceptical outsiders. To postpone or cancel the Games will be a big—and very costly disappointment.

But that previous calculus was overturned. The problem was not a lack of preparedness on Japan's part. After closing all schools on March 2, the government is already discussing plans to reopen them for the new academic year starting in April; universities are making similar plans. While there is a heated debate over the wisdom of reopening these facilities, the fact is that the country had only 1,140 confirmed Covid-19 cases and just 42 deaths from the disease as of March 24. Compared to other large, densely populated countries, Japan has been pretty successful in containing the outbreak.

The issue, rather, was that the rest of the world would not have been able to attend, whether as competitors or as spectators. With less than four months to go before the planned opening ceremony on July 24, the pandemic disrupted training and final preparations, as well as the qualification rounds for national teams. Moreover, there was almost no chance that among the thousands of athletes who would have come to Japan to compete, and their support teams, none would be carrying the virus. Add in the visiting spectators and you would have had a recipe for another outbreak. For all these reasons, the 2020 Olympics were a lost cause. Politically, when something becomes inevitable, accepting it sooner rather than later makes it much easier to command the narrative, and to make it appear as though the decision was not only your idea, but also a good thing in itself. And, in Japan's case, rescheduling the Olympics really is a good thing considering the circumstances. The alternative would have been either to host a stunted, inadequate, poorly attended Games amid a barrage of criticism, or to have a cancellation or postponement forced upon you by others.

The Covid-19 crisis could be Abe's last chance to shore up his legacy. By proposing a postponement before the IOC concluded its deliberations (and before other countries announcing boycotts made the decision for him), he presented himself as both a statesman and a responsible international leader. Delaying what is by definition a global event must be seen as an act of international solidarity. Even if Japan does go ahead and reopen its schools and other institutions, Abe can still say, "We are making a sacrifice so that the world can defeat the pandemic more swiftly." To be sure, given the rescheduling costs, a 2021 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games might not be as financially beneficial as the 2020 Games promised to be. But that promise is now dead. It is thus in everyone's interest to look to the future. Japan has an opportunity next year to host a spectacular celebration not merely of its own recovery, but of the world's.

By taking the initiative now, Abe along with Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike—has set an example for the world, placing Japan at the vanguard of the global recovery from the Covid-19 crisis. Postponing the Games is a gesture of solidarity in the present and offers hope for the future. People around the world can now look forward to a time when they can gather once again in the spirit of athletic competition and the pursuit of human excellence. Not only was delaying the event the right thing to do; it is also in Japan's own interest.

Bill Emmott, a former editor in chief of The Economist, is the author of The Fate of the West.

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(Exclusive to The Daily Star)



**OPINION** 

**COVID-19 PREPAREDNESS** 

# Bangladesh must enact widespread surveillance and social distancing measures

AYESHA MAHMUD and CAROLINE BUCKEE

**T**HE ongoing spread of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) that originated in Wuhan, China, has caused more than 400,000 confirmed cases and more than 19,000 deaths across 172 countries. The disease has death rates as high as 10-27 percent in people over 85, and 3-11 percent among people aged 65-84 years. In Bangladesh, there have been 44 officially confirmed cases of COVID-19 as of March 26, but the true burden of the disease is likely to be significantly higher. So far, only a few hundred tests have been reportedly administered in the country. Without widespread testing, the true burden of the disease and the extent of community transmission cannot be determined.

With the sharp increase in cases globally, there have been urgent calls in many countries for travel bans and "social distancing" practices. In Bangladesh, all educational institutions, and private and public offices have been temporarily closed in an attempt to halt the outbreak. Travelers from abroad have been asked to self-quarantine, and all domestic flights and public transportation have been suspended. Despite these measures, considerable volumes of travel are occurring daily within Dhaka, and from Dhaka to the rest of the country, with a spike in travel following the announcement of the lockdown.

The virus that causes Covid-19 is spread by close contact. Experiences in South Korea, Singapore, and Hong Kong have shown that widespread testing coupled with strong social distancing measures that limit close contacts, such as school closures and banning of public gatherings, can be effective in controlling the spread of the virus. Indeed, these are some of the few interventions available to us to slow the exponential increase of new cases by reducing transmission, if these are deployed early. During the 1918 influenza pandemic, for example, cities that intervened early had significantly lower death rates.

Social distancing measures are particularly important in the context of large urban hubs and megacities. Dhaka is one of the densest and fastest growing cities in the world, with



Staff at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital stretcher an elderly patient to an ambulance, on March 22, 2020.

more than 18 million inhabitants in the greater Dhaka area. It serves as a central hub with high connectivity to the rest of the country and internationally. Understanding what areas within Dhaka city might serve as transmission hotspots and how to implement strong social distancing measures is, thus, critical.

Population movement and aggregation have been shown to be important drivers of epidemics. However, day-to-day population movement patterns are difficult to measure using traditional sources of population data. Anonymised mobile phone call detail records (CDR) provide a unique opportunity to estimate population dynamics in real time at a high spatial and temporal resolution. We analysed population movement from anonymised mobile phone data, from Telenor Group's mobile operator Grameenphone in Bangladesh, for about 60 percent of the population in Dhaka city to identify potential "hotspots" for disease transmission. This builds on our previous work with Grameenphone and the National Malaria Elimination Programme, where we used mobility estimates derived from CDR data to

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

map the spread of malaria (eLife, 2019). Our analysis shows that in certain areas of Dhaka city, the average daily number of people traveling into that location can exceed 30,000. These include Gulshan, Uttara, Shahbag, Motijheel and Paltan areas. When we consider density, places such as Motijheel are particularly important given the larger volumes of traffic into a relatively small area. When we analysed the travel network in Dhaka, we found that certain parts of the city, such as Dhanmondi, Gulshan, Motijheel and New Market, were more highly connected to other

locations and have large volumes of incoming traffic from all across Dhaka city. Again, the high connectivity of these locations suggests that they could serve as potential transmission hotspots. During the 2017 Chikungunya outbreak, we found in our research (bioRxiv, 2019) that these areas did in fact have relatively higher disease incidence.

Our analysis also shows that large volumes of daily travel occur between Dhaka and all other regions in the country, particularly on weekends. We estimate that, on average, almost 400,000 people travel daily to other parts of the country. This suggests that an outbreak originating in Dhaka is likely to spread rapidly to all other parts of the country. The rush of people leaving Dhaka following the announcement of the lockdown is, thus, especially concerning, and the disease is likely to spread across Bangladesh. Again, without immediate widespread surveillance, it will be difficult to estimate the spatial spread of Covid-19 in Bangladesh.

The time to act is now. We can confidently say, from the experiences of other countries, that acting decisively and quickly is the best way to prevent the health system from being overburdened. Bangladesh health authorities should immediately expand their surveillance capacity so they know the extent of transmission of the virus, and they should enact social distancing measures, such as banning large gatherings, reducing unnecessary travel, and staying at home as much as possible—all of which have been shown to be effective in slowing the epidemic in other countries.

Reducing travel overall and especially within high-density, highly-connected locations around Dhaka and the related shutdowns will be critical for slowing the spread of the epidemic. If the infection is allowed to spread unchecked, the health system of Bangladesh is likely to be overwhelmed with severe cases needing hospitalisation, as we have seen in Wuhan, China, and across Italy, with devastating social and economic impacts.

Dr Ayesha Mahmud is an Assistant Professor of Demogra-phy at the University of California, Berkeley. Dr Caroline Buckee is an Associate Professor of Epidemi Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health. ology at the

## The universe is shutting us down. Can we restart?

**NO STRINGS** ATTACHED AASHA MEHREEN part of my pen. I Amin

FTER washing my hands for **H** my hands to: the eleventh time today, I am still not completely sure whether I touched something contaminated-the metal tap, the metal doorknob, the metal

self-pity, for thousands of my fellow human beings here and everywhere, self-isolation is not an option, and if imposed, it will mean starvation for the whole family. While I despair that the shops have run out of hand sanitiser and Dettol, many of my compatriots have not had running water for days. Talk to them about washing hands with soap for 20 seconds! I think of those people and wonder, if I in

my privileged bubble am feeling so helpless, what are they feeling? Do they even stand a

revenge or the only way for the planet to heal itself? While the humans are being forced to get into cages (as someone aptly put it) or doomed to die on hospital beds or without any medical attention whatsoever, there are signs of the Earth trying to breathe again. The air is cleaner without the fumes of vehicles, with no dust from the endless, mindless construction. The skies are bluer with far less of our carbon footprints from frenetic air travel. Dolphins are coming back to

and oceans at reclaiming what is rightfully their own—their home—from the human encroachers, who have only taken and taken, with nothing to give back except destruction.

Meanwhile, for us humans, the world has come to a standstill. It is as the latest Economist's cover has aptly represented through a globe with the ominous sign: CLOSED. The wheels of unprecedented economic growth, waves of development, billions of dollars of trading- all have come

resources, have come to naught. We never listened to the scientists who gave us the bare facts: that the world is getting hotter and more vulnerable day by day. We still didn't listen when a child named Greta crossed the Atlantic to chastise us and warn us of the dangerous predicament we have put the world in and that we must stop everything and try to save our planet. We went on blindly cutting down trees, filling up the rivers and choking

am obsessed with anything with metal that could host the deadly virus for up to two to three days. It could be a futile exercise, I know. Every object I touch, metal or not, every part of me, could be an unsuspecting host, a blind abettor to an unintentional death... my own, or a loved one's, or someone else's loved one's.

So far, all I know is that the best way to protect myself, those I care about, and those who live with me in this planet is through complete isolation. Unfortunately, complete isolation is just not possible at this point. Being in a newspaper, I fall under the "essential services" list, which requires us to keep the show going. We are trying out ways to minimise office attendance or hours, we practice social distancing in the cafeteriaone person per table only-we wash, sanitise and wash again. But the uneasiness doesn't wash off because the predator is a sly, invisible killer that has left the entire world shaking in fear and reeling from its longdrawn-out aftershocks. It has already taken well over 21,000 lives and counting.

As I indulge in my morbid ruminations and fight back tears thinking of those little, mundane moments that I took for granted but are now the most precious, with family, friends, relatives, colleagues, and acquaintances, I am forced to snap out of it by the realities around me. While I wallow in chance at fighting off this insidious assassin?

Going by the trends of infection and deaths in First World countries, it feels there is a deathly calm here before a merciless storm is about to unfold. I pray I am wrong. My head is overdosed with information-from all the videos, news, views and comments that everyone is sharing on various social media platforms. The phone and internet have literally become the primary connections to other human beings. The irony of it kills me: we are being deprived of the very thing we crave the most: human touch. A video of an official in a foreign country warns of the dangers of a child hugging a grandparentit could be sure death for the latter if the grandchild is carrying the virus that has chosen to target the elderly with inordinate ferocity (though anyone, regardless of age, can be taken if they have pre-existing conditions). What could be crueller? But this cruelty of separation, this ruthlessness is the only way we can keep people-at least many of them-alive. Isolation, loneliness, distancing from all those you love are the only options left.

Some say it is nature's revenge on us for our relentless onslaught on the planet. Only a few days ago, I read about 16,000 acres of forest in Mymensingh in danger of being cleared because of a "mistake" by the land ministry. Yes, we are as callous as that. Is it

**CROSSWORD** BY THOMAS JOSEPH

their habitat while wondrous wild birds are returning to their favourite spots. I imagine the joy of all creatures in the Sundarbans and other forests of the world, in the rivers, lakes

to a halt. All that greed that has led to such decimation of the Earth, all that hunger for power at the cost of grotesque inequality among us, and vulgar consumption of natural



With no seat left vacant, passengers sit huddled together on the floor of a train leaving Dhaka after the announcement of a general holiday amid the coronavirus scare, at the Kamalapur Railway Station, on March 24, 2020. PHOTO: STAR the ocean with our plastics, playing havor with ecosystems and killing our non-human cohabitants in the process.

And while we were consumed with our consumerism and unbridled appetite for more of this and more of that, always more, never enough, while we played that futile game of thrones, the superbugs and superviruses evolved and mutated and waited for their prey.

Never has the world-the world of humans-been left so shattered and defenceless as now. As scientists work round the clock to know this latest and deadliest enemy better, as health workers risk their lives, many with inadequate protection, to save others, and a few good people do their bit to help, what lessons can we draw from this global catastrophe?

Will we give up our selfishness and come together as a community of humans, of nations, and acknowledge our need to share and give and accept each other? Or are we, with greater zeal, going to go back to the path of insularity and othering, of being pirates in the guise of saviours and demigods in the shrouds of leaders? Will we ever be able to hold hands again without fear, or are we doomed to retreat into our lonely cages?

Aasha Mehreen Amin is Senior Deputy Editor, Editorial and Opinion, The Daily Star.





MAHATMA GANDHI (1869 - 1948)Indian lawyer, politician, social activist, and writer who became the leader of the nationalist movement against the British rule of India.

If you worry about yesterday's failures, then today's successes will be few. The future depends on what we do in the present.

ACROSS	28 Singer Franklin	6 Bud
1 Brace	32 It rises and falls in	7 Aviator Earhart
5 Petty argument	fashion	8 Lease signer
9 School event	34 Attila, for one	9 City on the Persian
10 Circus worker	35 Fury	Gulf
12 Yens	36 Catchword	11 ls furious
13 Kagan of the	38 Bellini opera	15 Grunge group
Supreme Court	40 Blood line	19 Misplace
14 Straight path	41 "LOve Story" writer	21 River of Russia
16 Fall back	42 Frugal fellow	24 Like some sports
17 Timetable abbr.	43 Hot	shows
18 Cable with a pulley	44 Abbr. on a town's	25 Tibia settings
for riding	welcome sign	26 Medal recipients
20 Bank named on a		27 Come into view
credit card	DOWN	29 Hankering
22 Stable diet	1 Kitchen gadgets	30 Sought
23 Sends regrets,	2 Makes furious	31 Lend - (hear out)
perhaps	3 N. Atl. nation	33 Polo's home
25 Former home of	4 Enlarges, say	37 Clark's co-worker
the Mets	5 Exorbitant	39 Upper limit

dsopinion@gmail.com

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#### YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

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#### NEWS

## Not much protection for police

FROM PAGE 1

they still have to live there like that. 'What can we do? We can't afford a room for each," said the cop.

When this correspondent visited the camp on Wednesday around 11:00am, most of the policemen were out on duty. Their used uniforms and mosquito nets were seen hanging from the sticks meant for hanging the nets.

has been no visible There initiative to clean the room and spray disinfectants.

It is not like the authorities had made sure the policemen would not get infected whilst on duty either.

The cops are often on duty for more than 12 hours with no personal protective equipment (PPE).

"We managed masks and alcoholbased hand rubs on our own," said a policeman.

The picture was similar at other police barracks, like Rajarbagh Police Lines and Mill Barrack of Dhaka. Between 30 and 40 policemen were living in a single room there.

At Rajarbagh, handheld infrared thermometers were being used for checking body temperature of policemen entering the dorms, officials said on Wednesday.

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) has about 34,000 members, according to the officials.

Rahman, Masudur deputy commissioner of the DMP, told The Daily Star that they instructed officials to maintain hygiene, wash hands, and keep their rooms clean.

They have also asked the cops not to allow any guests, family members, and outsiders in the barracks, he added.

Cops at police stations are not much better off.

"We have received only four special suits today [Wednesday]. We do not know what will happen to other officials and in the coming days," an

officer-in-charge of DMP's Lalbagh division told The Daily Star.

"Our officials have made arrangements for washing hands, wearing face masks, and gloves on their own and we have asked them to use the standard issue raincoats while on duty," the OC added.

Alongside their regular duties, officials at police stations have been tasked with getting information about people who returned from abroad recently and ensure that the returnees quarantine themselves at home.

Kh Mahid Uddin, deputy inspector general (DIG) of Khulna range, told this newspaper yesterday, "We have received a good number of masks, sanitisers, gloves and special suites from the PHQ today [Thursday]."

It would help a good number of policemen but they were trying to arrange some more from "local sources", he said.

"Besides, we have asked all field officials to use raincoats while on duty and visiting homes of returnees from abroad and hospitals," added the DIG.

Most field-level police officials were seen wearing masks on duty.

"We did not get the sanitisers and gloves as it is out of market. We come in close contact with a huge number of people daily. I do not know what is in our fate but I have to continue my job," said a traffic policeman, requesting anonymity.

However, Habibur Rahman, DIG of Dhaka range police, said they, making arrangements themselves, supplied all necessary materials for hand washing, and masks, sanitisers, and gloves to officers.

"But we are providing the special protection suits only to those officials working to find people who returned from abroad and ensure their quarantine," DIG Habib told The Daily Star on Tuesday.

Regarding the failure to provide PPE to policemen, a top official at the PHQ told The Daily Star on Tuesday, "We were not able to provide PPE to the officials as we did not get any support from the government.

Sohel Rana, assistant inspector general of the PHQ, told The Daily Star that they had taken steps to collect PPE on their own. "We would distribute the special protection suits to different police units gradually," he said.

Meanwhile, a number of returnees from abroad started communicating with police after the PHQ issued a circular asking them report to their local police stations.

Police officials are now requesting them to communicate over phone or send relatives as police officials do not have enough PPÉ.

"We are discouraging the returnees to come to the police station. Rather they can call us over phone," said a policeman at Adabor Police Station.

A banner was hung in front of the police station advising visitors to wash their hands before going in. They were allowing one visitor at a time.

From 8:00am to 2:00pm on Wednesday, the police station was visited by 25 returnees from countries like Italy, Japan, Saudi Arabia, and mostly from India.

"We didn't get any PPE. But our policemen are wearing masks and gloves they managed on their own," Abdul Latif, officer-in-charge of Mohammadpur Police Station, told The Daily Star.

Wednesday, On Inspector General of Police (IGP) Mohammad Javed Patawary during a video conference with DIGs, metropolitan commissioners and district police officials asked lists be made of people who had returned home from abroad recently and home quarantining them. The IGP asked cops to use PPE, hand sanitisers and gloves.

### 2 policemen suspended

himself.

#### FROM PAGE 12

He was not an accused in the murder case, grieving family members and locals said.

His wife Jharana Begum and son Shakib Hossain alleged that police demanded Tk 3 lakh in return for releasing him.

As they could not arrange the money on such short notice, Officer-in-charge Abul Bashar and Manoranjan Mistry tortured Shanu to death, they added.

Shakib said he offered Tk 10,000 to the OC on Tuesday, but the officer refused to take the money and asked for the full amount.

"They tortured my father because we couldn't pay the money... When I wanted to see him, the OC told me to bring the money first," he said.

OC Abul Bashar told The Daily Star that the allegations were false. The suspended officers refused to make comments.

On Wednesday, Shakib and his station to meet Shanu but they were for autopsy.

half an hour later, locals and family members said. At one point, a scuffle broke out with the law enforcers, locals said.

Maruf Hossain, superintendent of police in Barguna, visited Amtali Police Station hours later and suspended Manoranjan and Arifur.

about his death, but didn't let anyone

enter the police station until about

He also formed a three-member committee headed by Additional SP Tofail Ahmed to look into the incident. The committee was asked to submit its report in three days.

"There will be legal action against anyone found guilty in the investigation," SP Maruf said.

Shanu's wife Jharana broke down in tears in front of the police station and told reporters, "I want proper justice.

Shanu's body was sent to mother Jharana went to the police Barguna's General Hospital morgue

Shankar Prasad Adhikari, upazila

bathroom moments later and hung adding that police were trying to make the death look like it was Police then informed the family suicide.

Upazila Vice-chairman Mojibur Rahman and Amtali Upazila Municipality Mayor Matiur Rahman told reporters that the police officers' roles were suspicious and they demanded justice.

### Because they too

FROM PAGE 12 InshahaAllah, nothing would happen."

Rafiq, who lives in the capital's Lalbagh area, said, "Whenever I walk out, I always take dry food in my bag for stray animals."

"All the dogs in Lalbagh even know me," he said with a smile on

his face. "Yesterday [Wednesday] my mother made me swear not to do this. However, my wife is very helpful. She arranges the food for the animals," he added.

Meanwhile, Rafiq distributed 200 packets of biscuits at Mohsin Hall, Surja Sen Hall, Bijoy Ekattor Hall, Modhur Canteen and TSC premises. Speaking to The Daily Star, Ridoy, who posted the Facebook status, said that a team led by him would look after these animals and he would soon join Rafiq to continue helping the animals on the campus. "I am not in Dhaka at the moment as I am distributing hand sanitizers in my village."

#### One killed FROM PAGE 12

Contacted, Abdul Latif, director of Rupali Bangla Jute Mills, said he promised to pay a week's arrear but the workers did not listen and started throwing brick chips.

Sheikh Md Nasim Habib, officerin-charge of Biral Police Station, said they had to fire rubber bullets, tear shells and charge baton to take the situation under control.

Anwar Hossain, superintendent of Dinajpur police, said they managed to take the situation under control around 1:30am Thursday. Suraj suffered injuries during the

clash and later died. His body was handed over to his family members after conducting an autopsy at M Abdur Rahim Medical College Hospital.

Meanwhile, Abdul Kader, subinspector of Biral Police Station, filed a case accusing 1,100 unnamed people in connection with the incident.

A leisurely day FROM PAGE 12

solid due to vomiting," the relative said.

Khaleda woke up at 12:00pm and ate some rice porridge. A doctor then went to her house and checked her insulin level and blood pressure.

Khaleda's elder son Tarique Rahman's wife Zobaida Rahman is supervising the treatment from London. "Zobaida is coordinating the whole

medical treatment and Khaleda's stay inside the house," she said, adding that a nurse and a physiotherapist are giving her personal treatment.

When Khaleda came out of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, it was seen that her left hand was wrapped with a yellow scarf. "Due to arthritis, her left hand is

now bent," Khaleda's relative said. She also said Tarique Rahman and other family members are keeping in constant touch with her over skype

and phone. BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said doctors have already gave some guidelines and are hopeful of her recovery.

"We have strictly requested party leaders and activists not to gather in front of her house to meet her," he said. After spending 776 days in jail, Khaleda was released from jail on

condition on Wednesday. The BNP chief had been staying in the house since 2011, after she was ousted from her long-time home in Dhaka cantonment following a High

Court verdict. BNP's standing committee member Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury said Khaleda Zia's health condition is the first priority right now.

"Her physical condition is bad. She needs complete isolation. The way she was treated in jail was inhuman," he said.

#### Consider FROM PAGE 12

4, said a press statement of the BGMEA. The decision was taken at a board

meeting of the BGMEA -- chaired by



Firefighters spray disinfectant over a residential area from a sky lift crane during a government-imposed lockdown as a preventive measure against coronavirus, in Chennai, India yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

### Police excesses

FROM PAGE 12

Asif Iqbal, deputy managing director at Meghna Group of Industries, one of the leading importers and processors of commodities, said it may be that the local administrations were not properly aware of commerce ministry's instructions on facilitating movement of essential commodities and efforts of companies to cut scope of food shortage in the country. As a result, the unintended developments are taking place. If properly communicated, the number of such incidents will come down and things will be stable

gradually, he said. Kamruzzaman Kamal, director, marketing of PRAN-RFL Group, said sales representatives and delivery men across the country were harassed by

law enforcement agencies. They were trying to sale and deliver essential food products and grocery items, he said.

If it continues, it will create food crisis in the market during the holidays, he warned.

Legal experts and rights activists condemned such actions and termed it "unlawful and harassment of public"

Some footage of the police action went viral over the last two days. One of the incidents happened in Tangail's Bhuapur on Wednesdav.

"Hey, where is your mask?" a policemen were seen asking whoever were on the road and roadside shops in Bhuapur.

Without waiting for any reply, police started beating up owners of groceries and mobile-banking service providing shops, bikers, rickshawpullers, auto-rickshaw drivers and people on streets. Even they forced them to squat.

But there is a guideline of the World Health Organisation (WHO) on wearing masks. It suggests that everyone need not wear masks.

Wear a mask if you are coughing or sneezing. If you are healthy, you only need to wear a mask if you are taking care of a person with suspected 2019-

nCoV infection," says the guideline. to do any wrong with them. The Institute of Epidemiology, personnel to perform their duties Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) has also asked people to with professionalism and handle any llow the WHO guideline

Rashidul Islam, officer-in-charge

of Bhuapur Police Station, told

the civil surgeon of the matter.

A colleague of the doctor, wishing not to be named, said they protested the incident, but the local administration and top local leaders were putting pressure on them to 'solve the matter mutually".

Officer-in-Charge of Pangsha Police Station Ahsan Ullah said they were 'conducting awareness programmes' in the locality to fight coronavirus. "The doctor was travelling on a van

He was aggressive and didn't give his

professional identity first," the OC

said, denying the allegation of beating

from the upazila health complex. The

Daily Star also got some pictures of

mild injury marks on the doctor's legs.

Jyotirmoy Barua termed the police

action unconstitutional, unlawful

emergency imposed, such actions by

police were completely unlawful. It

has no legal basis. The government

requested the people to be self-

quarantine; it's not an order," he

could condemn this illegal action by

daily needs, or even a doctor who is

returning from duty are being beaten

up ... Police or magistrate can't give

inhumane or degrading punishment. It's unconstitutional," he said, adding

that the victims have the right to file

a criminal case against the police

neighbouring country. Our police also

followed the same. We are not sure

if the sticks used by the police are

carrying the coronavirus," the lawyer

Shafiqul Islam, Dhaka Metropolitan

Police commissioner, yesterday said

people were already in danger now, so

police personnel were not supposed

police

"We instructed all

Asked about the police action,

"We saw such video footage of our

police and seek for legal help.

personnel concerned.

The lawyer added that anyone

"People who are going outside for

Contacted, Supreme Court lawyer

"As there is no section 144 or

The doctor took primary treatment

up the doctor.

and unjustified.

clarified.

said.

police officials efused by the

Jahanara's brother Rakibul Islam said, "I heard him scream in agony while I was waiting at the police station to meet him. But they did not let me see him.'

Shanu was found hanging from the ceiling fan in Inspector Manoranjan's room the next morning, according to OC Bashar.

He added that Shanu was taken to the bathroom by a constable around 6.30am. But he sneaked out of the

health and family planning officer, said there were signs of torture on the body. "However, the exact cause of death will be known after the autopsy," he added.

The incident caused a stir among locals, with community leaders demanding justice for Shanu.

"He could not have died by suicide inside the police station,' Gulishali Union Parishad Chairman Mohammad Nurul Islam said,

its President Rubana Huq -- in Dhaka, the statement said.

If authorities of RMG factories want to continue operations, then they will have to follow the highest safety measures to protect their workers, according to a decision of the board.

During her March 25 address, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina announced a Tk 5,000 crore package for export-oriented industries to face the economic fallout from the coronavirus outbreak.

this newspaper that they initiated 'some awareness programmes in the locality'

Asked whether beating up people for not wearing masks is lawful, he said they had been trying to free the streets from gatherings for the last several days. But people were not paying any heed to them, he said.

"So, we had to be tough. As part of our action, we tried to make people ashamed on streets. After this, the roads became empty..." the OC said. In another incident, physician Suprove Ahmed was allegedly assaulted by policemen when he was returning home from his work at Pangsha Upazila Health Complex in Rajbari on Wednesday.

"I was coming back from my duty around 2:00pm on a van when the Pangsha OC intercepted my vehicle. Even though I said I am a doctor, the OC hurled abuse at me and also beat me up with sticks," said the medical officer in a Facebook post.

"At one stage, I said I am a government doctor and returning home after discharging emergency duties. The OC replied what matters that you are a doctor ... ?" the medical officer said, adding that he informed the upazila health and family planning officer, the upazila nirbahi officer and

calmly. It any or un found involved in any wrongdoings, punitive action will be taken against them," said the DMP boss.

Sohel Rana, assistant inspector general of Police Headquarters, told The Daily Star yesterday that police were working hard across the country to ensure the safety of people from the coronavirus, risking their lives.

"Police are politely appealing to people to follow the government directives, and the PHQ directed all units to deal people with modesty, professionalism, and tolerance," he said.

He also appealed to all to be respectful to police.

"Most often police don't get proper cooperation while working on the ground. And not all the allegations against police are true too," said Rana, adding that if any policeman was found to be unprofessional in performing their duties, "we must take action

On Wednesday, Inspector General of Police Mohammad Javed Patwary in a video conference from the PHQ instructed all district police superintendents, metropolitan commissioners, and range police deputy inspector generals to create awareness among people.

He also asked them to ensure social distancing and restrict people's movement.

## 'We believe in peaceful co-existence'

#### FROM PAGE 12

basis of respect of people's sovereignty and equality of status, and on the basis of non-interference in our national affairs.

#### BHUTTO THREATENS TO HOLD **BANGALEES HOSTAGE**

Pakistan President ZA Bhutto has threatened to hold Bangalees in his country hostage for the return of the 93,000 Pakistani prisoners of war. In an interview with Kuldip Nayar, resident editor of the Delhi Statesman, Bhutto says, "I have let the nightingale out of the cage. Now I can only equate prisoners of war

with Bangalees. I hope it will not between Bangladesh and India is have to be done. But I have nothing in my hands." BANKING SYSTEM REORGANISED

Bangladesh Bank today announces details of the reorganisation of all old commercial banks in Bangladesh falling within the nationalisation scheme of the government, and says that the assets and liabilities of these banks have been taken by the six newly established governmentowned banks.

TELECOM ACCORD WITH INDIA SIGNED

A telecommunication agreement

signed today. Under this agreement, an ordinary telegram from Bangladesh India containing seven words to or less will cost Tk 1.33. An extra 19 paisa will be charged for each additional word.

DISTRIBUTION OF SURPLUS LAND SOON

Agriculture Minister Sheikh Abdul Aziz discloses today that distribution of surplus land from owners having more than 100 bighas among the small and landless peasants will begin soon. The highest ceiling fixed by the government for a family is 100 bighas

of land. 417 DIE OF POX

Small pox has broken out in epidemic form in different parts of Faridpur and Barisal districts. The civil surgeon of Faridpur informs that he can confirm 193 deaths in Gopalganj and 32 deaths in Madaripur subdivisions so far. Health officials from Barisal confirm 192 deaths of small pox in the district.

SOURCES: March 28, 1972 issues of Ittefaq, The Bangladesh Observer, Azad, Morning News, Dainik Bangla and Purbodesh.

### At a loss in Lebanon

#### FROM PAGE 12

while prices of essentials have gone up significantly, according to international media.

Lebanon has also been going through a political crisis. Large-scale demonstrations demanding an end to corruption and the ouster of sectarian leaders, who have ruled the country since its civil war ended in 1990, brought down the government of Saad Hariri on October 29 last year.

Combine of all the crises left the migrants, including some 1.6 lakh Bangladeshis -- of whom around 30,000 are undocumented -- on the margins. More than half the Bangladeshis are women who work as domestic workers.

Abdul Aziz said he had gone to Lebanon in 2014 to work as a sewing operator for a sofa manufacturing company, spending Tk 5.5 lakh. For the next two years, he had to pay Tk 3 lakh to his employer for getting his work permit renewed.

The next year, he paid Tk 1 lakh

more to his company for work permit renewal, but in vain. Since then he has been undocumented.

"I did not have regular job then, but still I managed some work and survived. However, for the last eight months I have no job at all. I am now borrowing money from my relatives in Bangladesh," he said, adding that so far he took one lakh taka from home.

In five years, Aziz said, he could basically recoup the money that he had spent to migrate there. "This means five years are almost lost from my life. I could gain almost nothing," he said.

Rana Ahmed, another Bangladeshi in Lebanon, shared similar views. He also said he had been waiting for going to Bangladesh for the last several months, but is yet to get clearance.

"I could work a few days only a month. Now with coronavirus, I am confined in a room. I had some money, but it's almost over. I am not sure what comes next," he said.

Many of the Bangladeshi migrants in Lebanon he knows are borrowing either from relatives in Bangladesh or friends in Lebanon, he said.

"We are totally stuck here. Even the locals are trying to avoid all the migrants due to coronavirus that began since January," Rana said.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh embassy is now not registering the undocumented workers for return home due to the virus outbreak, while all flights for Bangladesh have been suspended.

Abdullah Al Mamun, first secretary at the embassy in Lebanon, admitted that the situation was actually bad and that many of the Bangladeshi migrants were borrowing from home for their survival.

More than 7,600 undocumented Bangladeshi migrants had applied for travel permit to return home since October last year. However, so far the General Security Division of Lebanon has cleared nearly 4,500. Of them, 1,400 have already returned home, he

said.

Last week, 200 migrants were scheduled to return to Bangladesh, but failed to fly because the flights

were cancelled, he added. "We had approached the Organization International for Migration if they could help repatriation of the migrants to Bangladesh, but they said they could not do it because Lebanon was not a member of IOM," Abdullah Al Mamun told The Daily Star on Monday.

The embassy is trying to ensure that undocumented Bangladeshis could return home as soon as possible.

"We are continuously communicating with the Lebanon's General Security Division that issues clearance certificates for those who want to return home after verification if they have any crime record.

"Now, the problem for migrant return is the suspension of flights due to coronavirus. We will have to wait for the Coronavirus crisis to be over,' Mamun said

### Last survivor

FROM PAGE 12

he told Newcastle University.

Matilda was captured by slave traders in West Africa when she was just two years old, and was transported to the US with her mother Gracie, her three elder sisters and the man who would go on to be her stepfather.

She was sold to a wealthy plantation owner named Memorable Walker Creagh and split up from her two elder sisters who were sold on to different owners.

The abolition of slavery in 1865 brought her emancipation, but her fight against injustice was far from over. "Matilda's story is particularly remarkable because she resisted what was expected of a black woman in the US South in the years after emancipation," said Dr Durkin.

'She didn't get married. Instead, she had a decades-long common-law marriage with a white German-born man, with whom she had 14 children. "Even though she left West Africa when she was a toddler, she appears

throughout her life to have worn her hair in a traditional Yoruba style, a style presumably taught to her by her mother. She also changed her surname from Creagh - her former enslaver's spelling — to McCrear." Crear explained how Matilda

having changed her name had meant much of her life had remained a mystery to him.

"My wife was researching our family history and we could only get so far, he explained. "The name Creagh would come up but as ours is spelled Crear, we didn't make that connection We didn't know it had been changed.'

Later in her life, Matilda travelled to the County Courthouse in Selma to make a claim for compensation for her time spent in slavery. Sadly her claim was dismissed.

"The story of Matilda and her family highlights the horrors of slavery, the abuses of the US South's sharecropping system, the injustices of segregation and the suffering of black farmers during the Great Depression, Dr Durkin said.

e-mail: sports@thedailystar.net DHAKA FRIDAY MARCH 27, 2020, CHAITRA 13, 1426 BS





# Fans missing their escape from reality

#### NABID YEASIN

After a lousy day at office or school, navigating all the chaos around the city and bearing long hours of traffic, the one thing that people try to find peace in at the end of the day is seeing their favorite club or team playing the game they love. Sport is not only a source of entertainment

number of people who follow European football. And during this time, some fans have grown impatient with nothing new on offer and would give anything to see two teams going at each other.

clubs of even unpopular leagues. I would watch it with the same level

unfortunate to see Liverpool being denied the title, he would gladly wait another 30 years to see his club triumph instead of risking lives.

"We have not won the title "At this point I am ready to for 30 years. It now seems the watch football matches between whole world is against Liverpool winning it. Everyone is just hoping something, be it Manchester City or coronavirus, to stop LIverpool from getting the trophy. I am actually enjoying this. It will be unfortunate if the season is declared null and void but given the situation, I think it is fine. If I stay alive, I would gladly wait another 30 years to see Liverpool win the trophy," sighed Pratik

Pratik said that while it would be who usually follows the Premier League and UCL.

Fans are also trying to stay connected to the sport they love even while being quarantined. Playing video games, sneaking out and going to their rooftop to play or even juggling with a ball inside their house, sport fanatics are finding ways to keep themselves busy Jawad Mahmud Chowdhury, a 24-year-old who represents his university football team and usually spends his time playing different local tournaments, explained how he was staying close to football during this crisis. "It is really frustrating. Previously we had no time to play but a lot of eagerness. Now we have time as well as the urge to play but opportunities are not there. I often juggle a football in my room. I also completed the stay-at-home challenge [juggling a roll of toilet paper] that all the [professional] players are currently doing," said lawad.

# **Councillors** want deferment of polls

BFF executive commitee meeting today

#### SPORTS REPORTER



through Bangladesh, all government and private offices are closed and mass transport remains halted but the Bangladesh Football

Federation (BFF) is seeking opinions from only 21 members of the executive committee on whether to postpone its April 20 polls or hold it despite the threat to public safety.

Even last Monday, the BFF maintained its decision to hold on the polls on April 20 using names like FIFA and AFC although they suspended all types of leagues and tournaments on March 16.

However, the BFF seem to be softening on their position ahead of today's executive committee meeting, where they will decide on the polls.

Physical attendance will not be required at the meeting at the BFF House today as general secretary

Abu Nayeem Shohag emailed members four questions, including whether or not the elections should be postponed and whether the deadline to submission names of delegates should be extended past the March 30 deadline. Executive members were also asked to give an explanation if they wanted to postpone the elections.

opinion polls, the councillors at District of deferring the polls considering the polls. situation in Bangladesh.

a few months," Bhola DFA president spokesperson said through email.

and councillor Hamidul Haque told The Daily Star.

Barong Dairy

"It is better not to hold the polls in such a situation. I am not sure whether I will travel to Dhaka if the BFF holds the polls on April 20," said Naogaon DFA president Mamunur Rashid Mamun.

"You know all types of sports in Bangladesh are now suspended and everyone is going through a tough time due to coronavirus. It is not that football will develop drastically if the elections are held or that football sink if polls are not held. At the moment, we are not in a situation to discuss the BFF polls, which must be deferred," said Natore DFA president and councillor Syed Mustak Ali Masum.

BFF vice-presidents Badal Roy and Mohiuddin Ahmed Mohi had already asked the for the postponement of the elections while Mohi also wrote to FIFA, asking it to take the necessary steps to postpone the polls.

Yesterday, Mohi said that he would go straight to court to stop the elections if the BFF keeps continues with procedures.

BFF vice-president Tabith M Awal also personally wanted to see the postponement of the polls but said that they were awaiting directives from FIFA, which they were supposed to receive last night.

The BFF may still be awaiting a response Although Shohag launched the from FIFA after penning a letter two weeks ago, but FIFA's media department Football Association (DFA) were in favour responded quickly to an inquiry about the

"We encourage all our member "We are scared to go to Dhaka. I associations to adhere to the directives brought back my two sons from there provided by the relevant health authorities and they are now in isolation at home. and congresses should be organised in I think the polls should be deferred by accordance with these directives," a FIFA



but also kind of an escape from reality for most people.

Whether it be tuning in to a UEFA Champions League clash or seeing Rafael Nadal fighting tooth and nail for his 20th Grand Slam, it is through sport that people try to forget all their hassles.

But for more than a week now, everything around the globe has come to a standstill due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Major sporting events have all been postponed indefinitely with lockdowns imposed around the world.

While athletes are trying to maintain fitness during this perilous time with the hope of returning to the field soon, fans are spending time watching training videos on social media and re-watching highlights of their favourite games.

Even in a cricket crazy nation like Bangladesh, there are a huge

of excitement that I have while watching a Champions League final. I even watched the Turkish league before it got cancelled. I am even ready to watch people playing in the streets through my window, but now that everyone is staying indoors, that is also not possible," said Ishrak Bashar, an avid football

While some fans just want to see the football rolling, some are anxious about what will happen if the season does not resume.

This is especially a tough time for fans of Premier League giants Liverpool, who had all but confirmed a league title with an incredible 27 wins, one win and one loss. It would have been their first league win since the 1989-1990 season, but now there are talks of declaing the season 'null and void'. Liverpool fan Shashwato

Meanwhile, some fans are finding it hard to cope with the uncertainty that looms over the resumption of sporting events.

"We do not know when the games will start. Usually at the end of a season there is a break. But we know how long that break is and we keep on counting the days. But this is really uncertain. We are at home now and we literally have nothing to do. This would have been the best time for us to see some matches because there is nothing much else to do," explained Shahjeer Ehsaan,

While sharing their thoughts, all these sports enthusiasts agreed on one thing: the best thing that can happen now is to wake up one day and hear that normalcy has returned.

Juventus star Paulo Dybala and his wife were both recently diagnosed with cornoavirus, but the Argentine, seemingly in good health, posted this selfie on Instagram yesterday alongside the caption: "We're okay". PHOTO: INSTAGRAM

#### WC qualifiers postponed by ICC

#### AFP, New Delhi

The ICC postponed a swathe of qualifiers for next year's T20 World Cup and the 2023 50-over World Cup on Thursday as the coronavirus pandemic continues to wreak havoc on international sport.

All qualifiers scheduled to take place before July in Kuwait, South Africa, Namibia, Spain, Papua New Guinea, Belgium, Malaysia and Finland are affected, a statement said.

"The decision has been taken in conjunction with members and in line with the relevant government and public health authority advice," the International Cricket Council said.

India will host the T20 World Cup, a revamped version of the former Champions Trophy, in October-November of 2021. It is not to be confused with this year's T20 World Cup in Australia.

## 'Don Nacho' dies at 103

#### AGENCIES

Ignacio Trelles Campos, who coached Mexico at three World Cups, has died at the age of 103. Popularly known as 'Don Nacho', Trelles led Mexico in 117

international matches. He coached Mexico in the 1958, 1962 and 1966 World Cup tournaments, FIFA said, and was also in charge of the team in the 1964 and 1968 Olympic football tournaments.

Trelles' death was announced by his former club Cruz Azul, whom he led to back-to-back Primera Division titles in 1978-79 and 1979-80

In all, Trelles won seven Mexican league titles as a coach - a record - having also won three championships as a player.

His other coaching domestic title triumphs came with Marte de Morelos, Zacatepec and Toluca. Trelles took charge of 1,083 matches in the Primera Division.

On the World Cup stage, he was only able to enjoy one victory, when Mexico beat Czechoslovakia 3-1 in a group game at the 1962



finals, held in Chile. Born on July 31, 1916, in Guadalajara, Trelles was remembered fondly on Wednesday.

Cruz Azul confirmed his death, announcing: "With great sadness, but likewise, pride in being part of this club, we would like to inform you that Don Ignacio Trelles was added to the 'Celestial Legends'."

The Mexican Football Federation said: "We join the grief that seizes the football family for the death of

Ignacio Trelles, legend of Mexican soccer. Prompt condolences to family and friends. RIP.'

CONCACAF, the confederation to which Mexico belongs, said: "Our thoughts and prayers are with the family and friends of Ignacio Trelles, who made a huge contribution to football in Mexico.'

Cruz Azul said Trelles would have a private funeral due to the coronavirus pandemic.

## **RFEF offers loans** <sup>'Emergency</sup> to small clubs

#### AFP, Madrid

Spanish Football Federation (RFEF) president Luis Rubiales on Wednesday announced lines of . credit for lower-level clubs in difficulty because of the coronavirus pandemic and repeated that he hoped the season could be completed.

He also told an online press conference he was willing to talk to La Liga, which runs the top two divisions, about helping its clubs. Rubiales said that semi-professional and non-professional clubs in men's and women's outdoor and indoor football "will have a line of credit that will reach up to four million euros depending on their wage bills".

He said the loans would be interest free and could be repaid over two years. Some clubs are considering introducing part-time working to compensate for lack of income. Rubiales said he hoped that this aid would help prevent such drastic action.

"We're talking about four million for modest levels of football, but there's also professional football and we want to reach out to it," said Rubiales. "If La Liga wants to talk, it's time to do the maths," he said. "We have worked on a line of financing of 500 million euros."

He said the RFEF was ready "to sit down and look for financing for clubs that are going to have a problem".

"(If the season) does not end on June 30, which is more probable, there are going to be clubs that do not receive 100 percent of the money from television," he added.

He said he could make 500 million available "for first and second division clubs, who need 15, 20 million euros now".

## meeting' for Wimbledon

#### AFP, London

Wimbledon could postponed or even cancelled after All England Club chiefs called an "emergency meeting" for next week to discuss whether to go ahead with the tournament amid the coronavirus outbreak.

Wimbledon is set to start in London on June 29, but the spread of the virus has caused havoc with the sporting schedule and the grass-court Grand Slam could be the next major event to be delayed.

The French Open was the first of this year's three remaining Grand Slams to be postponed due to the virus.

The new date for Roland Garros is just one week after the US Open finishes and clashes with the Laver Cup, the popular exhibition team competition set up by Roger Federer and featuring leading players from Europe and the rest of the world.



## At a loss in Lebanon

Bangladeshi migrants stranded with unemployment, low wage amid Covid-19 outbreak PORIMOL PALMA

With no jobs or low wages for months in crisis-hit Lebanon, Bangladeshi migrants are now borrowing money from home for their survival. As coronavirus spreading fast in the middle-eastern country and businesses are closing down, their future has become further uncertain.

Abdul Aziz Hawlader, 35, from Shariatpur could be a classic case in point.

"I have been jobless for eight months. Frustrated, I had decided to return home and applied for travel pass around five months back, but have yet to get it," he told The Daily Star from Lebanon on Sunday.

On that day, Lebanese troops began patrolling the city streets and major roads, setting up roadblocks and urging people to stay home amid official warnings that the country is struggling to contain the virus outbreak, reported Arab News.

After the number of coronavirus cases in the country rose to 248 the same day, an increase of 18 from the previous day, Interior Minister Mohammed Fahmi said, The situation is worrying. We must save ourselves, our families and our country before it's too late.'

The crisis of COVID-19 comes following months of economic crisis with an acute dollar shortage leading banks to restrict foreign currency withdrawals in the heavily dollarised economy. Thousands of employees have been laid off or had their working hours and wages slashed, SEE PAGE 10 COL 1



Vehicles stuck in a long tailback on the eastern side of Bangabandhu Bridge in Tangail's Bhuapur upazila yesterday morning. Although the government suspended public transport services from yesterday as part of its efforts to contain the spread of coronavirus, many vehicles continued to ply the highway. The situation was similar on the western side of the bridge in Sirajganj Sadar upazila.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

### **ENFORCING SHUTDOWN** Police excesses worry people

Suppliers of essentials, food items harassed, beaten up MUNTAKIM SAAD and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Some police personnel resorted to excesses while restricting people's movement and enforcing social distancing in some parts of the country yesterday.

They were seen charging truncheons on people in Tangail and Rajbari.

Similar incidents took place in Chattogram, Dinajpur, and some areas in

the capital, according to media reports. Even those who went outside to get their daily needs and an on-duty medical





Lt. General Jagjit Singh Aurora calls on Bangabandhu at his official residence on March 25, 1972.

MARCH 27, 1972

#### PROTEST OVER ARREARS One killed as jute workers clash with cops in Dinajpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A man was killed and five others were injured in a clash between jute mill workers and police in Biral upazila of Dinajpur on Wednesday night.

The dead is Surat Ali, 40, a tea-vendor near the Rupali Bangla Jute Mills in the upazila, said police.

Amir Ali, a workers' leader of Rupali Bangla jute mills, said the mill authorities announced to shut down the mills without any prior notice amid coronavirus outbreak. Knowing about the closure, the workers demonstrated in and around the mill demanding their three weeks' arrears,

## Last survivor of transatlantic slave trade discovered



#### INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

A woman called Matilda McCrear has been identified as the last known survivor of the transatlantic slave trade. Dr Hannah Durkin of Newcastle University discovered Matilda to be the latest survivor of the Clotilda, the last slave ship to arrive in the US in 1860.

### A leisurely day for Khaleda Spends first day

out of jail in selfquarantine

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

After getting conditional release from jail, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia has spent the first day in self quarantine and talking to relatives over Skype.

The 74-year-old former premier did not meet any party leaders and activists in her house "Firoza" as yet.

As she homequarantined, no one but her brother Shamim Ishkandar's wife Kaniz Fatema went to meet her, family sources said.

"Madam's [Khaleda] relatives could not go to meet her as she is in home quarantine...," said one of her relatives, wishing anonymity.

Khaleda's personal aide Fatema Bagum, who accompanied her inside the jail too, is looking after her.

"She [Khaleda] could not eat anything except rice porridge [jaw bhat]. She cannot eat anything SEE PAGE 10 COL 4

### Consider closure of factories till April 4

**BGMEA** to owners STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) yesterday asked factory owners to consider down shutting their factories to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

The management of the factories have been asked to follow the government announced general holiday notice and keep the units closed from today till April SEE PAGE 10 COL 4

officer faced the wrath of those policemen, alleged victims.

Law enforcement agencies yesterday beat up and harassed delivery men of essentials and foodstuffs in various places of the country, ignoring the fact that movement of essentials is outside purview of the 10-day closure, said leading food producers and suppliers.

The incidents were reported from Sonargaon of Narayanganj, Cumilla, Chandpur, Sylhet region, and Ashulia, raising alarm bells of food producers and truckers. They said such acts would severely hamper supply chain of the essentials and commodities and increase prices.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 5

Shamsuddoza Sajen

#### NON-ALIGNED FOREIGN POLICY DECLARED

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman today spells out the non-aligned and

positive neutral foreign policy of Bangladesh and says, "We are dedicated to seeking peace and to keeping ourselves out of big power politics and conflicts." He adds, "We believe in peaceful co-existence and are eager to establish friendly relations with our neighbours."

The prime minister further says that assistance from any country which wants to help Bangladesh will be accepted. But he adds that such help must be unconditional and must be extended on the

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

he added. At one point, the director of the mill tried to pacify the workers with police, resulting in the clash, he added

SEE PAGE 10 COL 4

McCrear died in 1940, aged either 81 or 82, three years after Sally 'Redoshi' Smith, who was previously understood to be the last survivor of the slave ship.

Her 83-year-old grandson, Johnny Crear, had no idea about his grandmother's history until it was discovered by Dr Durkin.

"Her story gives me mixed emotions because if she hadn't been brought here, I wouldn't be here. But it's hard to read about what she experienced," SEE PAGE 10 COL 5



**PRAYER TIMING MARCH 27** Fazr Juma Asr Maghrib Esha AZAN 4-45 12-30 4-45 6-20 7-45 JAMAAT 5-20 1-15 5-00 6-25 8-15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATIO

#### CUSTODIAL DEATH 2 policemen suspended

Allegedly tortured man to death, made it look like suicide

### **OUR CORRESPONDENT,** *Patuakhali*

Two police officers were suspended following allegations that they tortured a 55-year-old man to death at Amtali Police Station in Barguna yesterday.

The officers also allegedly hung the man's body from the ceiling to make it appear that he died by suicide.

Inspector Manoranjan Mistry and Assistant Sub Inspector Arif Hossain, both suspended after the incident, are facing an investigation, officials said.

Shanu Hawlader, 55, a farmer, died after 6:30am yesterday, three days after he was arrested. A doctor said there were multiple injury marks on his body.

Police arrested him on Monday night at his home in Kalagachia village of Amtali upazila on suspicion of being involved with a murder last year. SEE PAGE 10 COL 1



# Because they too need care

#### ASIFUR RAHMAN

As the country spends days in a nearlockdown situation to curb the spread of coronavirus, street animals are having to go hungry with everyone at home and all shops closed.

However, some people are making an extra effort to make sure the poor animals can also survive in this time of crisis.

On a quiet afternoon at Dhaka University's TSC area, a middle-aged man wearing a facemask and hand gloves was seen feeding a stray dog, who was evidently starving, having not been fed over the past few days.

"Don't move, little one. It will burn a bit. Everything will be okay," the man Rafiq Ahmed Dollar, 45, said to the dog as he rubbed some disinfectant on its back.

The rickshaw that Rafiq travelled had piles of biscuit packets, some emptied, some still full. While he cuddled and fed the dog, two more came to him, wagging their tails, in hope of some love and food for themselves. Rafiq put his hand in his side bag and brought out another packet of biscuits to feed the two new furry friends he made.

Asked, Rafiq, a businessman of a travel agency, said he only came here to feed these innocent animals as all the students of Dhaka University left their halls earlier.

"On the campus, there are many animals who have no one to take care of them. These dogs were usually taken care of by the students of DU. One student also posted on his Facebook seeking help for them after he left his dormitory recently, he said.

After the university halls closed down on March 20 amid fears of the coronavirus outbreak, Ishtiaq Ahmed Ridoy, a student of DU, posted a status on his Facebook, seeking help to arrange food for the dogs



and cats living on DU campus.

"When I thought about the poor hungry animals, I could not stop myself. I have been coming here for four consecutive days to feed them," he added.

Asked whether he was concerned about the coronavirus spread, he said that there was no proof or data about coronavirus being spread from animals. "However, I am trying to maintain adequate protection. SEE PAGE 10 COL 3

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