Bangladesh ready to work with UK on coronavirus

Writes PM to UK premier Johnson; expresses sadness over his coronavirus infection

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina vesterday expressed sadness for her British counterpart Boris Johnson, who has been infected

with coronavirus, and said that her government is ready to work closely with the United Kingdom (UK) government to overcome the challenge that has risen due to the outbreak of

the lethal virus across the globe. "Our government will always be prepared to work with the UK government in the spirit of existing cooperation in mutual efforts to overcome this challenge, and with determination to succeed," she said in a letter to the UK prime minister.

The PM's Assistant Press Secretary ABM Sarwer-E-Alom Sarker said that in the letter, Hasina wished Boris Johnson full recovery from Covid-19 as soon as

"While we're all fighting our own battles and challenges against the spread and loss of lives from the pandemic coronavirus, I have been closely following all your timely and dynamic leadership initiatives, including extreme lockdown, supporting laws and financial stimulus to protect the people of the United Kingdom from the devastation and deaths from coronavirus," she said in the letter.

Elaborating her government's measures to fend off the fatal virus, Hasina said that after understanding the grave concern over the global outbreak, the government acted very seriously from the very outset of this

"We started screening the suspects at the airport, along with the arrangement of dedicated quarantine zones for people arriving from the affected countries since January," she said. The premier said a high-powered

national committee, including the task forces of different compositions, was formed to tackle the different dimensions of the spread of Covid-19 and its challenges.

"We prepared designated hospitals, and equipped our health professionals with necessary facilities. We shut down all educational institutions in the country, locked down infectionprone areas to prevent community transmission and advised the people to stay home," she said.

Hasina said the government suspended all public gatherings related to the celebration of the long-cherished birth centenary of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and cancelled all the state and private get-togethers.

"We closed down all government and private offices and activities, except emergency services, to curb the spread of the virus for 10 days since the 25th of this month. We are unceasingly conducting mass awareness both from the party and the government to protect our people from this lethal virus," she said.

The prime minister said due to all these preemptive measures, the government has so far confirmed 48 cases with five unfortunate deaths, along with a minute success of 11 complete recoveries.

Feartul

FROM PAGE 1 and continue for more than an hour until police and the councillor rushed there and assured them of stopping the

A notice reading "The work has been stopped" was hanged in front of the

Ali Hossain Khan, officer-in-charge of Tejgaon Police Station, said, "People thronged there to protest the move of setting up the hospital, fearing that the virus might spread in the locality."

"We have convinced them to return," he added.

Shafi, also the president of Tejgaon Industrial Thana unit Awami League, said "I went there after hearing the incident. Setting up a hospital in this area won't be a good decision," he told The Daily Star.

An official of the Akij Group said they have almost evacuated the compound where some other works were going on.

A meeting was held yesterday following the protest and authorities would hold a press conference within a day or two in this regard, he said.

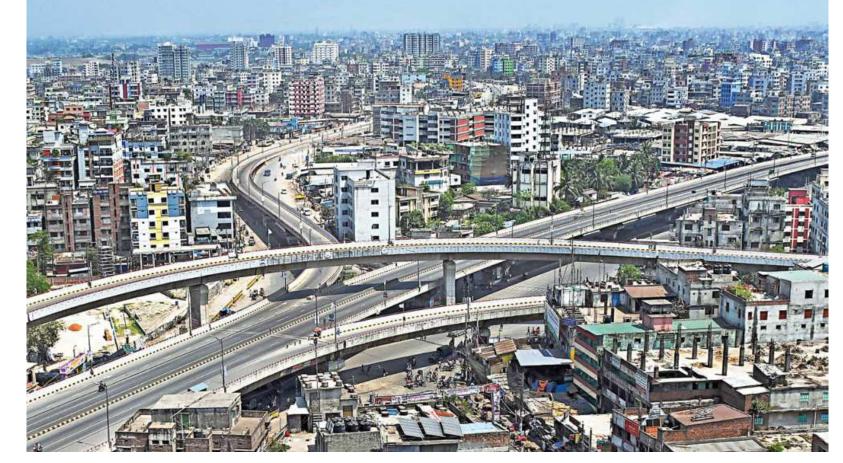
Ireland imposes coronavirus lockdown

AFP, Dublin

Ireland is to impose a lockdown in a bid to stem the spread of the coronavirus, Prime Minister Leo Varadkar said on Friday.

"Everybody must stay at home, in all circumstances," he said of the new measures to come into force at midnight (0000 GMT) yesterday and last until 12 April.

Exceptions will be made for essential workers, medical appointments and the purchase of



The Mayor Hanif Flyover, where gridlocks are frequent, is almost devoid of vehicles yesterday as many users of it have either left the capital or have opted to stay home due to the coronavirus outbreak. The photo was taken near Jatrabari. PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Many sick Bangladeshis stranded in India

number and some alleged that the replies of the commission were of no

Amid this 21-day-long lockdown, Bangladeshis are going through a tough time with dwindling cash and a fear of getting infected by coronavirus abroad.

Dedarul Islam Shawon, who went to Chennai for treatment a couple of days ago, said, "More than 1,000 Bangladeshis are locked in Chennai and its neighbouring town Vellore. Most of us came here for treatment. Our treatment is over, but we have no means to return to Bangladesh."

Like Chennai and Vellore, hundreds of Bangladeshis have fallen victim to the situation in Mumbai, Hyderabad, Bangalore and Delhi -- the popular destinations for medical tourism.

Aporna wentto Hyderabad with her mother and sister on March 13. She said, "Living cost in Hyderabad is very high. Moreover, most of the restaurants, kitchen markets, grocery shops are closed due to the lockdown. We are running out of money pretty fast, and therefore, we cannot stay here for 21 more days.

the shutdown began on Thursday,

public transport services have remained

suspended. Ridesharing services have

also been forbidden. Besides, there are

reports that rickshaw pullers and CNG-

drivers found without passengers were

harassed by law enforcers for being out

On Thursday, 19-year-old CNG

driver Hridov dropped off passengers in

Ashulia on the outskirts of the city. As he

was coming back towards Karwan Bazar,

are not allowed on the streets amid the

shutdown and asked me what was I

It was during a mobile court aimed

to ensure social distancing to stop

the spread of coronavirus. She also

punished several others the same way for

not wearing masks, our correspondent

Shaikh Yusuf Harun told The Daily Star

that the official has been withdrawn

and is facing an investigation led by the

deputy commissioner of the district.

in a facebook group, all field officials

not to repeat such an incident," he

"Apart from these, we have directed,

The deputy commissioner of a

district in Dhaka Division, wishing

anonymity, said, "[We were] asked to

be more careful and pro-people while discharging duties. He also asked us

Further action will be taken afterwards.

Sayeema did not explain her action,

Secretary

reports quoting locals.

when asked by reporters.

Public Administration

"A cop said CNG-run auto-rickshaws

he was stopped by some policemen.

doing there," he told this daily.

their ears.

Bengaluru, said, "My mother just went through cardiac surgery. We have been living in a hotel for over a month. Due to severe scarcity of food and funds, we are living on just rice and lentils. Shortage of food and extreme anxiety is making my mother sick again.

Amid this backdrop, Bangladeshis have been trying to communicate with the Bangladesh high commission desperately; however, they haven't received any solution yet. Many of them even faced harassment. Shawon said, "I was supposed to fly

to Kolkata from Chennai at 10:00pm on March 24. However, my flight got cancelled due to the lockdown. Then, I called to Bangladesh High Commission at Delhi. When I told them about my situation, the high commission official asked me if I could speak Hindi. And, had to describe the whole thing in Hindi again. Then I was told to call again tomorrow morning. I called but ey didn't receive.'

^{*}Again, I called the representative office of Bangladesh at Agartala. They told me that they had nothing to do and we have to obey Indian law as we are in India," he said.

Finding no other way, Bangladeshis Mehrab Hossain, who is trapped in this situation with his ailing mother in Mehrab Hossain, who is trapped in this situation with his ailing mother in media accounts of Bangladesh High

Hridoy then told the law enforcers

that a woman, her 5-year-old child and

a teenage boy inside the vehicle had

begged him to give them a ride. They

badly need to reach their destination.

"But the policemen started to harass me."

At one point, the cops got distracted

another approaching CNG-run.

"But that was a mistake. They

Taking the opportunity, a panicked

Hridoy tried to leave the place with his

immediately surrounded my CNG with

their motorbikes, caught me and put

handcuffs on me. I had to bribe my way

him have stopped going out fearing

Outrage; move on to pull in the reins

to follow relevant laws.... I asked my

The inspector general of police

(IGP) and Dhaka Metropolitan Police

DMP) commissioner issued separate

IGP Mohammad Javed Patwary

Commissioner Shafiqul

asked law enforcers across the country

to be tolerant, polite and professional

Islam also asked officers to behave

professionally and gave a set of directives

clarifying which shops were allowed to

announced closure of all public and

private offices from March 26-April 4

in a bid to contain coronavirus. Public

on hospitals, kitchen markets, drug

stores, freight trains, cargo vessels,

and trucks and lorries carrying goods,

medicine, fuel and perishable items.

No restrictions have been imposed

government

transport has been suspended.

while discharging duties.

open in the capital.

colleagues to abide by those directives,"

Hridoy said many other drivers like

Hospitals were never this far

auto-rickshaw.

irectives.

DMP

out of the situation."

Commission and sending emails. While many of them did not receive any reply, those who got, became even more

In reply to Aporna's SOS (a signal which indicates that a person is in danger and need emergency help), the commission replied, "The High Commission is also under lockdown. We will try our level best to address your situation. Try to be in contact with other Bangladeshis. The high commission is with you; however, you have to wait until the government relaxes the lockdown.

In another message the commission states, "We are really sorry to hear your condition. This is an absolutely unusual situation. As per the home country (India) directions, we are also locked down at our houses. We pray the situation will be normal and we will try to help you."

Amit Kumar Bandya, who got stranded in Mumbai with his cancer patient father says, "One of the high commission officials said that if we can reach Kolkata on our own, the high commission will arrange our return from Kolkata. However, inter-state travel is banned now. We can't travel more than 2000 kilometres to Kolkata from Mumbai by an ambulance. We appeal

On Friday, a reporter of this

"We thought we would use Uber, but

"We also could not find any CNG-

newspaper was trying to take his father

to a private hospital for chemotherapy-

the government has stopped ridesharing

apps along with all motorised transport

run auto-rickshaw or taxi. Car renting

agencies are also closed. After the

coronavirus outbreak, ambulances

have doubled and even tripled their

fares and are also extremely occupied,"

said the reporter, Md Shahnawaz Khan

Mohammad Shafiul Arif, deputy

commissioner of Jashore, said, "I have

seen the photos... A show cause letter

Officer Ahsan Ullah Sharifi and several

other officials yesterday went to the

village homes of the people humiliated

the day before and handed them some

men on behalf of the administration...

We asked them to stay at home and

promised to provide them with daily

essentials when needed," Sharifi told

"I think they accepted our apology,"

IGP ASKS FOR PROFESSIONALISM

In a message issued on Friday, IGP

Mohammad Javed Patwary asked law

enforcers to ensure free movement of

emergency service providers.

"We... apologised to the elderly

Manirampur Upazila Nirbarhi

MANIRAMPUR UNO SORRY

will be issued to her [Sayeema]."

"I cannot quite understand how

police harassment.

related check-ups.

Chandan.

daily essentials.

The Daily Star.

services very suddenly.

to our government to arrange a special flight for our return." Imran,

Mohammad Commissioner of Bangladesh to India told this correspondent, "Our staffs are working round the clock to ensure the well-being and safe return of our citizens. We have established the hotline where all Bangladeshis can call and share their concerns.

When asked what steps the high commission might take to ensure the well-being and safe return amidst interstate travel ban, the high commissioner says, "We are communicating with the Dhaka office and the Indian government to fix what we can do for them.'

However, foreign minister AK Abdul Momen said chartered flights could be arranged to bring the stranded Bangladeshis back provided that they pay for the cost of the flights.

"Bangladeshis who want to come back should register with the high commission by providing required information. Then if they agree to pay for the flight, we shall arrange chartered flights," said the foreign minister.

'Sending money to India or any other country from Bangladesh is now very easy. I hope they will take this opportunity," the minister added.

could they ban all forms of transport

services in a situation when there might

be so many patients and they might

need to be taken to the hospital for

Commissioner Md Shafiqul Islam

has announced a revised guideline

detailing on vehicular movement in a

city in shutdown, there is no mention

Suhrawardy Medical College and

Hospital and Dhaka Medical College

Hospital have set up dedicated flu

corners to treat patients with seasonal

influenza, which is quite common

"Ensure free passage for people and

"Be polite, patient and professional in

vehicles related to emergency services

like medicine, daily essentials, food,

electricity, banking and mobile phones.

dealing with citizens of the country...,

DMP Commissioner Shafiqul Islam

said restaurants and bakeries should

remain open and their employeed

should remain open and their

employees must be allowed to work,

recommended takeaways, it added.

Shops of essential commodities

However, customers should be

Individual movement in any form

should be allowed with health advice

and Police should take special care

for people like health care personnel,

technicians, city corporation officials,

security guards, etc, it added.

RESTAURANTS, BAKERIES TO

should be allowed to travel.

Meanwhile, hospitals like Shaheed

of regularising methods of transport.

Even as Dhaka Metropolitan Police

emergency treatment."

during this season.

reads the message

read his directives.

REMAIN OPEN: DMP

Man dies after showing Covid-19-like symptoms

8 others in isolation at hospitals

STAR REPORT

A man died of coronavirus-like symptoms in Bogura and 19 people were kept home-quarantined in different districts in the last two days as they showed similar symptoms.

Patients and their families alleged that they did not get proper treatment and medicare, reports our district correspondents.

In Bogura, a 45-year-old-man died at his home in Shibganj upazila on Friday night. His wife said he had been suffering from breathing problems, cold, cough and high fever for three

Bogura Deputy Civil Surgeon Mostafijur Rahman Tuhin claimed that the man was not infected with coronavirus.

"This [yesterday] morning, I talked to IEDCR Director Dr Meerjady Sabrina Flora over the phone. I informed her about the patient's symptoms. She told me that a coronavirus patient does not show symptoms of common cold.

"However, she suggested collecting samples from the patient's body and send those to Dhaka for tests. We will act as per her suggestions," said the deputy civil surgeon.

Meanwhile, Shibganj Upazila Nirbahi Officer Alamgir Kabir yesterday afternoon declared lockdown of 10 houses adjacent to that of the deceased.

Speaking to The Daily Star, wife of the deceased said her husband lives in Gazipur for business purpose. He returned home on Tuesday and fell ill the following day.

"We called the hotline number of

the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research time and again, but nobody answered the phone," she alleged.

The deceased was buried in the village yesterday afternoon.

In Pabna, a suspected coronavirus patient was put into isolation at the isolation unit of Bera upazila health complex and 16 of his family members were sent home in the upazila on Friday afternoon to quarantine themselves.

The 25-year-old patient, who used to sell products on trains, came to his father-in-law's house in the upazila's Nagarbari area on Thursday.

He was suffering from fever and a sore throat. Panicked, villagers informed the local administration and the health department about his condition, said Bera UNO Asif Anam Siddiquee. Doctors and officials of the local

administration visited the patient's inlaw's house on Friday and sent him into isolation at the Upazila Parishad Dakbanglow. Yesteday, he was shifted to the health complex.
Upazila Health and Family Planning

Officer Dr Milon Mahmud said he informed the IEDCR about the patient's illness. The IEDCR asked for his blood sample and the health officials were preparing for sending the sample.

In Sylhet, two people, including an 80-year-old woman, were admitted to the corona isolation centre at Sylhet Saheed Shamsuddin Ahmed Hospital yesterday after she showed coronaviruslike symptoms.

Sushanta Kumar Mahapatro, resident medical officer at the hospital, said the other patient, a university student, came to the hospital on Friday night with some coronavirus-like symptoms and was admitted.

He came in contact with some Europe-returnees recently, said Sushanta. Samples of both the patients will be collected and sent to IEDCR today, he

In Thakurgoan, five members of a family from the district's Sadar upazila were sent to the corona isolation unit of Rangpur Medical College Hospital yesterday as they were showing coronavirus-like symptoms.

Besides, three members of another family were showing coronavirus-like symptoms in a village in Thakurgoan Sadar upazila. They were kept quarantined at their homes.

Talking to The Daily Star over the phone, one of the patients alleged that ĥe returned home from Dhaka on Friday with fever.

Since then, his condition had been deteriorating and he was suffering from cough, breathing problems, and soar throat.

Later, two of his family members started showing similar symptoms.

Thakurgoan Civil Contacted, Surgeon Dr Mahfuzur Rahman said

health workers already visited the patients and gave directives to them. Our correspondents in Bogura,

Pabna, Sylhet, and Thakurgoan contributed to this report.

Europe suffers huge surges in cases, deaths

last week

second in the world only to Italy, which confirmed a one-day record of 969 on

Elsewhere, Iran announced 139 more deaths and India sealed off a dozen Punjab villages that had been visited by a guru now known to be infected and a possible "super-spreader".

And, in South Africa, Johannesburg police resorted to rubber bullets to enforce social distancing on a crowd queuing for supplies outside a downtown supermarket during a national lockdown.

The United States now has the world's highest single number of Covid-19 cases but per capita European nations are still the worst hit, with emergency services struggling to cope

WUHAN PARTIALLY REOPENS However, two months of almost total

isolation appear to have paid off in China's Wuhan, where the virus first emerged, which was partially reopened.

Since January, residents have been forbidden to leave, with roadblocks installed and millions subjected to ramatic restrictions on their daily life.

But yesterday people were allowed to enter the city, and most of the subway network restarted. Some shopping centres will open their doors next week.

The European Union economy has already been disrupted by border closures and stay-at-home orders, and Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte warned that the bloc could lose its

"If Europe does not rise to this unprecedented challenge, the whole European structure loses its raison d'etre to the people," he told the Il Sole 24 Ore

Italy, backed by France and Spain, wants Europe to come up with a stronger financial response to the crisis, but Germany and the Netherlands are resisting calls to pool national debts.

In the US, which now has more than 1,04,000 Covid-19 patients, President Donald Trump invoked emergency powers Friday to force a private company to make medical equipment. GIANT US STIMULUS PACKAGE

"Today's action will help ensure the quick production of ventilators that will save American lives," Trump said Friday, as he issued the order to auto giant General Motors.

With 60 percent of the country in

lockdown, and infections skyrocketing, Trump also signed the largest stimulus package in US history, worth \$2 trillion. It came as Italy recorded almost

1,000 deaths from the virus on Friday -- the worst one-day toll anywhere since the pandemic began. One coronavirus sufferer,

cardiologist from Rome who has since recovered, recalled his hellish experience at a hospital in the capital. "The treatment for the oxygen

therapy is painful, looking for the radial artery is difficult. Desperate other patients were crying out, 'enough, enough'," he told AFP.

Infection rates in Italy are on a downward trend, but the head of the national health institute Silvio Brusaferro said it was not out of the woods yet, predicting "we could peak in the next few days".

Spain has the world's second-highest coronavirus death toll after Italy and the number of cases jumped to 72,248 yesterday as the country moves to significantly increase testing. Smaller Belgium and Luxembourg

also saw a steep climb in deaths, with 353 recorded in the former yesterday -up from 289 the day before -- and 15 in the grand duchy, up from nine. In Britain, the death toll from

coronavirus outbreak has risen to 1,019 up from 759 the day before, according to government figures released yesterday.

The World Health Organization's regional director for Africa warned the continent faced a "dramatic evolution" of the pandemic, as South Africa also began life under lockdown and reported its first virus death.

YOUNGER PATIENTS

In the United States, known infections jumped past 1,04,000, the world's highest figure, with 1,711 deaths, according to Johns Hopkins