



THE DAILY Star ON FRIDAY



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



"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



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 wall-to-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 stayed 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



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

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Nat'l Day never felt this unreal

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

As the country stepped into 50 years of its independence yesterday, the nation was all set to celebrate the occasion.

There was an additional appeal because this year marks the birth centenary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

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

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

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, Muga

General Hospital, Sheikh Russel Gastro 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.

Elderly people with pre-existing

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Not much protection for police

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

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

Grim faces dot empty roads

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

SOHEL PARVEZ

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

MONITORING MEDIA Info ministry scraps circular amid outrage

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

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".

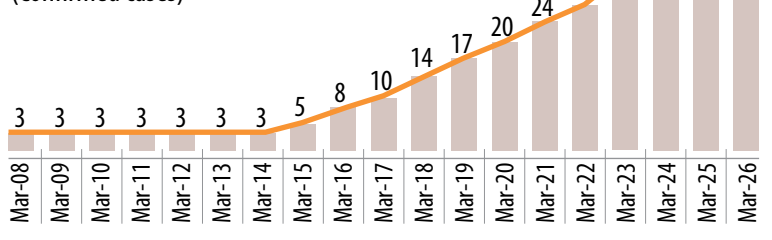
However, a cell has been formed to monitor and assist the authority and the media whether any rumour or misinformation is being circulated on the social media and different other media outlets, the ministry said.

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

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

INFECTION IN BANGLADESH

(Confirmed cases)



5 infected in 24 hours

44 Total infection

11 Total recovery

5 Death

47,361 People in quarantine

16,593 Completed quarantine

314 People in isolation

267 Completed isolation



Isolation separates sick people with a contagious disease from people who are not sick.

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



COVID-19

World toll on March 26 at 1100 GMT

Countries and territories affected

182

Deaths Including new Cases Including new

21,873 1,230 481,300 31,608

New since March 25 at 1900 GMT

Worst affected countries

Deaths Including new Cases

ITALY 7,503 — 74,386

SPAIN 4,089 655 56,188

CHINA (MAINLAND) 3,287 6 81,285

IRAN 2,234 157 29,406

FRANCE 1,331 — 25,233

UNITED STATES 1,046 219 69,197

BRITAIN 463 — 9,529

NETHERLANDS 356 — 6,412

BELGIUM 220 42 6,235

GERMANY 198 49 36,508

SOUTH KOREA 131 5 9,241

SWITZERLAND 103 — 9,714

Source: AFP count based on official tolls



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 a "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.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3