

"Please come help us in New York now. We need relief." NY GOVERNOR ANDREW CUOMO PLEADS

"There is no specific evidence to suggest that the wearing of masks by the mass population has any potential benefit." EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE WHO HEALTH EMERGENCIES PROGRAMME MIKF RYAN



"We want to cooperate with the government instead of criticising them. Let's work together to fight the coronavirus. BNP SECRETARY GENERAL MIRZA FAKHRUL ISLAM ALAMGIR

CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK

Low test rate may be belying reality

Fear experts; govt moves, though late, to scale up tests

WASIM BIN HABIB and MOUDUD AHMMED SUJAN

"We have a simple message for all countries: test, test, test.

These were the words Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, director-general of the World Health Organisation, said at a press briefing in Geneva in mid-March while expressing concern over the actions some nations have taken on detecting and containing the novel coronavirus

With 51 reported infections and five deaths so far, is Bangladesh conducting enough tests?

The available data gives a grim picture. The country tested 1,602 people from late January until vesterday, which hardly gives a clear idea about the real situation in the entire country. And the reason is limited testing.

Until now, Bangladesh has a restrictive testing policy -- it tests only those with recent travel history to affected countries or those known to have come into contact with confirmed cases and have Covid-19 symptoms. And Bangladesh is now among the countries with very low testing rates.

Three weeks elapsed since the country recorded its first coronavirus case on March 8, but the authorities are still struggling to get ahandle on the extent of the spread of

.....

the virus. The Institute of Epidemiology, Disease

Control and Research (IEDCR) maintains that there has been community transmission on a limited scale.

Experts, however, fear the number of infected people could be higher as many carriers of the virus could be off the radar due to limited testing.

They said widespread testing makes a big difference because, in many cases, coronavirus patients can be asymptomatic. Unless those are detected, the risk of virus transmission will be high.

Till last week, the IEDCR was the sole Covid-19 testing authority in the country. Only a couple of days ago, six other organisations -- five in the capital and one in Chattogram -- got the government nod to conduct tests.

People with coronavirus-like symptoms found it difficult to get tested after making phone calls on the hotlines provided by the IEDCR and Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

The IEDCR and the DGHS received more than 70,000 coronavirus-related phone calls in 24 hours till 3:00pm yesterday. Of those, only 140 suspected cases were tested and SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Many city dwellers have started using their vehicles for essential travels in the capital over the last couple of days. The city had gone quiet since the 10-day closure began on March 26. The photo was taken from Mohakhali Flyover.

Nearly half the world

in lockdown

Spain sees deadliest day; World Bank says crisis

may push 11m in Asia into poverty

4,025

3,117

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Shutdown to be The Pailly Star

OMS rice for Tk 10 a kg in cities from stretched to Apr 9 next week **REJAUL KARIM BYRON** and

Says PM in video conference with field-level govt officials



>>> Educational institutions to remain closed >>> Transport movement could be limited

The government is going to launch a special open market sale (OMS) of coarse rice at Tk 10 a kg in all city corporation areas to ensure food for the urban

of the efforts to slow

country.

down the spread of novel

coronavirus, which has so

far claimed five lives in the

The food ministry

government approval

in this regard, said the

"We are trying to start

selling rice from Saturday

Khanum, secretary of the

will have to formulate a

adding that she would

ministry officials, and

special guideline, she said,

soon hold meetings with

the food minister, relevant

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

ministry, told The Daily Star.

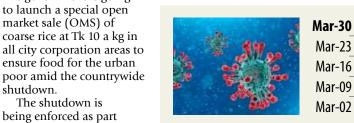
Before this, the ministry

or Sunday," Nazmanara

yesterday got the

ministry officials.

Jamil Mahmud



Mar-30		34,018
Mar-23		16,513
Mar-16	7,162	HOW GLOR

10-DAY SHUTDOWN Lax enforcement a cause of worry

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY and RASHIDUL HASAN

As the authorities are set to extend the shutdown to contain the spread of coronavirus, experts have pointed out that lax enforcement of the ongoing nationwide closure has raised questions about the effectiveness of the government move. Amid a slack surveillance, many are still roaming

on streets and alleyways in cities and other urban areas,

All requested to stay indoors >>> Warning against graft in food distribution shutdown. Curbs on Pahela Baishakh celebrations

Bss, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the government decided to extend the ongoing nationwide holidays for five more days till April 9 to contain the spread of deadly coronavirus.

"We had earlier announced a 10-day general holiday from March 26 and it'll be extended for five more days till April 9," she said.

The premier made the announcement while exchanging views on the country's coronavirus situation with public representatives and field-level government officials through videoconferencing from the Gono Bhaban.

When the cabinet secretary drew the PM's attention to the extension of holidays till April 9, she said it could be extended till April 9, but it would not be a complete shutdown.

"It can be done on a limited scale, and a scope will have to be created for the movement of some people," she said.

The movement of transport could be limited, she said, adding that the government would review the situation after completion of the 14-day (quarantine period). SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

Agencies

Tightened lockdowns across the planet saw nearly half of humanity told to stay at home in a bid to stem the spiralling coronavirus pandemic, as Spain recorded its deadliest day yesterday and the United States braced for the full impact of the disease.

Meanwhile, the World Bank warned in a report released Monday that the economic fallout from the pandemic could drive an additional 11 million people into poverty in East Asia and the Pacific unless "urgent action" is taken.

And G20 finance ministers and central bankers yesterday pledged to address the debt burden of low-income countries and deliver aid to emerging markets as part of a plan to combat the pandemic.

The announcement followed a second round of virtual talks after G20 leaders pledged a "united front" last week and

said they were injecting \$5 trillion into the global economy to head off a feared deep recession.

DEATH TOLL

MULTIPLIED

EVERY WEEK

The virus has claimed more than 38,000 lives worldwide in a health crisis that is rapidly reorganising political power, hammering the global economy and altering the daily existence of some 3.6 billion people.

Spain, whose outbreak is the world's second deadliest after Italy, reported another national record with 849 deaths in one day, dampening hopes it could have passed the peak of the crisis that has debilitated the country for weeks.

In battered Italy, flags flew at half-mast during a minute of silence to honour the more than 11,500 people who have perished from the virus, and the medical staff still working through nightmarish SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

ignoring the government advice to stay indoors

Besides, a good number of people from the low income bracket, including day labourers and rickshaw pullers, have to go out to earn their living as they struggle to survive.

The situation in villages seemed even worse. A large number of the people, who went there from the capital after the government announced the shutdown, were showing least interest in following the government advice, The Daily Star correspondents reported.

These increased the risk of coronavirus transmission among people.

The experts said the government must ensure that all stay home at any cost and urged it to do everything possible to make them stay indoors, saying the country is now passing through a very crucial time in the fight against coronavirus.

They called for enforcing the shutdown very strictly.

Prof Muzaherul Huq, a former adviser (Southeast Asia Region) of the World Health Organization, said the shutdown should be extended by up to two weeks and it must be enforced "effectively".

"Currently, the shutdown is being implemented loosely. Many people are roaming on the streets, posing risk. So the shutdown must be enforced effectively," he told The Daily Star on Monday.

He said, "Community transmission is going on. People with coronavirus symptoms should be segregated and SEE PAGE 2 COL 6



With PPE and hand sanitisers in high demand, many set up shops on the pavement near Midford Hospital and are selling those with a high markup. The photo was taken yesterday.

рното AMRAN HOSSAIN



Nearly half the world

FROM PAGE 1 conditions.

Although there are hopeful signs the spread of infections is slowing in both countries, hundreds are still dying every day, leading authorities to extend nationwide shutdowns despite their crushing economic impact.

Elsewhere Poland toughened restrictions on movement while Russia expanded lockdowns across its territory as infections ticked up.

According to a new study from the Imperial College London, strict containment measures might have already saved up to 59,000 lives across 11 European countries.

Even so, health facilities are in overdrive, with distressed medical staff forced to make grim decisions about how to distribute limited protective gear and life-saving respirators.

The United States was preparing for its darkest days after known infections topped 164,000 -- the highest number in the world.

In scenes previously unimaginable in peacetime, a field hospital was set to open in New York's Central Park after a medical ship with 1,000 beds docked outside the city.

Like France, the US is nearing the 3,305 death toll recorded in China, where the virus emerged late last year but has since come under control.

While companies and schools around the globe have shifted to teleworking and teaching over video platforms, huge swaths of the world's workforce cannot perform their jobs online are now lacking pay in the face of a deeply uncertain future.

New York city food banks have seen a surge of newcomers who have

lost their wages. Three-quarters of Americans are now under some form of lockdown after Maryland, Virginia and Washington DC became the latest to join the roll call.

President Donald Trump sought to reassure Americans that authorities were ramping up distribution of equipment such as ventilators and personal protective gear.

But he also warned that "challenging times are ahead for the next 30 days" and acknowledged a potential nationwide stay-at-home order.

"We're sort of putting it all on the line," Trump said, again likening the efforts against coronavirus to a "war."

Meanwhile finance ministers and central bankers from the world's 20 major economies welcomed a \$160 billion World Bank relief package to be deployed over the next 15 months to support its member countries, the Saudi hosts said in a statement.

They agreed to press ahead with plan to address "the risk of debt vulnerabilities in low-income countries" and work to "swiftly deliver ... financial assistance to emerging markets and developing countries", the statement said.

The economic pain of lockdowns is especially acute in impoverished cities in Africa and Asia.

The pandemic threatens to plunge up to 11 million East Asians into poverty, according to a new World Bank report.

In the worse-case scenario outlined by the Washington-based financial institution, the region could suffer its sharpest downturn in more than two decades, plunging much of Asia into a prolonged recession.



A man, trying to distribute food items among the poor near LabAid Hospital in the capital, is overwhelmed by rickshaw pullers and homeless people yesterday. The 10-day shutdown to slow coronavirus spread has hit the people of low income group particularly hard. PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Shutdown to be stretched to Apr 9

FROM PAGE 1

Hasina added: "Everything can't be stopped. The essential things will remain in operation. But all the educational institutions such as schools and colleges will remain

The premier, however, opined for keeping open the industries by taking all precautionary measures. 'We've to keep the industries open for

She said the holidays would have to be extended to stem the outbreak of Covid-19 in the villages as many people have already gone to their village homes soon after the announcement of the 10-day general holiday.

"We will have to take the quarantine eriod into consideration so that this lethal virus can't spread," the PM said. The government on March 23 had declared a nationwide 10-day holiday All were requested to stay at home during the holidays unless they have

pharmacies, hospitals and all emergency services remain opened.

this regard will be tolerated anymore.

made in a coordinated way and it from now on." must be ensured that no single person can get food again and again.

She also asked the authorities to ensure additional allocation of foods to meet the growing demand. She said there is no scarcity of food in the country as there is enough stock. Hasina urged all, particularly the

affluent people, to join hands with the government to this end.

She also directed all to celebrate the Pahela Baishakh, the first day of the Bangla New Year, digitally without creating any mass gatherings, in line with the government's "stay-at-home" guideline.

"But it is a matter of sorrow that we have to stop the celebration this time due to coronavirus situation. We have stopped it considering the welfare of the people."

In this context, the premier said that the government suspended all the programmes of the "Mujib Year" marking the birth centenary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh health safety of the workers and Mujibur Rahman, the programmes on the occasions of the Independence Day and the historic March 7 because of the Covid-19 situation and observed of Sylhet district, the PM said the tea the programmes in a different way.

She said there was no need to use the personnel protection equipment (PPE) by all except the health workers, nurses and physicians who are entrusted with giving treatment to the people infected by the coronavirus.

She asked the authorities to create awareness about the use of PPE.

The PM asked the public order. Special attention should be representatives and others concerned given so that none can commit crimes taking advantage of this bad time." the mosquito menace.

Lax enforcement FROM PAGE 1

tested. Those who will be tested positive for the virus must be kept in

isolation. "I think the shutdown should be extended for at least two weeks."

On March 23, the government announced closure of all public and private offices from March 26 to April 4 to contain the spread of the virus.

Hospitals, kitchen markets, drug stores, media outlets and emergency services remained outside the purview of the closure.

Besides, people were advised not to go out of their home unless they need to collect food, medicines or receive treatment.

The following day, the government decided to suspend all public transport services, inching closer to enforcing a lockdown.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the shutdown might be extended till April 9. In that case, offices will reopen on April 12 after weekly holidays on April 10 and 11.

Following the announcement on March 23, people in droves left the capital for their village homes, ignoring the government advice to stay at home.

Dhaka wore a deserted look. CHANGING SCENARIO

In the last two days, people's movement increased in the capital in compared to the previous days of the shutdown.

The number of cars on roads also rose.

Although there was hardly any crowd on the main thoroughfares, many thronged the alleys.

Visiting different areas in the city, including in Jhigatola, Hajaribagh, Chankharpul and Mirbagh, these correspondents saw locals gathering at tea stalls and other small shops, which are supposed to remain closed.

Farmgate, Nakhalpara, In Rayerbazar, West Dhanmondi and Rajabazar areas, people were seen thronging kitchen markets without wearing any sorts of safety gears and without maintaining social distancing.

Although there was some circles marked in front of many shops, people bothered least to stand in them while buying commodities.

Around 10:30am yesterday, some 10 people, all in their 40s, were seen standing and talking with each other at an alley in Kalunagar area of Hazaribagh area.

Only three of them wore masks.

When one of these correspondents asked them why they came out of their home, one of the men named Shamshul Alam said, "Yes we fear the virus, but how long we can stay at home?"

There was a tea stall nearby where five to six people were sitting and gossiping. Yards away, several children were seen playing.

Around 2:00pm yesterday, The

Low test rate FROM PAGE 1

two fresh cases were detected.

A lack of sample collectors is one of the major reasons behind limited testing. The institute has only 20 staffers who collect samples in the capital, said sources.

Just a couple of days ago, medical technologists of 130 healthcare organisations completed training, arranged by the government, for collecting samples from suspected Covid-19 patients.

A shortage of test kits, on the other hand, initially hindered the government's response to the crisis. Like other countries, Bangladesh too had difficulties in getting the kits from abroad because of flight restrictions imposed by several countries.

At a press briefing yesterday, Habibur Rahman, director of Management Information System of the DGHS, said they collected 92,000 kits for Polymerase Chain Reaction (RT-PCR) tests, and of those, 21,000 were already sent to different laboratories.

The country is now scaling up its testing capacity. It is now readying seven organisations in the capital and three outside for conducting tests.

"We have already increased the testing capacity within a short period of time," said Habibur.

He mentioned that they plan to

far managed to contain the spread of the virus, have been able to do so by testing more and more suspected cases,

they mention. "As of now, the number of tests appears to be very limited," Prof Nazrul Islam, a virologist and former vice chancellor of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, told The Daily Star.

"Unless we go for widespread testing, we will not be able to get a clear picture of the real situation," he said, adding that it is difficult to say anything about the level of community transmission as no scientific data is available.

"We have to wait till April 5. By that time, two incubation periods [since the first reported case] will be over, and it will be possible to come up with an estimation [of the number of infections]."

He pointed out that sudden deaths of people with coronavirus-like symptoms another matter of concern. "Each and every one of these cases

should be analysed," he noted.

Speaking on the issue at a briefing yesterday, IEDCR Director Prof Meerjady Sabrina Flora said they did not find any coronavirus infections in the samples that they had collected from the people who died after showing virus-like symptoms.

She, however, did not mention how

closed till April 9.'

producing many [essential] things."

from March 26 to April 4 shutting down government and private offices except essential and healthcare facilities over the Covid-19 situation.

to buy essentials such as food and get medical and healthcare services. Kitchen markets, food shops,

The premier warned against any corruption and irregularity in distribution of foods among the destitute people, particularly the day labourers.

"No corruption and irregularity in We will not spare anyone, whoever he or she might be, involved in doing so to take necessary measures to check to be rich or wealthy capitalising on

food distribution would have to be So, we've to give attention to this end

increase by April 20 the number of Covid-19 testing organisations to 28.

By April 5, three labs will be ready in the capital and another five in other parts of the country for conducting Covid-19 tests. By April 20, four more labs will be prepared in the capital and six outside, said Habibur.

The Daily Star yesterday learnt that the labs in Mymensingh and Rangpur were yet to start conducting tests.

Experts say the government should have expanded the testing facilities much before, preferably by February, when it became clear that the epidemic was spreading across the globe.

Bangladesh cannot afford to lose any more time as it has already spent three months on preparations for dealing with the crisis, they point out.

They say the US and Spain, which did not put emphasis on widespread testing, are now seeing an explosion of cases.

On the other hand, South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore, which have so

OMS rice

FROM PAGE 1

other stakeholders for the guideline. The secretary added that the special OMS programme might continue until the upcoming Boro season.

Food ministry officials said the government has different programmes to ensure food for the country's poor living in rural areas. But it does not have any such programme for the poor and the disadvantaged living in urban areas.

The government move -- the special OMS programme -- for the urban poor came five days after it went for a 10-day shutdown.

Thousands of marginalised people are in a tight spot amid the shutdown as they cannot go outside and earn their livelihoods.

Like many others, the urban poor have also found themselves in a precarious situation and are passing their days in hardship.

They largely cannot meet their basic needs, including food, as their income opportunities have dropped significantly.

As part of the efforts to alleviate the economic pains of low-income groups, including labourers, rickshaw pullers and street vendors, the government has planned to sell the rice through the special OMS programme.

According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics' poverty data of 2016, 26.6

many samples the IEDCR had collected. **COORDINATORS FOR 8 DIVISIONS** The DGHS has assigned eight experts to coordinate Covid-19 prevention and control activities in the eight divisions.

They will also oversee the activities of the medical technologists under the DGHS, who will collect samples from suspected cases in each upazila. The samples will then be sent to divisional laboratories, sources said.

"If we can test at least 1,000 samples in each lab a day, the total number of tests would be 8,000," said Prof Dr Shah Monir Hossain, coordinator of Dhaka Division.

He hoped the number of tests will go up next week.

Asked whether the existing workforce is capable of doing the task, Prof Monir, also former director general of the DGHS, said that if any problem arises, the staffers concerned would be given training or be replaced.

percent of service workers, 22.8 percent of production-and transport-related workers, and 17.7 percent of sales workers are dealing with poverty.

A World Bank report says only 17.84 percent of the country's poor people living in towns and cities receive support from social safety schemes, whereas 35.77 percent of the poor people in rural areas get the benefits.

The report said urban poverty rate declined to 19.3 percent in 2016 from 21.3 percent in 2010.

Under the existing OMS programme, the government sells coarse rice at Tk 30 a kg and flour at Tk 18 a kg in trucks.

Under the special OMS initiative, the government will sell only coarse rice. For this, the government is likely to allocate about 55,000 tonnes of the coarse rice in two months for the urban poor, said food ministry officials.

They said the target group would be selected with the help from the local public representatives of the city corporations.

At present, the government has a stock of about 16.95 lakh tonnes of food grains in its storage facilities. Of the quantity, rice accounts for about 13.87 lakh tonnes, according to the ministry sources.

The storage is at a satisfactory level, and there is enough stock of food grains, says the ministry.

the bad time of the people."

She asked all to be alert to this end. The PM also ordered preparing a separate list of the people, such day labourers, rickshaw pullers, transport workers, and tea-stall vendors, who are out of the social safety network programmes to reach essentials to them so that none remains hungry due to the shutdown.

"I am requesting all, including the deputy commissioners [DCs], to work accordingly... It must be ensured that no one remains hungry," she continued.

The premier instructed the authorities concerned to ensure that none is left out of the list. She said

Hasina said there is a possibility that the mosquito menace may begin in the summer and the monsoon, and the situation may aggravate further if "dengue adds to corona".

"So, you'll have to take steps from now on to protect the people from the mosquitoes," she said.

In this connection, the premier advised the people to use mosquito nets while sleeping.

Hasina instructed the agriculture minister to take necessary measures to boost agricultural production.

"Many countries of the world are likely to face shortage of food due to the coronavirus pandemic, and at that time we may have to supply foods.

military officials for making their best efforts in fighting the coronavirus, saying, "The situation of Bangladesh is well in comparison to many developed countries due to the efforts of all.

The PM asked all to make sure

In reply, Agriculture Minister

that no arable land is left out of the

Abdur Razzaque said they directed

the officers and employees concerned

not to go home and help continue

of food in the country, the minister

hoped that more Boro crops would be

harvested this year than the previous

The premier said the world is going

"Hence, from now on we'll have to

About the continuation of

to witness an economic recession due

to the coronavirus pandemic, and its

take measures to face this impact," she

production in mills and factories

during this period, Hasina said their

production could be continued

through discussion and maintaining

While exchanging views with

public representatives and officials

workers could continue their work

by maintaining (social) distancing

the supply of essentials to keep their

premier said, "Law enforcers must

be made aware to maintain law and

The premier thanked the civil and

She asked all concerned to ensure

Regarding the law and order, the

impact may fall on Bangladesh too.

Noting that there was no shortage

cultivation programme.

agricultural production.

season

said.

employees.

among themselves.

prices under control.

She once again called upon the people not to panic over the coronavirus issue as her government has successfully tackled several disasters in the past.

The PM asked all not to pay heed to any rumours being spread on social media

Urging all not to spread any rumour, she directed the authorities concerned to take punitive actions against those involved in this crime.

Daily Star correspondents saw several hundred poor people gathering in front of Ward-14 councillor's office near Hajaribagh Tannery Intersection. They were waiting to get some food.

"We've been waiting for several hours here since morning. We are coming here for the last three days, but are yet to get any assistance," said Safura Khatun, a domestic help.

Without wearing any safety gears and maintaining safety distance, they were seen standing very close with each other.

Asked, Khalilur Rahman, personal assistance of the ward councilor, Mohammad Selim, said as per the instruction of mayor of Dhaka South City Corporation Saveed Khokon, they prepared a list of 500 poor people who are supposed to get food assistance from the DSCC.

"We submitted the list to the mayor office but we are yet to receive any assistance for distributing it among the destitute," Khalilur said while talking at the councilor's office.

Khalilur said they sought assistance from the local police station to avoid such crowd as it poses health risk. But police failed to drive them away from the spot.

Our correspondents from Lalmonirhat, Noakhali, Dinajpur, Tangail, Khulna and Barishal reported similar situation there. People, especially in the countryside, gathered at different markets in the afternoon and gossiped for hours, they said.

Contacted, Sohel Rana, assistant inspector general of Police (media) at the Police Headquarters, said two lakh police members were working across the country to implement the government instructions regarding coronavirus, upholding human rights and abiding by the law.

"There were some allegations against a few police members of doing excesses and the police highups took it seriously so that all police personnel can carry out their duty showing respect to the country's citizens," he told The Daily Star last night.

"We will make people cautious and make them understand that they should stay at home for the safety of their own and others," Sohel Rana added.

Four die with Covid-19-like symptoms

FROM PAGE 12

Disease Control and Research]," he added

Local upazila administration has locked down the five families of the house and asked the entire village to go into isolation, said Md Nazmul Alam, upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) of Bhandaria.

In Tangail, a man died at Madhupur's upazila yesterday with flu-like symptoms.

The deceased, Hobibur Rahman Hobi, 35, a resident of Tekkar Bazar village under Mohishmara union, was suffering from cold and fever.

He used to work as a hawker in Gazipur and went to his village home on March 22 with fever. But his family members did not disclose the matter to health officials, said Kazi Motaleb Hossain, chairman of Mohishmara union parishad.

When informed of the death, local administration sent a medical team to the deceased's house to collect samples, said Arifa Johura, Madhupur upazila nirbahi officer (UNO).

When contacted, Dr Mohammad Waheduzzaman, civil surgeon in Tangail, said Hobi's samples will be sent to IEDCR for testing.

In Moulvibazar, a 60-year-old female tea garden worker with Covid-19-like symptoms died at her residence at Mirzapur Tea Garden in Srimangal upazila.

The woman was suffering from fever, cough and waist pain for the last couple of days. Her condition Later, on Tuesday morning, she was taken to the tea garden's dispensary where she was declared dead.

The victim's husband alleged that she did not get treatment from local health workers or tea garden authorities.

When contacted, Dr. Sajjad Hossain Chowdhury, Sreemongol upazila health and family planning officer, said, "We have contacted to IEDCR in Dhaka. After hearing the deceased's symptoms, they said us the woman was not infected with coronavirus."

In Pabna, a man died of respiratory problems at the Gaspara under Sadar upazila vesterday.

The deceased, Md Ramjan Ali, 40, a vegetable vendor of Gaspara village, has long been suffering from respiratory problems, according to locals.

Contacted, Pabna deputy commissioner (DC) Kabir Mahmud however said the deceased was not infected with Coronavirus. He may die due to respiratory problems.

In Chattogram, three patients exhibiting Covid-19-like symptoms and fever have been kept in isolation in Chattogram General Hospital (CGH). Of them, two were admitted on Monday and one admitted yesterday, said Dr Asim, superintendent of the hospital.

Their ages are between 60 to 70 years. Of the patients, two were female and one was male. None

kept deteriorating since Monday. had contact history with any foreign returnee, he added.

> 'We sent samples of two patients to BITID [Bangladesh Institute of Tropical and Infectious Diseases] on Monday for Covid-19 test and that of the other today (Tuesday)," he said, adding, "We have got the result of the first two patients and both were negative for Covid-19.

> We expect to get the results of the third sample by tomorrow (Wednesday)," he said.

Yesterday evening, a 55-year-old patient died at BITID after she was referred there from Chattogram Medical College and Hospital (CMCH) earlier in the day. She was kept there in isolation.

MA Hasan, director, BIDIT, said that she had asthma and a heart condition. Her body was at the BIDIT and they have collected her sample, which will be tested today, he added

Meanwhile, BITID tested a total of 34 samples since March 25 and result of all those samples showed negative for Covid-19, said Mamunur Rashid, associate professor of BITID, adding, testing of two samples was under process till Tuesday afternoon.

A total of 930 people were in home quarantine in Chattogram till yesterday, said Chattogram Civil Surgeon Seikh Fazle Rabbi.

Our Correspondents from Pirojpur, Tangail, Moulvibazar, Pabna and Chattogram contributed to the story.

CITY

Morning glory returns to Cox's Bazar beach



Mostafa Yousuf, Ctg

All it took was a mere few weeks for it to come back to the vast stretch of Cox's Bazar sea beach.

With a ban on tourist movement in place, sagarlata, also known as beach morning glory -- a key component of the beach ecology -- which had disappeared from parts of Cox's Bazar due to unbridled movement of tourists and construction of structures along the beach, started to grow once again.

The 120-km stretch of the beach laid empty with a tourist ban in place from

March 18, making room for the vine to grow rapidly in absence of human activities and reappear at Kolatali, Sugandha and Dorianagar -- three important beach areas.

Also known as railroad vine, sagarlata acts as a natural barrier to waves, protecting seashores from erosion.

Ahmed Gias, a resident of Dorianagar who is working to safeguard the beach ecology, told The Daily Star that sagarlata is important to dune erosion control and acts as a shield against natural calamities.

Hotels which were built occupying many dunes in the area destroyed roots SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Ctg jail inmates 40 prisoners quarantined, make 4,000 masks 6 isolation units at jails

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN, Ctg

A group of prisoners in Chattogram Central Jail have made 4000 face masks in last eight days, to be used as a precautionary measure against a possible coronavirus outbreak inside the jail.

Kamal Hossain, senior superintendent of the jail, told The Daily Star, "With help from 10 inmates, we started manufacturing masks on March 22, using raw materials from Dhaka, with an aim to contain the spread of coronavirus among the prisoners.

'Chief tailor Md Shahjahan of the jail coordinated the inmates to prepare the masks while as senior official, I personally oversaw the work," added Kamal.

"Every day around 250-350 masks were prepared by the inmates and then sent to the canteen for sale. At least 4,000 masks were made during this time," added he.

The face masks have been distributed among the jail staff or free while the inmates can buy it at the canteen using Tk 5 from their personal cash cards, said the officials.

According to jail sources, there are more than 7000 inmates in the jail now. This population includes both men and women prisoners.

However, the initiative has been halted for now, due to shortage of raw material supply, said jail officials.

PRISONERS CAN NOW CALL LOVED ONES

According to jail authorities, prisoners of Chattogram Central Jail can call their family members using official phones installed by the jail authority.

He said, 650 inmates talked to their family members vesterday over phone.

Senior Jail Super Kamal Hossain said, "Prisoners at the jail are allowed five minutes every week to talk to their dear ones -- parents, wife, children, and siblings -- over phone. SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Says report by home ministry cell

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

The directorate of prisons has opened six division-wise isolation centers inside jails for inmates, to keep any potential coronavirus patient.

The isolation centers are in jails at Kishoreganj, Madaripur, Pirojpur, Sylhet, Feni and Dinajpur, according to a report of the home ministry's special coordination cell.

No coronavirus positive cases were reported from jails until Saturday, but 40 inmates have been kept in quarantine at different jails as precautionary measures, reads the report, signed by Abdul Kadir, a deputy secretary of the ministry.

The country's jails are being kept under strict vigilance to prevent spread of the virus, he said.

Sources at prison directorate said there are around 89,000 prisoners now in 68 jails across the country, against the capacity of 41,244

Jail officials were instructed to follow necessary health advisory properly, and disinfect hands and shoes and check body temperature regularly before joining duty, reads the report.

On March 25, the home ministry formed the special coordination cell to provide support to law enforcers to prevent

coronavirus during the ten-day general holiday from March 26 to April 4.

The tenure of the cell would be increased upon extension of the holiday, Sharif Mahmud Opu, public relations officer of the ministry, told The Daily Star yesterday.

According to the coordination cell report released yesterday, on-arrival visas have been suspended for all foreign nationals until April 15.

No traveller who visited the European Union and Iran after March 1 are allowed to enter Bangladesh till April 15.

However, others with valid visas must provide medical certificates to prove they are Covid-19 negative, while visa applicants must also provide it with their applications.

With an aim to ensure smooth operation of all development projects during the ongoing situation, Bangladesh has already extended visa validity to all temporary and permanent foreigners involved with the projects upon their application, reads the report.

In a bid to ensure monitoring of home quarantine, information of Bangladeshis who returned from overseas were given to National Telecommunication Monitoring Center (NTMC), Directorate General of Health Services and Institute SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

VEGETABLES, SPICES Wholesale prices fall in Rajshahi

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

Although retail prices remain unchanged, wholesale prices of vegetables and spice crops have dropped -- in some cases by more than 50 percent-- in Rajshahi markets, frustrating growers. Farmers and who

wholesalers attributed the price fall to absence of buyers, closure of markets and stoppage of supplies to the country's other parts during the 10-day shutdown from March 25, a protectionist move by the government to avoid spread of Covid-19

Although the shutdown has no embargo on the supply chain of food crops and vegetables, many trucks used to transport those to different regions including Dhaka, Sylhet and Chattogram from Rajshahi region have remained off the street, contributing to the price fall.

Price of onion has come down to Tk 20 from Tk 30 per kg while it is being sold in retail market at Tk 34 per kg. Garlic price has plunged to

Tk 40 from Tk 70 per kg against the retail price of Tk 80.

Prices of okra and pointed gourd have decreased to as low as Tk 10 from Tk 30 per kg against retail price of Tk 40. Prices of brinjal and cucumber have come below Tk 6 from Tk 30 per kg.

The prices of wheat, masur and khesari dal have also come down.

"The prices may fall further," said Sazzak Hossain, a farmer, who was picking okra from his field in Duari beside Rajshahi-Tanore village road while this correspondent was passing by recently.

The farmer said he would distribute the day's harvest among his relatives and villagers. He cultivated the vegetable on half a bigha of land and will be harvesting twice a week for three months.

"I would rather donate than sell at such low price," Sazzak said. "I sold okra at Tk 50 per kg even a week ago. Now, buyers are hesitating to pay even Tk 12."

"Most wholesalers are declining

to purchase vegetables," Shahjahan Ali from Baksara village in Poba upazila.

Shahjahan shared a story of one of his neighbours named Anarul Islam, who returned home with four maunds of cucumber after failing to get fair price at a wholesale market in the city.

"I saw Anarul selling cucumber at Tk 10 to neighbours," he said. Faijul Islam, president of Rajshahi Vegetable Wholesalers' City Association, said finding no buyers many are dumping brinjal and cucumber in dustbins.

"Many are also selling cucumber at a very low price," he further added.

"We're incurring a complete loss as the markets are empty," he said, adding that the onions they purchased at Tk 28 per kg are being sold at Tk 20.

The labourers at the market have become unemployed, he said. The city has around 2,000

trucks while some 400 of those are used to transport crops and

country, said Sadrul Islam, general secretary of Rajshahi Truck Owners' Association.

"Most ruckers are fearing obstacles by law enforcers on

Most shops of vegetable wholesalers were empty at the city's Kharkhari.

leave this place for different districts daily," said Samjan Ali. "No truck plied in the last five days," he added. The law enforcers are frequently

While visiting the areas under Poba and Tanore upazilas, this correspondent found that farmers completed harvesting almost wheat while some were harvesting potatoes

Wheat price has fallen to Tk 900 a maund from Tk 1,200 within a week, said Sayebur Rahman, a farmer from Idolpur in Poba.

per maund against its normal price

Brac launches PAHELA BAISHAKH food support Chhayanaut cancels at city slums Ramna Batamul event STAFF CORRESPONDENT

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Cultural troupe Chhayanaut has cancelled their celebration of "Pahela Baishakh", the first day of the Bangla year 1427, at Ramna Batamul considering safety of artistes as well as countrymen from the coronavirus pandemic.

The Bengali new year falls on April 14.

Chhayanaut, one of the leading cultural organisations of the country, has been holding the celebration since 1967. This is for the first time since the country's Liberation War that the organisation is not holding their programme at Ramna

People from all walks of life usually join the programme in thousands, held at the capital's Ramna from dawn.

"We have decided not to hold the programme at Ramna Batamul as people are panicked over coronavirus, and for the sake of safety of artistes performing there as well as general people," executive president of Chhayanaut Sarwar Ali told The Daily Star yesterday evening.

He said that Chhayanaut has also decided to donate the fund of arranging the programme to its relief fund.

Over the decades, Chhayanut's programme, that had begun in erstwhile East Pakistan as a protest against the cultural domination of the Pakistan millitary regime, has become synonymous with Pahela Baishakh celebrations.

"The major aim of Chhayanat's programmes is to awaken humanity among people and society," Sarwar Ali added.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Tragic end to a DSCC distributes food among **TREATING COVID-19 PATIENTS**

said vegetables to different parts of the

The Urban Development Programme of Brac

roads," said Sadrul Islam.

"At least six trucks with vegetables

raiding the market, he said.

Masur dal is selling at Tk 2,700

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

yesterday started essential food package distribution campaign for poor people in two major slums of the capital -- Korail in Banani and Shahidnagar

in Lalbagh amid the coronavirus outbreak, said a press release.

Brac will distribute 7,500 food packages door to door to the extreme poor and daily wage earners, who have been without work since the government imposed a countrywide "general leave" last Thursday.

The packages each contain 7kg rice, 1kg lentil, 1kg edible oil, 1kg salt, 2kg flour, two hand soaps, and half kg detergent powder. Brac has also undertaken

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

different measures, such

noble initiative

Man killed in road crash after distributing food to poor

STAR REPORT

Noor Jamal Ghazi began his day yesterday visiting poor families in Manirampur upazila of Jashore. He had stepped out of his house from a sense of duty even during the shutdown, distributing food to those suffering during the coronavirus crisis.

His noble initiative, however, ended in tragedy. On his way back home on a motorbike, Jamal was killed in a road accident at Bagerhat Bazar area. He owned a private clinic named "Bandhan" in jail road.

Md Moniruzzaman, officer-in-charge of Kotwali Police Station, said a truck coming from the opposite side hit him.

His body was kept at Jessore Medical College morgue for autopsy, he added.

In Cumilla, a couple and their car driver were killed after the vehicle plunged into a roadside canal in Bangra Bazar area of Muradnagar yesterday morning.

The deceased were Parvin Akhter (24), Saddam Hossain (27), and Abdur Rahman (28). Kamruzzaman Talukder, officer-incharge of Muradnagar Police Station, said the vehicle skidded off the road and fell into the canal, killing all three on the spot.

800 labourers, rickshaw-pullers STAFF CORRESPONDENT Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) distributed necessary food items among 800 labourers and

rickshaw-pullers yesterday as part of its efforts to help around 50,000 poor families who are out of work due to the ongoing shutdown to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

DSCC Mayor Sayeed Khokon handed over the food packets, which included rice, lentil, salt, potato, oil and soap, near the High Court area.

The mayor also urged city dwellers not to go outside unless necessary. "It's imperative that we follow rules and maintain social distancing," Khokon said

He also said DSCC will continue their food distribution programme for the next 15 to 20 days. "We will provide food to 500 families in a ward and all the 75 wards under DSCC will be brought under the programme," he said. The mayor said they are providing a month's supply for now.

Khokon said there is a committee comprising zonal executive office, local councillor and elders in every



Mayor Sayeed Khokon during the food distribution programme yesterday.

ward -- which will take necessary steps so that those in need get the assistance. On Saturday, DSCC started the distribution programme from Bahadur Shah Park. Khokon also handed over money to around 100 rickshaw-pullers and labourers on Friday.

"If any resident calls our hotline and informs us that they are facing a food crisis, our DSCC team will bring them food," the mayor assured.

BIWTA HANDS OUT FOOD Bangladesh Inland Water Transport SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Only one designated Ctg hospital to get ICU

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

The government has decided to set up an intensive care unit (ICU) at only one hospital among three dedicated to treat Covid-19 patients in Chattogram.

To this end, the health ministry has sent a letter to the authorities of Chattogram General Hospital (CGH).

CGH Superintendent Dr Asim Kumar Nath, who received the letter Sunday, said, "The letter said the government has decided to give us five ventilators to set up an ICU."

A team of experts from Dhaka will visit the hospital soon, he said.

The letter, however, did not mention anything about when the hospital will get the logistic facilities -- including central oxygen supply, necessary equipment, and trained doctors and employees to run the ICU, said CGH sources.

The superintendent said, "It is not possible to run an ICU with only five ventilators.

Earlier, the government has selected three hospitals to treat people infected with coronavirus in Chattogram. Of those, a 100-bed isolation ward has been set up at CGH.

Bangladesh Institute of Tropical and Infectious Diseases (BITID) and Chattogram Railway Hospital are two other selected hospitals.

Meanwhile, health experts have emphasised installation of ICU with dequate ventilators at all the hospitals dedicated for Covid-19 patients.

Mamunur Rashid, associate professor of clinical tropical medicine at BITID, such facilities are urgent as most patients die from respiratory failure

Contacted, Prof Dr Masood Ahmed, former head of ICU at Chattogram SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



This old man earns his living by begging on the streets of Gulistan, but there's no one left on the roads to give him money. The photo was taken recently. PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

সুরক্ষা ও চিকিৎসা সামগ্রীর ঘাটতি নেই: প্রধানমন্ত্রী শেখ হাসিনা

- স্বাস্থ্যকর্মীদের সুরক্ষার বিষয়ে সর্বোচ্চ অগ্রাধিকার দেওয়া হয়েছে।
- পিপিই-সহ পর্যাপ্ত পরিমাণ সুরক্ষা সরঞ্জাম সংগ্রহ করা হয়েছে।
- করোনাভাইরাস পরীক্ষার জন্য পর্যাপ্ত কিট মজুদ আছে।
- ঢাকায় ৪টি স্থানে এবং চট্টগ্রামে করোনাভাইরাস পরীক্ষার ব্যবস্থা করা হয়েছে।
- অন্য ৬টি বিভাগে করোনাভাইরাস পরীক্ষাগার স্থাপনের কাজ চলছে।
- কেউ গুজব ছড়াবেন না। গুজব রটনাকারীদের বিরুদ্ধে কঠোর ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণ করা হবে।

PADMA BRIDGE **Construction of** last pier completed

in need

Members of Yamaha Riders

Club, a large community

food among about

a press release.

800 families across the

country amid the recent

On Sunday at ACI

Centre, during a formal

session, the club and ACI

Motors announced their

joint venture with Jaago

Foundation for helping

individuals with low-

They handed over

food to the foundation

for distribution. Subrata

Ranjan Das, executive

director of ACI Motors,

the occasion.

DSCC

FROM PAGE 3

to Shinnirtek.

Authority (BIWTA)

yesterday distributed

essential commodities to

labourers and boatmen at

six points from Sadarghat

BIWTA Joint Director

AKM Arif Uddin said

they handed over food

packets to around 1,000

labourers and boatmen

who are now out of work.

The packets included 5kg

rice, 1kg lentil, 1kg onion,

2kg potato, 1 litre soybean

Arif said they distributed

the items in a disciplined

General of Health Services.

manner, following the

direction of Directorate

oil, one soap and two

acemasks

and other officials of the

company were present on

income

coronavirus outbreak, said

of bikers, have distributed

CITY DESK



Construction of the last pier, 26th from the Mawa end. was completed yesterday. PHOTO: COLLECTED

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Construction of the last pier of much-anticipated Padma Bridge was completed last night, giving a big boost to the long-delayed project.

Concreting of the last pier, which is the 26th from Mawa end, started at noon and was completed at 9:15pm last night, said Dewan Md Abdul Kader, project manager (main bridge). "With this, we will be able to complete construction of all 42 piers of the bridge, one month ahead of the revised schedule," he told The Daily Star.

Besides, construction of 91 piers for viaducts on both sides of the bridge has already been completed, he said.

The development came when the country is passing through closure of all public and private offices, and all modes of passenger transports remain suspended.

Moreover, 60 to 70 percent local workers involved in the project left workplace due to the coronavirus situation, a project official said.

On Saturday, the 27th span of the bridge was installed, making more than four kilometres of the bridge visible. The span was installed linking the 27th and 28th piers at Janjira end.

The 6.15km bridge would have a total of 41 spans.

Construction of the bridge began in December 2015 and once completed it will directly connect the capital with 21 southern districts via rail and road.

The deadline for completion of the project changed several times and the fresh deadline to open country's largest bridge is June 2021. But, the current coronavirus situation casts shadow on completion of the project within fresh deadline.

Yamaha Riders | HeLO, Bata join forces Ctg jail FROM PAGE 3 Club stands to fight Covid-19 For every minute, they will beside those be charged one taka." CITY DESK A senior prison-guard

Healthy Heart Happy Life Organization (HeLO) and Bata Shoe Company Bangladesh have teamed up to tackle the coronavirus situation, said a press release.

On Sunday, HeLO received a delivery of PPE, facemasks, gloves and sanitiser from Bata.

On behalf of HeLO, chief patron Dr Mohsin Ahmed and general secretary Dr Asifur Rahman were present on the occasion alongside Bata general managers Jalil Ahmed Chowdhury and Malik Mehedi Kabir.

The supplies would be distributed among doctors and health workers of Bangladesh Railway Hospital at Kamalapur on Monday, said Associate Professor Dr Mohsin Ahmed of National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases. Besides, an initiative has been taken to provide medical

assistance to those at home via WhatsApp (01867090929)

Brac launches food FROM PAGE 3

as awareness-building, hand-washing disinfecting public places and transports, distributing hand sanitisers, liquid soap and soap bars, and disbursing cash to those in need in 20 cities of the country.

During yesterday's distribution programme in Korail, UDP Director Md Liakath Ali said in the last two weeks they have worked for building awareness on frequent handwashing, maintaining physical distance and disinfected public places and transports to contain the pandemic.

Woman goes missing from capital's Farmgate

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leena Leticia Biswas (49), an intellectually-challenged woman, has been missing from her residence at Monipuripara of Farmgate area since Monday morning.

Her relatives failed to find her after searching nearby areas for the whole day. They eventually filed a general diary with Tejgaon Police Station on the same night.

Leena's brother John Biswas told The Daily Star their father Benedict Biman Biswas got up in the morning and noticed that Leena was missing. Leena, the youngest among four siblings, has been intellectually-challenged since childhood, and is not used to going out alone.

"Our aged parents are very worried," John said. If anyone comes across her, they are requested to contact her family at 01718-479509 or 01817-090252.



Department of Narcotics Control (DNC) has issued a special permit for 500-litre rectified spirit for producing and distributing sanitisers. DNC has also issued permit of 22.14 lakh litre rectified spirit to different private

institutes, reads the report. The DNC officials were also instructed to keep close monitoring and increase surveillance so that narcotics dealers do not get any scope to increase their business during this pandemic period.

Chhayanaut

FROM PAGE 3

Earlier in the day, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina directed all to celebrate Pahela Baishakh "digitally" without creating mass gatherings. She made the call while exchanging views on the country's coronavirus situation with public representatives and field level government officials through videoconference from her official Ganabhaban residence.

Morning glory returns

FROM PAGE 3

of the vine, he said, adding that before no trace of sagarlata could be seen in Sugandha, Kolatali and Laboni points.

Ibarhim Khalil Mamun, chief executive of Youth Environment Society, said the sprawling vine sprouted at the beach in absence of human activity. "It grows where humans don't tread," he said. The government must take steps to contain movement on the beach, allowing it to breathe.

Dr Kamal Hossen, professor of Institute of Forestry and Environmental Science at Chattogram University, said, "It acts as soil binder, helps the seashore fight against strong waves, plays a role as natural shield against erosions and stabilises the beach."

He said due to human disturbance, the plant disappeared from most part of the beach. "The current shutdown created a new hope for the plant. Authorities must think about how to nurture the plant," Dr Hossen added.

Wholesale prices fall

FROM PAGE 3

of Tk 3,500 while khesari at Tk 1,800 against Tk 2,350, he said, adding, "I have to go back without selling my produce."

Atahar Ali of Rajabari said he produced bananas besides five of his ponds and guavas in five orchards. Those are becoming rotten in absence of buyers.

Contacted, Shamsul Haque, deputy director of Department of Agricultural Extension, said the precautionary measures for avoiding coronavirus may affect vegetable and spice markets.

"We are going through a crisis. There will be some impacts," he said, adding, "We'll discuss the issue with the district level administrative officials.

Only one

FROM PAGE 3

Medical College Hospital, said a hospital with ICU support is ideal to treat Covid-19 patients.

Asked whether five ventilators are enough, Dr Hasan Shahriar Kabir, director (Chattogram division) of Directorate General of Health Services, said only one percent of Covid-19 patients need ICU support.

"The number of infected persons in the country is below 50 till now," he said, adding that the government will increase the facilities as per need. "With five ventilators, a 10-bed ICU can be set up," he said.

All logistic facilities will be provided in time, he added.

'Peace must be restored'

FROM PAGE 12

including the countryside at all cost and if necessary, by force. Al Badr members and razakars have not yet deposited their arms and these are the elements who are committing armed atrocities in certain places of the country, he adds. He orders the police and other agencies responsible for maintaining order to shoot the armed miscreants wherever they are found. "I can't allow my countrymen to be harassed by these miscreants because I am responsible to Allah for peace in the country," Bangabandhu says.

PRESSURISE PAKISTAN Bangladesh government, which

Bangalees from that country, is undertaking fresh moves to pursue the issue. Telegrams from Foreign Minister M A Samad are being sent to all the countries that have recognised Bangladesh, urging those countries to put pressure on Pakistan to ensure the safety of four lakh Bangalees and repatriate them to Bangladesh.

TELEGRAM TO SAUDI KING

Bangladesh Foreign Minister M A Samad has sent a telegram to the King of Saudi Arabia, requesting to repatriate about 100 him Bangalee air force personnel and others stranded in that country. Pakistan. Pakistan is insisting on getting has already approached some those unfortunate Bangalees to

The foreign minister has also expressed his gratitude to the King for the repatriation of Bangalee Hajis to Bangladesh in response to Bangabandhu's request to the King. PRINCE AGA KHAN CALLS ON

BANGABANDHU UN High Commissioner for Refugees Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan today calls on Bangabandhu. The prime minister raises the question of repatriation of four lakh Bangalees trapped in Pakistan with the Prince. Bangabandhu tells him that Pakistan has no right to detain innocent Bangalees in

JAPAN KEEN ON CONSTRUCTION

is taking keen interest in the Jamuna Bridge project of Bangladesh. This is related to Bangladesh Foreign Minister MA Samad by Toshikazu Maeda, leader of the visiting Japanese economic and technical delegation. Maeda further informs that a survey team will soon visit Bangladesh to prepare a feasibility report for a bridge on Jamuna and apprise the Japanese government of the financial requirements for it.

The proposal for the bridge over Jamuna was personally made by Bangabandhu to the Japanese Parliamentary delegation early this month.

SOURCES: April 2, 1972 issues of Ittefaq, The Bangladesh

most ICU settings. This can help

keep a dying patient alive for five to

seven days until a proper ventilator

okay and has been tested using a

plastic lung. Now we have to test it

permission from the relevant

get positive results, we can go into

any deal with any financial backers,

mass production," he added.

"The prototype is theoretically

And for that, the team is seeking

"If we can test it on patients and

As of yet, they have not inked

is found," Shakkher said.

on real patients," he added.

government authorities

he claimed.

No way to get home

FROM PAGE 12

suspension of on-arrival and tourist visas and ban on cruise ship docking.

Some of these countries have also deployed security forces to strictly enforce law, aiming at preventing unwanted movements of citizens.

Bangladesh took took some precautionary measures to contain the virus transmission.

Amid this situation, Saudi government has informed Bangladesh embassy to collect detailed information of stranded Bangladeshis in the Kingdom so that it can arrange chartered flights to ferry them to Dhaka, Moshi said.

"But in the current situation, it is difficult to communicate with them," he added. Many such stranded Bangladeshis

Many of the Bangladeshis who went to Saudi Arabia for performing Umrah saw their visas got expired as such visas are issued for only 15 days.

As a precautionary measure, Dhaka imposed a ban on passenger flights to 10 countries including six Gulf Cooperation Council member states from March 22 to March 31. Later, it extended the suspension till April 7.

Earlier on March 17, 409 Bangladeshis were brought back from KSA by a special flight.

Bangladeshis usually travel to Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt using Saudi Arabia or Dubai as transit since Bangladesh does not have direct air communications with the three Arab countries, according to

protective measures have been taken for inmates so that they can maintain campaigns,

hygiene at their cell and outside. Before entering cells, every inmate has to wash their hands and feet. Apart from that, the

will accompany them

he said

official.

during the conversation,

The service will be

every day, said the jail

available from 9am-12pm

and again from 1pm-3pm

"In-person visits are now

limited due to the ongoing

Hossain, "We have also put

a one-metre barricade [for

social distancing] between

has to meet in person."

Jail sources said

visitor and inmate if anyone

pandemic," said Kamal

guards have been told to wash their shoes with bleach-mixed water before entering every ward.

40 prisoners

FROM PAGE 3 of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR)

on Pakistan for repatriation of return to Bangladesh.

University, and Tajbiul Hasan Kabbo,

a student of electrical and electronic

engineering at Ahsanullah University

"Spondon: Made in Bangladesh".

Currently, there are only 10

ventilators available for patients

diagnosed with Covid-19, Aminul

Hasan, director of Hospitals and

Clinics section of Directorate

General of Health Services (DGHS),

the

device

of Science and Technology.

They named

had told The Daily Star.

OF PADMA BRIDGE Japanese Prime Minister Eisaku Sato Dainik Bangla and Purbodesh.

Observer, Azad, Morning News,

going through financial hardship in other Arab countries as well, said Moshi, also

> the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. He added that he sent messages about them to officials concerned in Bangladesh government.

Bangladesh's permanent representative to

According to the ambassador, some five million Bangladeshis are living in the nine countries.

M Shahadat Hossain, president, Hajj Agencies Association of Bangladesh (HAAB), said they have information that several thousand Bangladeshi are stranded in different Gulf countries.

"We wrote to different airlines who took the Bangladeshis requesting them to arrange accommodation and food for the stranded Bangladeshis until they return, he added.

Eight more Bangladeshis

sources.

FROM PAGE 12

allowing journalists or close relatives of any of the patients admitted to hospitals to prevent the spread of coronavirus, he added. "Panic and fear grip the New York

residents," said Neher.

The journalist added that he talked to some of the victims' family members who requested the media not to disclose the names and identities of their loved ones.

Bangladesh eligible

FROM PAGE 12

The EU accounts for 63 percent of the total apparel exports from Bangladesh and 58 percent of all exports every year.

Regarding the European Ombudsman's decision, the EU in a statement said four trade union organisations wrote to the European Commission in October 2016 alleging that Bangladesh did not comply with its obligations in the area of fundamental labour rights.

They drew attention to very serious issues and urged the Commission to investigate the matter in the context of the GSP.

Dissatisfied with the fact that the Commission had failed to launch an

investigation, the International Trade Union Confederation, the Clean Clothes Campaign and HEC-NYU EU Public Interest Clinic turned to the Ombudsman in June 2018, the EU said.

Car crash

FROM PAGE 12

According to witnesses, a overspeeding black car lost control and fell into a roadside ditch around 12:00 noon. The car drowned but the locals managed to rescue the trio and sent them to a local hospital.

The on-duty doctors at the hospital declared the trio dead.



be finalised, he said.

Ventilators pump oxygen into the lungs of patients suffering from severe pulmonary stress or patients unable to breathe on their own anymore. For patients with the worst effects of the coronavirus infection, a ventilator offers the best chance of survival.

"We first came up with the concept a year ago after noticing the fact that ventilators are expensive. Importing a ventilator can cost up to Tk 5 lakh," said Baized.

This ventilator, however, is made While there are plans to set up entirely of materials that can be more, but when and where these found locally, and its components ventilators would be set up is yet to are made from scratch, the

inventors said.

When a regular ventilator comes with many features, this model would just help patients alleviate their breathing difficulties by pushing oxygen into their lungs. Shakkher, explained what this means, "Ventilators have multiple modes. Some are 'spontaneous', which pumps oxygen to the patient's lung at a regular interval by analysing his or her breathing.

Whereas our ventilator provides 'continuous mandatory ventilation' where the patient is given a steady stream of oxygen at a pre-set parameter," he said. "This is the mode needed in

Goutam Kumar

took position there.

additional superintendent of Pabna

police, said they conducted a raid

around 2:00am in Shamukjani

Bazar area in Santhia upazila on

information that a robber gang

robbers opened fire, forcing the law

enforcers to retaliate. At one point

of the "gunfight", Sarwar sustained

bullet injuries. He was rushed to

Pabna Medical College Hospital

where doctors declared him dead,

Sensing their presence, the

Three killed in 'gunfights'

police. While narrating the "gunfight", Moniruzzaman, officerin-charge of Birampur Police Station, echoed Lt Col Firoz's statement tweaking only the time and place.

A police team conducted a raid in Mirpur village of Birampur upazila on information. As soon as they reached the area, a group of seven to eight opened fire, forcing them to retaliate, he said.

At one point, Fahim sustained bullet injuries and died on the

spot. The body was sent to M Abdur notorious robber gang, said police. Rahim Medical College Hospital for autopsy, he added.

Three policemen also sustained injuries and received primary treatment at Birampur Upazila Health Complex, the OC said.

A pipe gun, three bullets, and several sharp weapons were recovered from the spot, he claimed

In Pabna, Sarwar Hossain aias Soro, 36, was killed in a "gunfight" with police.

The dead was the ringleader of a

Protect the elderly

FROM PAGE 12

diseases, he said.

"So, when coronavirus attacks, it can become fatal," he said.

As the elderly have regular medical check-ups, during this time they should refrain if the problem is not severe.

should be continued till a medical check-up. They can also consult with telemedicine for adjusting dosage," he said.

Dr Nazmul suggested that extra measures need to be taken for the older family members. Emphasis should be given on maintaining good habits, including sufficient sleep, healthy eating and exercise, he said

The medicine specialist said "If physical condition remains balanced food and proper sleep is stable, the prescribed medicine a must for them. Dr Nazmul also suggested that older people could pass their time offering prayers, watching movies and those who write, should keep writing.

Prince Charles out of virus isolation

Bishwas,

AFP, London

Prince Charles, the eldest son and heir of Britain's Queen Elizabeth II, is no longer in quarantine after showing mild coronavirus symptoms, his office said on Monday, as scientists said strict measures put in place across Britain to limit close-contact transmission could be having an effect.

"Clarence House has confirmed today that, having consulted with his doctor, the Prince of Wales is now out of self-isolation," it said in a statement.

The 71-year-old prince, whose age put him among the most-risk category for the disease, is said to be in good health and abiding by government health guidelines.

flee, he said, adding two policemen also sustained injuries during the "gunfight" and were undergoing treatment at the hospital. Police claimed to have recovered a gun, ammunition and a knife from the spot, Gautam said.

The Daily Star, however, could not independently verify the law

enforcers' claims. Our Bagerhat, Dinajpur and Pabna correspondents contributed to this report.

but are on the search for interested parties.

Rest of the criminals managed to

friendly countries to create pressure Pakistan instead of agreeing to their

A prototype with huge potential

FROM PAGE 12 science and engineering at BRAC

INTERNATIONAL

Stop wearing masks if you're not sick: WHO

CNN ONLINE

World Health Organization officials Monday said they still recommend people not wear face masks unless they are sick with Covid-19 or caring for someone who is sick.

"There is no specific evidence to suggest that the wearing of masks by the mass population has any potential benefit. In fact, there's some evidence to suggest the opposite in the misuse of wearing a mask properly or fitting it properly," Dr. Mike Ryan, executive directo4r of the WHO health emergencies program, said at a media briefing in Geneva, Switzerland, on Monday.

"There also is the issue that we have a massive global shortage," Ryan said about masks and other medical supplies. "Right now the people most at risk from this virus are frontline health workers who are exposed to the virus every second of every day. The thought of them not having masks is horrific."

World Health Organization officials warned at a media briefing last week that globally there is a "significant shortage" of medical supplies, including personal protective gear or PPE, for doctors.

"We need to be clear," Dr. Maria Van Kerkhove, an infectious disease epidemiologist with the WHO, said last week.

"The world is facing a significant shortage of PPE for our frontline workers -including masks and gloves and gowns and face shields -- and protecting our health care workers must be the top priority for use of this PPE."

'We're living on a prayer' 'Tsunami is coming'

Indian doctors fight coronavirus with raincoats, helmets Agencies REUTERS, New Delhi

Shortages ofw protective health gear in India are forcing some doctors to use raincoats and motorbike helmets while fighting the coronavirus, exposing the weak state of the public health system ahead of an anticipated surge in COVID-19 cases. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government said India was trying to get personal protective equipment in bulk domestically and from South

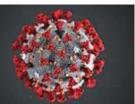
Korea and China to meet the shortages. More than a dozen doctors battling the outbreak, which has so

far infected 1,251 people and killed 32, told Reuters they were concerned that without this proper gear, they could become carriers of the disease. In Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state, drivers of around

4,700 ambulances that mainly serve government hospitals went on strike yesterday, demanding proper safety gear and health insurance. According to one projection, more than 100,000

people could be infected by mid-May, putting India's underfunded health system and scarce doctors under severe strain. In the eastern city of Kolkata, junior doctors

at the major coronavirus treatment facility -Beliaghata Infectious Disease Hospital - were given wants to work without protection."



plastic raincoats to examine patients last week, according to two doctors there and photographs reviewed by Reuters.

In northern Haryana state near New Delhi, Dr Sandeep Garg of ESI Hospital said he had been using a motorbike helmet because he didn't have : any N95 masks, which offer significant protection against virus particles.

The plight of doctors in the pandemic has cast a light on a dilapidated and overburdened public

health system that has for years been starved of funds and an : overhaul. India spends about 1.3% of its GDP on public health, among the lowest in the world.

'We are living on a prayer, it's not that we can save ourselves by relying on the health system," said a senior federal government official in New Delhi.

In a state-run hospital in the city of Rohtak in : Haryana, several junior doctors have been declining to treat patients unless they have adequate safety equipment.

They also established an informal COVID-19 fund, to which each doctor contributed 1,000 rupees (\$13.27) to buy masks and other face coverings, one of the doctors said.

"Everybody is scared," the doctor said. "Nobody

New York's governor put out an urgent plea for medical volunteers, and a Navy hospital ship pulled into port as coronavirus deaths in the city mounted and hospitals buckled in what authorities say could be a preview of what other communities across the United States could soon face.

New York governor begs for help

"Please come help us in New York now. We need relief," Governor Andrew Cuomo pleaded as the number of dead in New York State climbed past 1,200, with most of those victims dying in New York City.

A US Navy hospital ship with 1,000 beds arrived in port in New York on Monday to help relieve the crisis gripping the city. The USNS Comfort - also sent to New York City after 9/11 - will be used to treat noncoronavirus patients while packed hospitals deal with those with COVID-19.

Nurses and other medical professionals who have volunteered to help have also begun arriving.

As he announced the latest death toll, he said, "That's a lot of loss, that's a lot of pain, that's a lot of tears, that's a lot of grief that people all across this state are feeling."

Criticising President Donald Trump's politicising of the crisis, Cuomo told MSNBC earlier on Monday: "The science people, the government professionals, have to stand up and look the president in the eye and say this is not a political exercise. This is not press relations. It's not optics. The tsunami is coming." The United States has the highest number of infected

people with 164,610 diagnosed cases, 3,170 deaths and 5,764 recoveries.



The USNS Comfort passes the Statue of Liberty as it enters New York Harbor during the outbreak of the coronavirus disease in New York, on Monday.

AFP, Koror

CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC LATEST UPDATES

MORE THAN 790,000 CASES

More than 790,640 cases of infection have been recorded in 185 countries and territories

since the epidemic started in China in December, according to an AFP tally compiled at 1000 GMT Tuesday based on official sources. At least 38,464 deaths have been recorded, 27,740 of those in Europe. Italy has 11,591 deaths, Spain

8,189, mainland China 3,305, the United States 3,170, France 3,024, and Iran 2,898.

11M ASIANS FACE POVERTY

The World Bank warns China's growth in 2020 could be brought to a standstill, compared to 6.1 percent growth in 2019, which was already its worst performance since 1990. The country will postpone its notoriously difficult college entrance tests from June to July. The economic fallout from the coronavirus pandemic could drive an additional 11 million people into poverty in East Asia and the Pacific unless "urgent action" is taken, the World Bank warned in a report released Monday.

RAY OF HOPE AMID RECORD DEATH TOLLS

Once again, Spain hit a new record with 849 coronavirus deaths in 24 hours although health chiefs said the rate of new infections was continuing its downward trend. The number of confirmed cases rose to 94,417 vesterday after another 9,222 people tested positive: a nearly 11-percent increase. This time last week the rate of new infections stood at around 20 percent. Professionals of Italy also said the trend is slowing there despite the record death toll.

IRAN, EUROPE TO GET MEDICAL **EQUIPMENT**

European nations deliver medical goods to Iran in the first transaction under the Instex mechanism set up in January 2019 to bypass United States sanctions on Tehran. President Donald Trump says the US will send some shipments of excess medical equipment worth around \$100 million to hard-hit Italy, and later to France and Spain.

MORE THAN 3.6 BILLION IN LOCKDOWN

Panama announces strict quarantine measures that separate citizens by gender. From Wednesday for 15 days, men and women will only be able to leave their homes for two hours at a time, and on different days. On Sunday all outings are banned. Mexico extends its state of emergency to April 30, which also allows it to prolong its suspension of all non-essential activities. Guinea announces a night-time curfew between 2100-0500 GMT and restrictions on movement out of the capital. More than 3.6 billion people -- 46.5 percent of the world population -- are now either under orders or have been asked to stay home, according to an

AFP database tally on Tuesday.

SPAIN BANS FUNERAL CEREMONIALS Spain banned funeral ceremonies, including vigils at home, and decreed that no more than three people could attend burials as the government struggles with thousands of fatalities from the coronavirus pandemic. Madrid announced that "religious celebrations and civilian funeral ceremonies are postponed until the end of the alert," which has been declared until at least April 11 and keeps the population confined. SOURCE: AFP

30 Albanian doctors

help virus-hit Italy



AI predicts which patients will get

World's last virus-free corners

AFP, Brescia

bases, around 90 people have found themselves

Harry, Meghan guit royal life

Prince Harry and his wife Meghan formally step down as senior members of the British royal family yesterday, as they start a controversial new life in the United States. The couple have already relocated to California, according to reports, after announcing in January that they intended to guit roval life and "work to become financially independent". The decision means they will no longer carry out duties on behalf of Queen Elizabeth II and are giving up their office within the monarchy in Britain. However, they will continue to be known as the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, their official titles, and Harry remains sixth in line to the throne, with no change in the line of succession.

Myanmar journalist hit with terrorism charges

A Myanmar journalist faces up to life in prison for publishing an interview with a rebel group operating in the country's restive Rakhine state a week after the insurgents were classified as a terrorist organisation. The western region has long been a tinderbox of conflict between the Myanmar military and Arakan Army (AA), a group demanding greater autonomy for the state's ethnic Rakhine people. A March 27 interview with a top-ranking AA representative published by the Mandalay-based Voice of Myanmar led to the detention of editor-in-chief Nay Myo Lin, who was brought to court on terrorism charges yesterday. The interview was published after the government declared on March 23 that the insurgents had been classified as a "terrorist group". Amnesty International's Nicholas Bequelin called for the charges to be dropped and for Nay Myo Lin's immediate release.

US deploys Patriot air defence system to Iraq

The United States has deployed Patriot air defence batteries to Iraqi bases to protect American troops recently targeted by Iranian missiles, US and Iraqi military sources told AFP Monday. Washington and Baghdad had been negotiating the placement of the defence system since January, when Tehran fired ballistic missiles at the western Iragi base of Ain al-Asad, which hosts American and other foreign troops. One of the Patriot batteries was deployed to Ain al-Asad last week and was being assembled, said US sources. Another battery was deployed to a base in Arbil, the capital of Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region. Two further batteries destined for Iraq were still in Kuwait.

SOURCE: AFP

deadly 'wet lung'

AFP. Washington

Researchers in the US and China reported Monday they have developed an artificial intelligence tool that is able to accurately predict which newly infected patients with the novel coronavirus go on to develop severe lung disease.

Once deployed, the algorithm could assist doctors in making choices about where to prioritize care in resourcestretched health care systems, researchers said.

The tool discovered several surprising indicators that were most strongly predictive of who went on to develop so-called acute respiratory disease syndrome (ARDS), a severe complication of the COVID-19 illness that fills the lungs with fluid and kills around 50 percent of coronavirus patients who get it.

The team applied a machine learning algorithm to data from 53 coronavirus patients across two hospitals in Wenzhou, China, finding that changes in three features -- levels of the liver enzyme alanine aminotransferase

(ALT), reported body aches, and hemoglobin levels -were most accurately predictive of subsequent, severe : health services were overrun. disease

Using this information along with other factors, the tool was able to predict risk of ARDS with up to 80 percent : the island undetected. accuracy.

A coronavirus-free tropical island nestled in the northern Pacific may seem the perfect place to ride out a pandemic -- but residents on Palau say life right now is far from idyllic.

The microstate of 18,000 people is among a dwindling number of places on Earth that still report zero cases of COVID-19 as figures mount daily elsewhere. The disparate group also includes Samoa, Turkmenistan, North Korea and bases on the frozen continent of Antarctica

A dot in the ocean hundreds of kilometres from its nearest neighbours, Palau is surrounded by the vast Pacific, which has acted as a buffer against the virus. Along with strict travel restrictions, this seems to have kept infections at bay for a number of nations including Tonga, the Solomons Islands, the Marshall Islands and Micronesia.

But remoteness is not certain to stop the relentless march of the new disease. The Northern Mariana Islands confirmed its first cases over the weekend, followed by a suspected death on Monday.

Klamiokl Tulop, a 28-year-old artist and single mum, is hopeful Palau can avoid the fate of Wuhan, New York or Madrid -- where better-resourced

But she describes a growing sense of dread, a fear that the virus is coming or could already be on

Inside Australia's four remote Antarctic research

ensconced on the only virus-free continent as they watch their old home transform beyond recognition.

In some places, reporting no cases does not always mean there are no cases to report.

North Korea has portrayed emergency measures as an unqualified success in keeping COVID-19 out, despite sustained epidemics in neighbouring China and South Korea.

But state media also appears to have doctored images to give ordinary North Koreans face masks -- handing sceptics reason to believe the world's most secretive government may not be telling the whole truth.

While Palau has no confirmed cases, it has still been gripped by the society-altering fears and economic paralysis that have affected eleswhere.

Supermarket aisles in the country's largest town Koror have seen panic buying and there are shortages of hand sanitisers, masks and alcohol.

The islands depend heavily on goods being shipped or flown in, meaning supplies can quickly run low. United Airlines used to fly six times a week from nearby Guam -- which has seen more than 50 cases -- but now there is just one flight a week.

Residents have been practising social distancing. Doctors are waiting for test kits and the government is building five isolation rooms that will be able to hold up to 14 patients.

It all feels like waiting for the inevitable.

About 30 doctors from Albania, one of Europe's poorest countries, were at work in northern Italy on Monday helping overwhelmed hospitals at the epicentre of the coronavirus pandemic. One of the doctors said he was simply following the Hippocratic Oath that medics have taken through the ages vowing to help their colleagues in need. The doctors arrived Monday in Brescia, a city whose COVID-19 death and infection rates have been among the highest in the world for the past month.

Saudi-led raids hit Yemen's Sanaa

AFP, Riyadh

The Saudi-led military coalition on Monday carried out multiple air strikes on Yemen's rebel-held capital Sanaa in retaliation for missile strikes on Riyadh. Residents in Sanaa reported multiple explosions after the bombing raids began, in a new escalation despite UN calls for a ceasefire to protect Yemeni civilians from the coronavirus pandemic. The operation comes after Saudi air defences intercepted Huthi ballistic missiles over Rivadh and the border city of Jizan late Saturday.

At least 19 killed in China forest fire

AFP, Beijing

Eighteen firefighters and one forestry guide died while fighting a huge forest fire in southwestern China, the local government said yesterday. State television footage showed large flames shooting into the sky from the mountains above the city of Xichang in Sichuan province, turning the sky orange. More than 1,200 local people have been evacuated from the worst-hit areas.

Middle-age patients too at high risk

AFP, Paris

Middle-aged people, and not just the elderly, have a dramatically higher risk of dying or developing serious illness from COVID-19, new research from Britain showed yesterday.

The findings came in a new comprehensive analysis of virus cases in mainland China.

Researchers from Britain analysed more than 3,600 confirmed COVID-19 cases as well as data from hundreds of passengers repatriated from the outbreak city of Wuhan.

They found that age was a key determining factor in serious infections, with nearly one in five over-80s requiring hospitalisation, compared to around 1 percent among people under 30.

Taking into account estimates of the number of cases that may not have been clinically confirmed -- that is, mild or asymptomatic infections -- the data showed the hospitalisation rate of patients in their fifties was 8.2 percent.

The study, published in The Lancet Infectious Diseases journal, estimated that the mortality rate from confirmed COVID-19 cases in mainland China was 1.38 percent.

If unconfirmed cases were taken into account, the death rate dropped to 0.66 percent.

The authors of the research said that while this was significantly lower than previous estimates, COVID-19 is still several times deadlier than previous pandemic viruses, such as H1N1.

"Our estimates can be applied to any country to inform decisions around the best containment policies for COVID-19," said Azra Ghani, a study co-author from Imperial College London.

"There might be outlying cases that

HOSPITALIZATION IN CHINA

18.4 percent of patients in their **80**s

4.3 percent patients between 40 to 49

Only 1 percent patients under **30**



But experts stress that without widespread testing it is impossible to know how many people may have become infected and recovered.

is likely much lower, in line with The Lancet study and previous research from China.

percent of patients in their 80s were hospitalised in China.

This compared to 4.3 percent for 40 to 49-year-olds and roughly 1 percent

proven deadly.

This means the true mortality rate

The Lancet study showed that 18.4

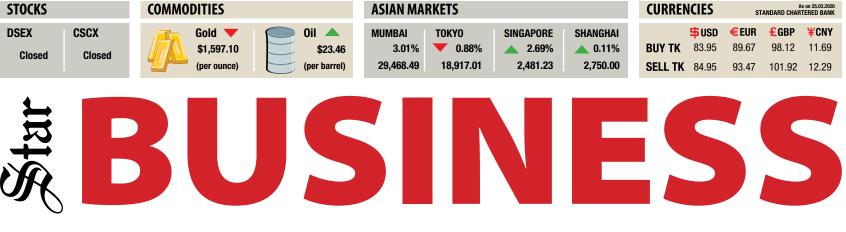
get a lot of media attention, but our analysis very clearly shows that at aged 50 and over, hospitalisation is much more likely than in those under 50, and

a greater proportion of cases are likely to be fatal.' Billions of people have been confined to their homes around the world as

governments desperately try to stop the spread of the novel coronavirus.

As of 1900 GMT Monday the virus had killed 38,466 people out of more than 791,000 cases globally.

That would mean 4.8 percent of all confirmed COVID-19 infections have for people in their 20s.

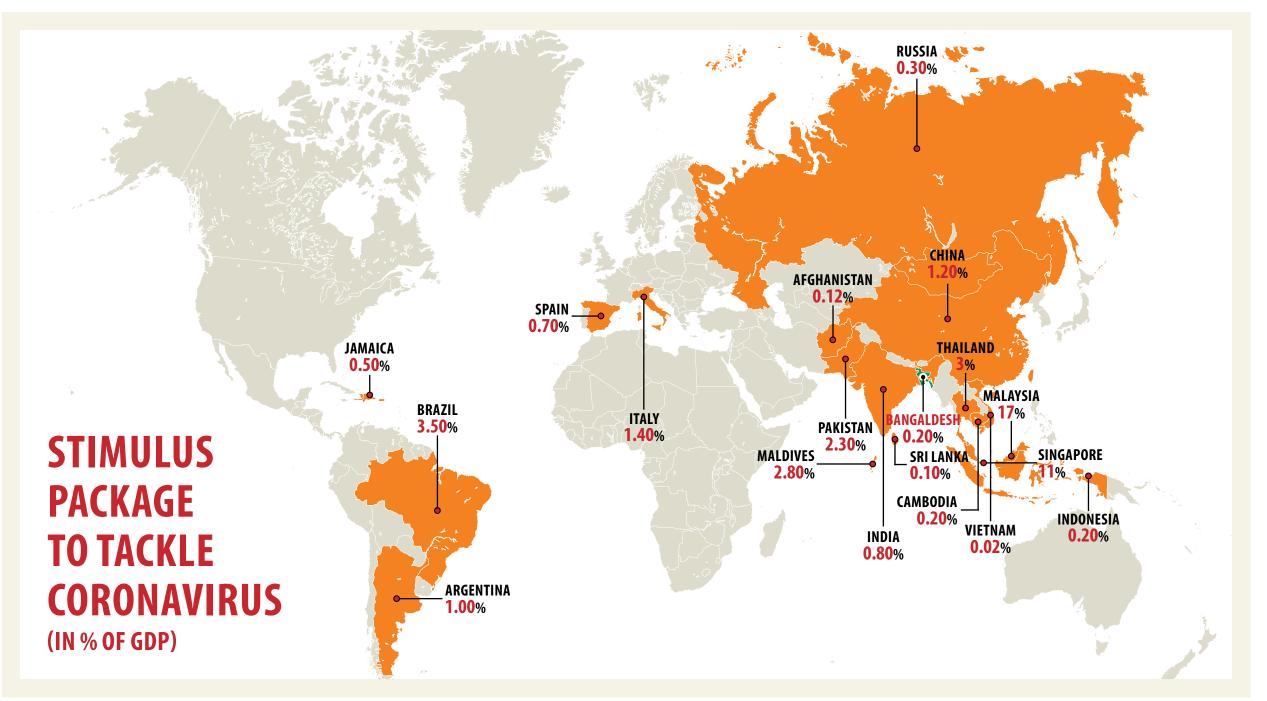




DHAKA WEDNESDAY APRIL 1, 2020, CHAITRA 18, 1426 BS 💿 starbusiness@thedailystar.net

TAMING CORONAVIRUS RAMPAGE

Bigger relief package needed to make up for lost economic activities



REJAUL KARIM BYRON and MD FAZLUR RAHMAN

Bangladesh has announced one of the lowest stimulus packages among South Asian and Asian peers in terms of gross domestic product (GDP) to counteract the impact of the coronavirus pandemic that is on course to bringing about an economic recession.

Last week, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina announced a Tk 5,000 crore stimulus package, which is equivalent to 0.2 per cent of fiscal 2018-19's GDP, to extend wage support to workers in the export-oriented industries.

If compared with a set of countries, Bangladesh is only ahead of Vietnam, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan, lags behind India, Pakistan, the Maldives, Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia and is at par with Cambodia and Indonesia

The stimulus package came after Bangladesh reported its maiden cases of coronavirus infections on March 8.

Since then, the deadly virus has infected 51 people and was linked to death of five, according to the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research.

In order to face expected increased demand for healthcare spending, the finance division of Bangladesh is preparing a revised budget for the fiscal year, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said on its website. It already

allocated an additional Tk 250 crore to the health services division.

The government is also considering measures to cushion the impact of the crisis on the economy, including the expansion of existing transfer programmes that benefit the more vulnerable households, as well as mechanisms to support exporting industries.

Increased allocation has been made to the Open Market Sale (OMS) programme to ensure adequate food supply for lowerincome class households, particularly those dependent on daily wages.

The National Board of Revenue has suspended temporarily duties and taxes on imports of medical supplies, including protective equipment and test kits.

"The recent announced fiscal response in Bangladesh is in the right direction, though far from adequate," said Zahid Hussain, a former lead economist of the World Bank's Dhaka office.

The most significant in terms of the amount of financial resources is the Tk 5,000 crore -which is equivalent to 0.2 per cent of fiscal 2018-19's GDP -- wage support to workers in the export-oriented industries.

Bangladesh Garment Now, the Manufacturers and Exporters Association claims that it pays Tk 4,000 crore in wages every month. The Bangladesh Knitwear

Manufacturers and Exporters Association probably pays an amount very similar.

Then there are the others: leather, footwear, furniture, ceramics and so on. Most are demanding more than a months' basic pay. Rationing is inevitable since the total is well short of the wage bill in the exports sector, the economist said in a write up.

In order to pool resources, the government is seeking \$750 million from the IMF.

The government wrote to the crisis lender on Sunday asking for the fund, said a finance ministry official.

The IMF has made available about \$50 billion through its rapid-disbursing emergency financing facilities for low-income and emerging market countries that could potentially seek support.

Initially, officials had said that the government was seeking \$200 million from the World Bank: \$100 million for the health sector and \$100 million in budget support.

Now, the government would like to get \$500 million from the Washington-based development lender, said one official of the finance ministry.

The Asian Development Bank may provide \$500 million to Bangladesh initially as budget support in order to help the country improve its health system and assist the vulnerable groups. It has already provided \$300,000.

The coronavirus may wipe 1.1 per cent off the GDP of Bangladesh as per a projection of the ADB.

"Many people have lost jobs because of the coronavirus. We have to stand by them," said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in her address to the nation on March 25.

Assistance would be extended to the lowincome people in their respective villages under the Ghore Fera Kormosuchi, a programme of the government. Homeless and landless people would be given homes, food for six months and cash, she said.

The Vulnerable Group Development (VGD), one of the largest safety net programmes, the Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) programme, which provides food transfers to the poor during disasters and major religious festivals, and the initiative to sell rice at Tk 10 a kg

would continue, she said. On March 23, the government declared a

general holiday from March 26 to April 4. The holidays were extended to April 11.

Government offices, private offices and courts have been closed. Commercial banks are operating shorter hours. Individuals have been requested not to leave their homes except to collect daily necessities and emergency supplies.

Beyond the domestic impact of the health crisis, the two main channels through which

the Bangladesh economy will be impacted are remittances and exports of garments, said the IMF on its website.

Remittances represent more than 5 per cent of GDP (close to \$17 billion in fiscal 2018-19), and a majority of the migrant workers are based in Gulf countries that are affected by the abrupt decline in oil prices.

Close to half a million migrant workers have returned since the outbreak of the pandemic.

The garment sector accounts for more than 80 per cent of the country's exports. The industry has been hit by the cancellation of \$2.90 billion in garment orders from major retailers in advanced countries, affecting 1,059 factories and 21 lakh workers, according to data compiled by the BGMEA.

Almost all garment factories were closed yesterday. The sector employs about 41 lakh workers.

In a recent interview with The Daily Star, Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal, however, said more measures, short-term, mid-term and long-term, would be taken to support all the industries that have been affected by the virus pandemic.

"Once the crisis is over, we will take whatever steps we need to take so that the affected businesses and businesses can return to their pre-crisis level. No sector would be left out.'

Now more buyers assure garment suppliers of taking goods

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Many international clothing retailers are coming up with assurances to help garment suppliers by taking the shipment of goods that have already been manufactured or ordered, in a relief to the exporters reeling from the coronavirus fallout.

Since the outbreak of the deadly and highly contagious virus, many Western clothing retailers, which have been sourcing from Bangladesh for decades, have sent letters to local manufacturers asking for cancellation of current and upcoming work orders as their own stores have been closed due to demand collapse and the measures aimed at slowing the spread of the novel virus.

worldwide are facing the challenges of order cancellation and delayed shipments.

A few brands, including PVH, Inditex, Marks & Spencer, Kiabi and Target have come forward and have informed of their decision to take the ready goods along with the goods in production, said Rubana Huq, president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), in a WhatsApp message.

We welcome their decision to support us and hope that the payment terms will remain unaffected in order to ensure liquidity flow for the factories," Huq told The Daily Star in a WhatsApp message.

This comes after the Swedish retail giant At the same time, there have been assurances H&M on Sunday assured its garment suppliers

been manufactured.

Spanish retailer Inditex has confirmed it would not stop taking goods in seas or in production lines, according to the BGMEA chief.

"Similarly, French Kiabi would take all the products that are ready and all the products whose work is in progress."

Target of the US has confirmed with full assurance that it would be taking all the orders in hand and take full responsibility and come up with solutions on work orders, Hug said.

"Target also reiterated that it would work as partners to come out of the crisis and has no intention to cancel any order. The list is getting long," Huq said.

French buyer Kiabi told Rising Group during a video-conferencing on Monday that it would

from the buyers when the apparel suppliers of taking shipment of goods that have already take the old orders worth nearly \$14 million, according to Mahmud Hasan Khan Babu, managing director of the garment exporter.

> He has been supplying knitwear items like T-shirts to Kiabi for more than nine years. He supplies garment items worth \$120 million to the French company every year.

> items worth \$700 million from Bangladesh every year over the last 20 years, the entrepreneur said.

> As of yesterday, \$2.90 billion worth of garment export orders were cancelled by international retailers, according to data compiled the BGMEA.

> Some 1,059 garment factories reported a loss of 920.36 million units of work orders. The cancellation will affect 2.10 million workers.

More than 3,079 woven, knit and textile factories were closed yesterday as the government is enforcing a nationwide lockdown. However, nearly 60 factories were open, according to sources in the industrial police.

The worst-affected countries such as Italy, Kiabi has been directly sourcing garment the UK, the US, France, Spain and Germany are the prime destinations of Bangladeshi garment items.

The US is the largest export destination for Bangladesh and takes apparel items worth \$6 billion a year. Germany also sources almost the same amount of garment items.

Bangladesh exports nearly \$3 billion worth of garment items to Italy and more than \$2.5 billion to Spain and France. The UK imports more than \$3 billion worth of garment items.

BUSINESS

Homegrown ventilator goes on clinical testing next week

Walton to manufacture the critical respiratory machines

MUHAMMAD ZAHIDUL ISLAM

The Military Institute of Science and Technology (MIST), an engineering university run by the Bangladesh Armed Forces, has designed a ventilator, in the most positive development for the nation panicking from the coronavirus pandemic.

Ventilators blow oxygen into the lungs of patients suffering from severe pulmonary stress and are essential for saving the lives of the sickest COVID-19 patients. And Bangladesh, a nation of more than 16 crore, has only 1,250 ventilators

MIST has received the certification of the design of the ventilator from a body of the World Health Organisation and is scheduled to go for a clinical testing from April 4 at the Combined Military Hospital in Dhaka.

Syed Mahfuzur Rahman, head of biomedical engineering department of MIST, shared the development during a virtual press conference organised by Zunaid Ahmed Palak, state minister for the ICT division.

In another development, Bangladesh yesterday received the patent, design and source code of the PB 560 model ventilator of Medtronic, a global medical device manufacturer, Palak said.

The government plans to go for local manufacturing of the highly technical medical equipment that are desperately in short supply worldwide.

MIST will go for stimulation from today, Rahman told The Daily Star after the media briefing.

"We are maintaining very close contact with the ICU department of the CMH and after completion of the simulation we will go for clinical testing."

And if any suggestion comes from the ICU team, those will be accommodated before applying to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

MIST informed the DGHS about the development. The state agency has assured the university of all kinds of support to expedite approval from local and international bodies, he added.

Local technology company Walton is also maintaining contact with MIST. If the ventilator design gets approval, Walton will start manufacturing it.

"We have already suggested Walton to started to work on hardware assembling and it is doing its part," Rahman added

Meanwhile, ICT Division will sit today with the research and development team of Medtronic's Hyderabad office. Interested local technology companies will also attend the meeting, Palak said.

"We are not sure how long it will take to develop







An almost deserted Shapla Square in Motijheel yesterday. The outsize sculpture near the centre of Dhaka typically sees hubbub of activities in normal times.

Govt needs to do more for SMEs, domestic industries

AKM ZAMIR UDDIN

There is no question that the export-oriented sectors, particularly garment, have been dealt a cruel blow by the global coronavirus pandemic. Which is why, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on March 25 have rolled out a Tk 5,000 crore stimulus package for them.

But there is a vast swathe of domestic industries and smalland medium-sized enterprises that has been hit, arguably, just as hard. But they remain criminally

BB be of genuine help to them?

been close to standstill for a good one month now and with no signs of things getting back to normal in the near future, is it rational to assume that they would be able to service the loan accounts must be left out of this facility, complete with the accrued interest come what may," he added. in two months' time?

Banks are unable to waive the interest payment for entrepreneurs as they now face a wide range of financial problems of their own due to the ongoing crisis, said Syed Mahbubur Rahman, managing

the period, so this begs the by offering to pay their interest question: could this move from amount, said Rahman, also an immediate past chairman When economic activities have of the Association of Bankers, Bangladesh a forum of managing directors of banks. "It must only be the regular,

upright borrowers who are given this relief -- the habitual defaulters Salehuddin Ahmed, a former

Besides, the central bank asked mobile financial services not to outsourcing impose any charge on deposits amounting to Tk 1,000 per day, as a result of which the vendors are losing money. "The government should be providing funds to banks and MFS vendors. The other countries have also followed the model," said Mansur, also the chairman of Brac Bank.

as well, said Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of the Policy Research Institute.

The lenders are now burdened with the financial packages declared by the government.

For instance, lenders will not be allowed to realise any instalment from borrowers until June but that has put pressure on their funds.

the banks and the MFS players. "And regrettably, the government

has not taken any measure to shield the small entrepreneurs, when they are the one of the driving forces of the economy."

FIROZ AHMED

generate The SMEs employment and keeps the economic growth rolling in, said Mansur, also a former official of the International Monetary Fund.

Rahman, Mansur and Ahmed

ventilators in the country, but once the first device is manufactured, the process will be easier and bulk manufacturing will begin."

It might take a few weeks to complete the whole process and the price will be much lower than the imported ones, he said.

In order to manufacture, Medtronic's technological support will be required at least for the first batch of products as it will not be easy for the local talent to produce them by only just following the source code and design.

Walton has showed interest in manufacturing the Medtronic ventilators, too. Some other local technology companies are also keen to join in the effort, Palak added.

If the local technology companies can manufacture the device, its price will be within Tk 2 lakh, said an official of the ICT Division.

It costs at least Tk 7 lakh if the device is imported from China and Tk 18 lakh to Tk 20 lakh if it comes from Europe.

Walton is ready to go for the manufacturing of the device and would be happy to produce it for local patients, said Liakat Ali, chief executive officer of the group's computer division, while attending the video-conferencing.

Even if Bangladesh does not get the expected success from the initiative, it will give a huge boost to the country's technological sector and help them do better in the coming days, said Anir Chowdhury, policy adviser of the Access to Information (a2i) project under the ICT Division.

Medtronic is sharing design specifications for a basic ventilator model with any company that wants to help produce them for hospitals racing to treat coronavirus patients.

The Dublin-based company on Monday posted specifications for its PB 560 ventilator "to enable participants across industries to evaluate options for rapid ventilator manufacturing to help doctors and patients dealing with COVID-19".

Software and other information for the compact model, on the market since 2010 and sold in 35 countries, will also be added for download soon, Medtronic said.

American electric vehicle and clean energy company Tesla has taken up on this opportunity: it would be manufacturing the model in its solar panel production facility.



Social Islami Bank hands over medical equipment to Regent Hospital in Uttara for protecting the healthcare personnel treating COVID-19 patients. Md. Sirajul Hoque, the bank's deputy managing director, handed over the items to Md. Mizanur Rahman, MD of Regent Hospital.

neglected thus far. An assistance of sorts was offered to them on March 19, when the Bangladesh Bank (BB) asked banks not to consider borrowers as defaulters if they fail to repay instalments until June 30 this year.

But, their accounts will still continue accrue interest during director of Mutual Trust Bank. "But, it is undeniable that the SMEs will have to be protected from the economic fallout in the interest of the country's GDP growth."

One way the government to waive the interest as they have can help them in this dark hour to provide interest to depositors

governor of the central bank, recommended the task of separating the good borrowers and entrepreneurs from the bad ones to banks.

"The government should address the issue promptly, or else a large number of local manufacturers will be forced to wrap up their businesses," he added.

Banks do not have any strength

The authority concern has yet to take any genuine rescue measures: the buck has been passed on to

went on to urge the central bank to form a special refinance schemes for the SME sector such that they can get loans at a discounted rate than the existing market rate for a soft landing to this drop in

economic activities. As of September last year, banks and non-bank financial institutions gave out Tk 205,491 crore to SMEs, which is about 20 per cent of their total outstanding loans, according to data from the central bank.

Flower industry wilting

SOHEL PARVEZ

If you happen to be in the southwest village Godkhali or its neighbourhood Panisara, you will find there is no dearth of colours from the stretches of rose, tuberose, marigold, gerbera and gladiolus gardens.

But the blooming beauties are now being discarded -- instead of

being cherished. The demand for flowers has screeched to a halt amid the ongoing countrywide shutdown to prevent the spread of the

deadly coronavirus that has claimed upwards of 38,000 lives thus far globally, including five in Bangladesh.

The usual scenes of cascading garlands of flowers, busy florists and salesmen attending to flower lovers in the capital's Shahbagh area have been absent since March 26, when the government's movement control order took effect.

"We could sell even during hartals and violent political unrests. But we have never witnessed such a situation," said Md Rafiqul Islam, who has grown gerbera, gladiolus and tuberose on his 6-bigha of land.

The flower industry is only one of the many across the country facing daunting prospects as the Bangladeshi and world economies stagnate because of the fallout from the coronavirus pandemic.

"It is a highly uncertain situation. Only his Almighty

knows what awaits us ahead," said the 50-year farmer, who has been plucking flowers to protect the plants from pests and disease and

On average, Islam cut 2,000 sticks of gerbera daily and threw them away last week. Those would have fetched him Tk 5,000 a day.

Being a perishable item and not easy to preserve, the country's 20,000 flower farmers, including Islam, and traders, are staring at ruins.

Every day, blooms worth Tk 1.5 crore were written off since March 20, according to Babul Proshad, president of Dhaka Ful Baboshaye Kalyan Samity, an association of flower traders.

Flower cultivation first began in Bangladesh in the 80s in Panisara of Jashore district. From there, it spilled over to other districts.

Today, flowers are grown on 2,200-2300 hectares in Bangladesh, according to the of Department Agricultural Extension.

mainly cultivate Farmers nine types of flowers, including marigold, gladiolus, tuberose, rose, gerbera and chrysanthemum.

The actual data on market size is not available and guesstimates of stakeholders vary between Tk 200 crore and Tk 1,500 crore annually.

The pandemic and the accompanying economic woes came at a particularly bad time for the flower industry.



Spring is a busy time of year for florists, and they depend on the revenue coming in from Valentine's Day, national days such as the International Mother Language Day on February 21 and Independence Day on March 26 and the first day of the Bangla calendar year, Pahela Boishakh, on April 14.

"Now, all of us will be in big trouble as there will be no celebrations for Pahela Boishakh," said Fazlur Rahman, a flower farmer in Kaliganj of the western district Jhenaidaha.

Flower cultivation and trade is the main livelihoods for many farmers in Jashore, Chuadanga and Jhenaidaha districts and they will lose the mental and financial capacity to continue cultivation, according to Md Abdur Rahim, president of the Bangladesh Flower Society (BFS).

In the face of closure, Afsar Uddin, who grows flowers in Dhaka's outskirts Savar, furloughed two of his permanent workers.

"There is no other way," he said, adding that he is considering giving the workers nominal wages. Rahim urged the government to provide support to flower growers.

"Agricultural produce like fruits and vegetables are being sold. But we are shut as flowers are considered non-essential items. The government should provide low-cost loans for us to urvive.

to ensure good yields.

EDITORIAL



LATE S. M. ALI

DHAKA WEDNESDAY APRIL 1, 2020, CHAITRA 18, 1426 BS

Averting ventilator crisis could be a game-changer

Govt should prioritise ventilator import and production

THE New York governor has rightly said that ventilators are to the coronavirus fight what "missiles were to WWII". Amid criticism of Bangladesh's response to the epidemic, such nuggets of wisdom are an important reminder of what can be done on a priority basis. So far, Bangladesh has been mostly focused on the expansion of testing and treatment services for coronavirus cases, without notable success. But one important aspect that remains still unaddressed is the lack of ventilators, the machines that help ICU patients with breathing. Covid-19, basically a respiratory illness caused by the virus, attacks the patients' lungs; ventilators help them breathe when they are no longer able to breathe on their own, thus increasing their chance of survival. Bangladesh has reportedly 1,250 ventilators-500 in public hospitals and 750 in private ones. That is far fewer than the amount required for a country with more than 16 crore people. According to one estimate, we might need at least 25,000 ventilators in the coming days.

We, therefore, fully support the call by experts to expand the ventilator service urgently. One of the options available to Bangladesh is to get the devices brought in from China, where the number of Covid-19 cases have dropped. Another is to make them locally. The government has already enlisted the service of local tech giant Walton to manufacture them with support from Medtronic. This is a welcome step, one that should be followed by more such initiatives. Intrinsically connected to this is the need to have professionals trained to run the devices properly. The private hospitals can be an important ally in this regard, as they can help develop necessary manpower and also expand the ventilator services by procuring and installing them on their own. While talking to The Daily Star, one expert said the government could provide Tk 500 crore in interestfree loans to private hospitals to install around 10,000 ventilators in two months. Such proposals deserve consideration. We need to remember that the coming months are going to be crucial, given the growing threat of a wider communal spread of the coronavirus, and we should encourage such initiatives since the private sector can play a huge role in this fight, as it has done in countries most affected by the virus.

Launch anti-Covid campaign in Rohingya camps

Not doing so carries grave risks

T is surprising that the Rohingyas have so far been left out of the ambit of effective campaigns against coronavirus. In this context, we fully endorse the call by journalists and NGOs to launch coronavirus awareness campaigns in the Rohingya refugee camps. At this point in time, to have nearly a million people outside the government's virus prevention campaign is strange. While an effective way of preventing the spread of the virus is by maintaining social distance, given the condition of the camps, where the refugees are living in cramped conditions, other measures, like making face masks, soap and water widely available, along with restricted movement, should be implemented. Another aspect of the effort to contain the spread of the virus is a robust campaign. But unfortunately, given the limited television access because of poor and irregular electric supply, the essential messages of the government campaign are not reaching the Rohingyas. It is essential that the dos and don'ts and vital information regarding coronavirus symptoms, and necessary instructions on prevention of the spread of the virus, get to the Rohingyas. Also, what cannot be overlooked is that, notwithstanding the security needs, the ban on mobile internet facilities also adversely affect the performance of aid workers and other agencies in their coordination and quick response efforts. This situation, we fear, has the potential to affect the lives of refugees, the local communities, and healthcare workers. And for this, it is essential for the ban on the use of internet in the refugee camps be lifted immediately. Understandably, the ban was imposed with security in mind in September last year, but at a time like this, when the country is addressing the scourge of Covid–19, the situation as it occurs today with regard to the Rohingyas, carries the risk of compounding the problems, both of security and health.



▲ Sheikh Hasina has struck a bold and inspirational note, as the leader of the nation must, in her impromptu remarks on March 29 while receiving contributions

RIME Minister

to the Prime Minister's Relief Fund to support the fight against the covid-19 pandemic. She listed quite an agenda for a wide range of actions. She had spoken in the same vein in her television speech to the nation on March 25. But are all in her administration, and society at large, hearing her message and gearing themselves up to respond? The Prime Minister spoke of

supporting the vulnerable members of society during this time, referring to social welfare programmes at the district, upazila, union and ward levels to ensure the supply of food and other essential items. She also stressed on the importance of maintaining social distance, while acknowledging the dilemma this creates in terms of livelihoods and food shortages in the absence of employment.

Do we really know where we stand today in respect of the pandemic's incidence of infection, recovery and number of deaths? What can we say about its trajectory, and the time it may take to reach its peak? Does one develop immunity against the disease by being infected, and how long does this last? When and how can the lockdown, social distancing and isolation be eased or further extended and expanded?

It is in the nature of a virulent and new viral zoonosis (diseases passed from animals to humans) that no definitive answers can be given to these questions. Countries with much greater technical capabilities and resources than ours are debating the answers.

Statistics 101 tells us that the numbers given in daily briefings every day by the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) are only numbers, which do not provide any epidemiological insight. Since there is no widespread testing based on representative population samples, the number of cases of infection detected and deaths recorded are numbers which cannot be compared to a denominator, the number of potential vulnerable cases, to derive percentages or proportions.

We simply do not have the epidemiological data for infection rates in the population and other rates, such as caseload, morbidity and mortality. Many wealthier countries, notably USA, seem to be in the same boat. In the absence of the epidemiological estimates, the health experts can only speculate about the trajectory and pattern of the curve of the disease, its peak, and the wind-down. Suggestions have been floated in international media that "herd

immunity"—enough people being exposed to the disease, developing immunity and breaking the cycle of infection—may be the answer. Herd immunity is an epidemiological concept that describes the state where a sufficient number in a population is immune through vaccination or acquiring natural immunity, and the vulnerable minority is then protected.

Experts regard this untenable as a preventive strategy because there is no vaccine yet, and it is not known yet if immunity is developed naturally against Covid-19, and if so, for how long. If immunity is acquired against the virus (a big "if"), it is estimated that at least 70 percent of a population have to be exposed to achieve herd immunity, given its person-to-person transmission national period of "hibernation."

Covid-19 response: What is

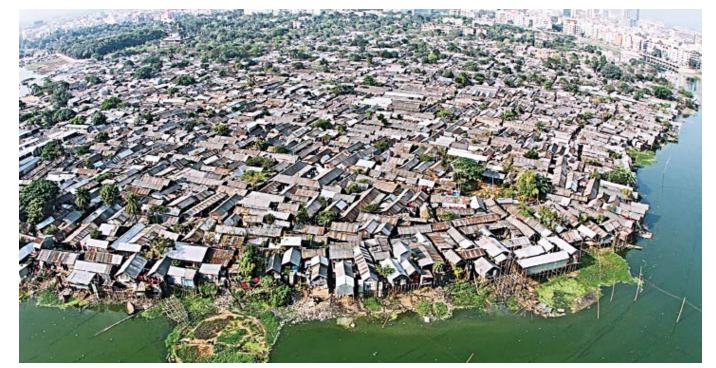
still missing?

In all probability, the worse is to come for Bangladesh before it gets better. Intensity and scope of the crisis and uncertainty about the timeline point to the urgency of government actions on a war footing.

Should there not be a cabinet task force to oversee, guide and take policy and strategic decisions on a daily basis? And should this taskforce not be supported by two inter-ministerial technical committees for health and safety and for economic support and relief, each headed by a cabinet member? These bodies would be able to assess the situation, take necessary decisions, and inform and reassure the public in a coordinated, coherent and authoritative way on a daily basis. The attention of and ward that need food and income support, especially in the informal sector, and this support and relief have to be delivered using existing safety nets and complementing these as needed. Can there be a moratorium on rent and utility charges for slum dwellers and low-income families? Transparency and involvement of community groups, youth and NGOs can help ensure efficiency and honesty in this effort.

Education measures: the school closure has to be prolonged. What can be done to support students, teachers and parents beyond steps initiated?

Treating infected people with compassion: deplorable behaviour towards suspected cases and burial of the dead arise from ignorance and superstition. Safety measures have to be observed, but



An aerial view of the congested Korail slum. With millions living in such slums across the city, a coronavirus outbreak could easily have severe impacts at the community level here.

rate. That is 125 million people for Bangladesh. Imagine the resulting numbers of deaths and sickness.

It is clearly both a health and economic pandemic, as the Prime Minister implied. The consequences of either can be equally devastating and the effects, unfortunately, feed on each other. The ongoing lockdown in Bangladesh has been extended by a week and may have to be extended again.

India, with its 1.3 billion people, has gone into a strict nationwide lockdown for three weeks from March 25, and in all probability this will have to be extended. USA has extended its federal lockdown to the end of April. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan said over the weekend that Japan was now at risk of an explosion of cases, with a spike in new cases in Tokyo, and a state of emergency may be in the offing. Spanish officials said that they have to impose more rigorous restrictions on residents' movements, leading to a these bodies are needed at least in the following areas.

Medical and health service response: guidelines and rules for medical facilities, public and private, throughout the country, have to be provided in order to serve people in need of care—whether they are affected by covid-19 or other ailments. Medical personnel have to be mobilised, supported and protected and given clear ground rules. Procurement, production and distribution of supplies and protective gear have to be arranged.

Surveillance and testing: there need to be guidelines and rules for testing for diagnosis and surveillance so that reliable epidemiology can be built up. Could the Gonoshasthaya Kendra test, cheap and quick, be supported and used widely, including for national sample surveys? This can help future surveillance and containment strategies that will be needed. Economic support and relief: lists have to be prepared in each union

surely the virus cannot jump out of the grave to infect people. More has to be done on an awareness and re-assurance campaign.

A major revision of the 2019-20 budget is in order, to redirect allocations and provide economic relief and support targeting of the most vulnerable. Many countries have designed stimulus and relief packages committing 10 percent or more of GDP. The next budget for 2020-21, in addition to a focus on restart and recovery of the economy, must have a contingency plan to continue support and relief, if elements of the crisis persist.

Control rooms have to be set up under the cabinet office and at the district levels. There has to be daily authoritative briefings for the public from the cabinet taskforce, as has been seen in many other countries. We

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR letters@thedailystar.net

Villages still at high risk While we are observing on the news and social media how the law enforcement agencies across the nation are monitoring the streets and asking people to stay indoors, it is indeed shocking that many villages, including mine, are least aware about the pandemic. With total disregard for social distancing, the residents, many of whom have returned from the capital and abroad, are spending time as if they are on vacation here. And I have received similar updates from my peers in their villages as well. Nobody seems to be abiding by the rules set out by IEDCR and the government, and when I try to explain the seriousness of the situation to the villagers, they pay no heed. It is shameful that they are behaving in this manner. I am extremely worried about the risky situation here and elsewhere. I believe only with strict military intervention can this be managed. I urge the authorities to pay attention to such vulnerable villages and help curb the carelessness that prevails. Abdus Salam, Nilphamari

are in a war, which must be won.

Dr Manzoor Ahmed is professor emeritus at Brac University.

Domestic violence during the time of corona Let's not forget the victims

The Covid-19 pandemic has opened our eyes to many vulnerabilities. With home quarantine proving to be a successful strategy, we are

EETA SHAMS MIZAN Up and practicing

it. Bangladeshi narratives about home quarantine now discuss how home is the safest place to ensure sanitisation, hygiene and disinfection.

But what if home is where you are most unsafe? While we feel safer with home quarantine, there is one group of people who may suffer very differently and much severely from this social distancing—the victims/survivors of domestic violence and child sexual abuse.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), one out of three women in the world experience physical or sexual violence in their lifetime, making domestic violence "the most widespread but least reported human rights abuse". With covid-19, the risk of abuse has increased. Newsweek reported that America is seeing a rise in child-abuse related injuries, often resulting from children spending more time at home with abusive parents. According to the Deputy Executive Director of United Nations Women, "the very technique we are using to protect people from the virus can perversely impact victims of domestic violence."

The situation is no different in Bangladesh. According to Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association (BNWLA), February 2020 saw a sharp rise in rape. It is not hard to guess that unreported cases of domestic violence will be no exception. Because domestic violence happens at the hands of people living under the same roof or sharing the same bed as the victim, it is hard to identify and hardest to prove, and these victims are the least visible in society. In the case of domestic abuse, much of it happens at the hand of family members who can abuse, assault, humiliate and torture women and children. Domestic violence can also be verbal, financial, psychological and sexual.

We now need to think carefully about how covid-19 home quarantine can accelerate these risks. Due to the countrywide lockdown and zero mobility, vulnerable women and children are trapped within the confines of their homes with their abusers 24/7. Earlier, they might have been safe for a limited time while the abusers were away for work. But now they are constantly present, with abusers having a stronger ability to control and terrify their victims.

Added to this is the fact that few Bangladeshi men share the domestic workload. With home quarantine, women are facing increased work pressure. If an exhausted wife dares to refuse husband's advances at night, she might risk receiving forced intercourse. And thanks to our colonial laws, such forced sex can't legally be considered marital rape.

Another dangerous effect of long isolation is a mental health crisis. Office going people may face reactive depression from sitting at home, which can lead to stress, frustration and anger. Stressed people often release their frustration on the weaker members of their familychildren, wives and elderly parents. Instead of seeking mental health assistance, you create a suffocating environment at home by blaming everyone around you. Victim blaming is a strong weapon of domestic abuse. The abusers may threaten family members by denying necessary amenities or making them feel guilty for falling sick. In the US, cases have been reported where

perpetrators have threatened to throw "disobedient wives" out on the streets so they can catch coronavirus and suffer.

And one can't emphasise enough the risks of child abuse. Home quarantine means children are more available and closer to family members and in Bangladesh, this can include distant relatives living with them. Stressed parents may physically punish their child unduly. Children may be forced to play with these relatives or live-in domestic helpers who might be potential abusers. These children have nowhere to hide or escape, and their abuse won't be immediately identified. The psychological trauma these children would face in that situation is irreversible.

But what makes the risk greatest for children and (many) women is that they have little or zero access to information. Firstly, they may not understand that what's happening to them is domestic violence. Secondly, they may have no money. They may never have taken a rickshaw on their own before. How can they move to safety? An abused victim needing medical support won't know how to find a hospital.

Our social mindset doesn't help either. Many Bangladeshis believe domestic violence is a private affair. Even during normal times, police rarely entertain complaints of domestic violence unless it involves fatal physical injury, dowry claims etc. With the covid-19 crisis, people may even think that talking about domestic violence is a luxury. This severely affects the victims. For male victims, there is the additional stigma of kapurushotto (cowardice), preventing adolescent boys and adult men from speaking up. And as hospitals, medical professionals and law enforcement agencies are busy with corona detection and isolation, they may be unable/unwilling to help victims of domestic and sexual abuse.

This can make home quarantine a

double-edged sword—home quarantine increases the violence, but it is also the *only way to* contain the spread of virus. In that case, what can we do to protect the potential victims? USA and Canada have actively acknowledged the increased risks of domestic violence during isolation, and are making continuous announcements about helplines and shelter homes. Bangladesh needs to follow suit.

Print and electronic media can play a big role here. BTV and Bangladesh Betar can give announcements to raise awareness and sensitise people about the harmful effects of family abuse, as well as share information on how to contact the police and one-stop crisis centres via hotlines. The police force should be more responsive at the district and sub-district levels, as well as in the metropolitan areas. Government agencies must be careful not to dismiss complaints of abuse. Television channels can put information on scrolls. Rights based organisations and mosques can raise awareness using loudspeakers. These announcements should be in a language understandable to the general people. Telecommunication companies can send informative bulk SMS to its users. Religious leaders and even social media influencers can use digital platforms to talk about domestic violence. Social media posts mocking women or patronising angry men in isolation should be reported immediately.

During these hard times, we are slowly reviving a part of our psyche that has been asleep for quite some time—thinking about the greater good. Let us not leave anyone behind; whether they are the victims of coronavirus or survivors of domestic or child abuse, or anyone else who may become more vulnerable during this self-quarantine period.

Arpeeta Shams Mizan is Assistant Professor of Law at University of Dhaka, and legal analyst (Bangladesh) at iProbono.



OPINION

Covid-19 Can this be the war to end all wars?



and epidemics make the perfect bedfellows. Wars create the perfect wombs where murky diseases can gestate and then

out entire populations as they spread around the world. While infectious diseases are democratic in naturethey do not discriminate between their victims based on their social or financial status-the worst hit is usually taken by the displaced who are more susceptible to catching the attention of these grim reapers: forced to live in sub-human conditions, often without food, water and access to basic sanitation facilities-malnourished or undernourished, with their immune systems compromised.

According to a study titled, "Conflict and Emerging Infectious Diseases", authors Michelle Gayer, Dominique Legros, Pierre Formenty and Maire A Connolly argue that "Conflict may lead to the displacement of large populations into temporary settlements or camps with overcrowding and rudimentary shelters, inadequate safe water and sanitation, and increased exposure to disease vectors during the acute phase of the emergency. In protracted and post-conflict situations, populations may have high rates of illness and mortality due to breakdown of health systems, flight of trained staff, failure of existing disease control programs, and destroyed infrastructure ... These conditions, which are encountered during or after war and conflict, favor emergence of infectious diseases.

At the time of writing, covid-19 has claimed 37,831 lives worldwide, according to Worldometer, and 786,459 people across 199 countries and territories continue to battle this pandemic. As per UNHCR data, there are currently 70.8 million displaced

people around the world, of whom 41.3 million are internally displaced and 25.9 million are refugees, including the 1.1 million Rohingya refugees living in Cox's Bazar.

In view of this reality, the current UN Secretary-General Ántónio Guterres' call to stop wars to fight Covid-19 together—"I am calling for an immediate global ceasefire in all corners of the world. It is time to put armed conflict on lockdown and focus combust, wiping together on the true fight of our lives'

The area hosts more than three million people, 1.5 of whom are estimated to be displaced, thanks to the nine-year-

long bloody civil war. The long standing war in the country has not only uprooted people; it has significantly destroyed the infrastructure of the country and damaged its public service facilities, including its healthcare system—once considered to be one of the best in the region. And things have gotten worse for the people of Idlib since fresh



A Syrian boy poses for a picture last week during an awareness workshop on coronavirus at a camp for displaced people in Atme town in Syria's northwestern Idlib province.

 —comes as no surprise. When a host is infected by a superspreader like Covid-19, they turn into a mobile carrier of the virus, spreading it among others through various means, especially where distancing or isolation is difficult.

The north-western Syrian province of Idlib, for instance, makes for an ideal breeding for the ravaging Covid-19.

attacks by the Russian-backed Syrian government started from December 2019, in an attempt to retake control of the area from rebel forces.

With nine confirmed cases of Covid-19 in the country and one death, health workers and medical professionals working in Idlib are now more worried than ever about the potential spread of the disease, while talking to Betsy Joles for a report published by Vox. According to Joles, Fear that the virus is already festering

"If we face this situation here, I think

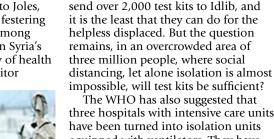
it will be endless," said Mohamed

Twaish, a field coordinator for Relief

Experts Association, a humanitarian

organisation working in Idlib province,

has been growing for weeks among humanitarian organisations in Syria's northwest, where the capacity of health care facilities to test and monitor



shattered forever.

especially among those living in camps. alleys of war-torn Idlib, the residents

have been turned into isolation units equipped with ventilators. They have also mobilised nearly 1,000 healthcare workers and are expecting delivery of protective gear, including 10,000 surgical masks and 500 respirator masks.

can only pray that this time they will be

spared the excruciating pain of death,

Only recently, the World Health

Organization (WHO) has decided to

loves lost and dreams of a better life

With other organisations, including Early Warning and Alert Response Network (EWARN) and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) sending more test kits and hygiene packages, the only consolation is that some of these ill-fated Syrians might be saved from the dark clutch of Covid-19, if not all of them. If hospitals in developed countries like the UK and US grapple to get the situation under control, one can only imagine what it would be like in Syria if there is a Covid-19 outbreak.

And then there is the irony of the UN Secretary-General's call to end wars to fight Covid-19 together. As if the world needs a disease to end all these meaningless, futile wars.

But it is amidst fire, fury and follies we live and we die, be it in sparsely planned cities or cramped camps and dark alleys. It is how it is, how it has been, and based on available objective evidence, how it will continue to be. The question: does it have to be, remains just wide-eyed naiveté.

Perhaps we do need a massive jolt to the system to break this cycle of eternal returns after all.

Tasneem Tayeb is a columnist for The Daily Star. Her Twitter handle is: @TayebTasneem

Homebound: The first eight days

choices

MUSHTAQUE CHOWDHURY

THE country, and the world at large, has changed at an unprecedented pace over the last eight days. All 193 of the UN member countries have reported the existence of Covid-19 within their borders. We remain homebound, along with a third of humanity. No other global crisis has reached so many countries and people in the past, not even the Spanish flu

movies is another popular pastime. Like When mosques in most Muslim many others, we re-watched the 2011 hit Contagion, which is very similar to what is happening in the world today. I also read Jajabor's epic Drishtipat after many decades.

Staying at home and the additional cleaning and apartment duties has not prevented me from my "other work". Many academics and researchers are taking the crisis as an opportunity to engage in research on the pandemic. As part of several virtual working groups, I have had the opportunity to connect with some very insightful people, which is furthering my thinking. Similarly, I am spending considerable time each day on conference calls with colleagues and friends from around the world who are concerned about the crisis and its potential responses. In one such meeting convened by a local group and attended by leading health specialists and some with close connections to the government's Covid-19 responses, it was abundantly clear that a grim future would be inevitable unless effective and decisive steps were taken without any further delay. The additional time has allowed me to become more socially active on social media platforms as well, where my friends and I keep tabs on each other. I was recently surprised to know that some were still meeting up for breakfast and *addas*. I have recently written about this lacklustre response we are seeing to the requests of "social distancing" and how it remains "foreign" in our culture. Thinking further, I am also disturbed by the lukewarm actions taken by our mosques and the powerful Islamic Foundation in restricting congregations.

countries including Saudi Arabia have forbidden congregations, we are continuing as if nothing or very little has happened—this can be fatally sloppy, careless and irresponsible. I may not be an authority on this, but wouldn't endangering the lives of your fellow musalli go against the grain of Islam? In times like these, the government must effectively lead and look beyond politics to make difficult

who suffer most, particularly those who live hand-to-mouth and depend on meagre wages. The Prime Minister, in her address to the nation, announced a package of financial assistance for those who would be hard-hit by the crisis. These include an incentive package worth Tk 5000 crore to help the export-oriented sectors. This, as she said emphatically, would be used to pay for workers' wages. She also announced a few other measures for the rural poor.

a new kit by Gonoshasthaya Kendra (GK) was exciting. I started wondering what BRAC was doing. In any previous disasters, be it floods, cyclones, civil strife or refugee crisis, BRAC was always at the frontline. As part of this, BRAC and Channel-i have already initiated a joint communication programme on Covid-19. I understand the new Chairman of BRAC is also planning to convene a (virtual) meeting of leading NGOs to coordinate the response efforts. The show of voluntarism across the country is also very encouraging. Many civil society groups are active in producing protective gear and creating awareness. I feel very proud that the alumni of my school in Sylhet have been extending such help to those needing them. There are many others like this. We must also keep in mind our elders. Isolation, especially for them, can be debilitating. I have been trying to do my bit by chatting with elderly relatives and my own teachers. I recently called Professor MG Mostafa, a former Chairman of the Statistics Department of Dhaka University. His wife, also my teacher, passed away many years ago. He is alone in his apartment in Uttara, and I could sense how happy he was to receive such a call in these days of distress and uncertainties.

PHOTO: AAREF WATAD/AFP

suspected coronavirus cases is especially

Caught in the middle of the

infighting between Turkey-backed

the prospects of Idlib residents to

combat the disease look pretty grim.

Amid apprehensions that the disease

might already be lurking in the dark

rebels and the Russia-backed Assad

regime, and in the middle of nowhere,

limited.

in 1918. It is levelling socioeconomic gaps. Rich, poor, the powerful and the disenfranchised - all are susceptible.

My wife and I decided to give in to the mounting pressure from our children and finally stay home from March 18, 2020—incidentally the day the first Covid-19 related death was announced in Bangladesh. At the risk of sounding insensitive, the first hit for us was in our apartment building. The caretaker left his job without notice. The cleaner became irregular. I decided to take over some of their jobs, including distributing newspapers to different apartments. As a precaution for all involved, we gave paid leave to our help.

Now that we are on our own, I'm letting the inner optimist out and approaching this from a glass halffull perspective. I finally have time to do things that I don't normally do or am not allowed to do. Yesterday, I decided to cook bhaji with shalgom. This particular winter vegetable is normally used as an ingredient with fish or meat, not as a bhaji. My wife appreciated my cooking with a grain of salt-"delicious but it has too much oil." I have re-taken charge of cleaning, which I used to do while abroad. Watching

However, it is not clear whether these

We must also keep in mind our elders. Isolation, especially for them, can be debilitating. I have been trying to do my bit by chatting with elderly relatives and my own teachers. I recently called Professor MG Mostafa, a former Chairman of the Statistics Department of Dhaka University. His wife, also my teacher, passed away many years ago. He is alone in his apartment in Uttara, and I could sense how happy he was to receive such a call in these days of distress and uncertainties.

Of late, the government has taken a number of positive steps. However, while the country is now in a near "lockdown" condition, why are we not calling it so? The government offices have been given *chhuti*, and to many, as we have seen, this is interpreted as "holiday". In such emergencies, it is always critical to be clear, transparent and decisive—call a spade, a spade! In such situations, it is always the poor

are new funds for the looming crisis or part of already existing social welfare schemes run by the government. If it is the former, we need to know how much money the government is committing and also make sure that these are efficiently used. If the latter, the government must commit new funds because the existing schemes reach only a section of the poor.

The news of the development of

This is the time to stay at home, but we must remember to not shut all doors, figuratively speaking. We have to stay active and innovative and extend whatever assistance we can to face this unparalleled crisis together.

Mushtaque Chowdhury is adviser and founding Dean of James P. Grant School of Public Health BRAC University.



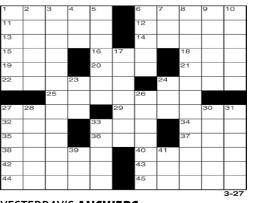


CHINUA ACHEBE (1930-2013) Nigerian novelist, poet, professor and critic

While we do our good works, let us not forget that the real solution lies in a world in which charity will have become unnecessary.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH					
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YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

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E-mail: lifestyleds@yahoo.com





Ujayyi Breath to Boost your Immunity During Covid-19

Ujayi breath — breath of fire — helps us burn away toxins in our system. Prana is the life force, also known as chi, ki, and the Force in various cultures. We inhale 'prana,' and to expand our capacity to draw in more life force we practice 'pranayama,' or perform breathing techniques designed to increase the flow of prana.

Pranayama is the fourth limb of yoga. We need prana to battle the darkness of the ego and illuminate our conscience for 'samadhi,' an eternal state of bliss.

There are numerous pranayama exercises to expand one's prana. One breath that can be performed to improve prana is called the 'ujjayi breath,' meaning the breath of fire, or of victory. The ujjayi breath sounds like the breathing of Darth Vader from Star Wars, or like ocean waves, and is brought about by constricting the back of the throat to make a sound, both during inhaling and exhaling.

To practice the ujjayi breath, try fogging a mirror or glass in your hand. Try to recreate the sound that comes out with your mouth closed but your tongue down, so your mouth cavity is hollow. Practice inhaling and exhaling to a count of four each, with the mouth closed, inside hollow, making the sound. The inhale should be smooth and unhurried. The exhale should be deep and long. This is the ujjayi breath!

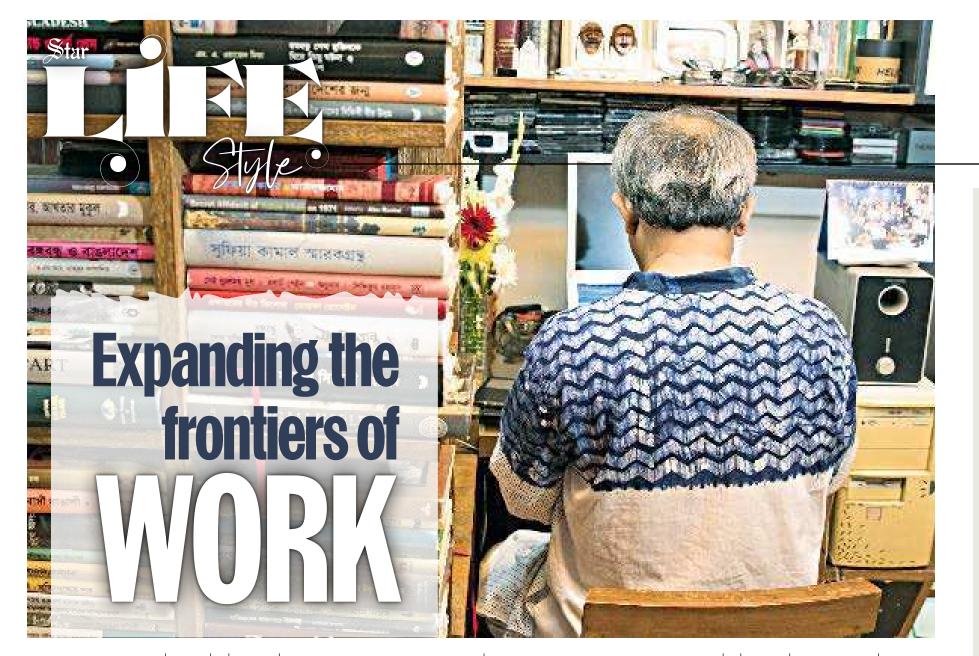
Using the ujjayi breath during yoga asanas helps us regulate exercise in terms of length and vigour for each asana, as we want to achieve a rhythm that matches the four-count-breath. The sound helps us stay aware of the movement of the breath so it also serves in strengthening our concentration on the meditative practice of breathing.

Ujjayi breath is both energising and relaxing. Two mindful ujjayi breaths are all it takes to draw you away from the stress of an obsessive thought to the respite of your own space.

The breath should be both 'dirga' (long) and 'suksma' (smooth), according to the yoga sutras of Patanjali. Remember to enjoy the sensation of the inhale and enjoy the sensation of the exhale, thus creating joy with each breath.

Shazia Omar is a yogini, an activist and an author. www.shaziaomar.com

Photo: LS Archive/Sazzad Ibne Sayed



Home and work have been two separate realms ever since we stopped doing homework assigned from school. Since then, work is work, and home is for unpaid work!

The very concept of working from home has, at times, been confounding— a part of a culture alien to many, an otherworldly experience, but something not at all new. To some, it would not even constitute the definition of "work," per se. Work, for generations, has meant having a fixed mode, place and structure— clockwork regularity in offices full of tables and later computers, and of course colleagues, alongside the exchanges of smiles, fist-bumps, hi-fives, and all the hustlingbustling-grinding which goes in-between. But still, it is a tried and tested concept, in many parts of the world, especially in the creative fields.

With the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, which has quickly engulfed the entire world, the idea of working from home has suddenly become a necessity. It has forced many companies to rethink their policies and become more flexible.

DIGITISING THE WORKPLACE

With the recent public health crisis, numerous companies in the country, and around the world, have shifted their day-to-day operations and activities to the confines of the homes of their employees. This has enabled them to create an entire digitised platform of getting messages across and delivering the services within

conferencing using Google Hangouts to get people in the mood for work, helping to enable a virtual connectivity, through which, employees will feel like they are working in unison," remarked Abdullah, who took a couple of test trials of remote working with certain segments of the office when the initial news broke about the virus.

What is more fascinating, is the multitude of apps that have become accessible to the wider public in light of the recent events, making it easier to actually execute a home-working environment digitally conjoined to the office space. Google and Microsoft have extended their support by granting free access of Hangouts Meet, and Microsoft Teams as the coverage and scope of the meetings increase. Slack, Flock, Zoom, and Toggle are tools employed for collaborative purposes, with messaging, video conferencing, basic time tracking, and chat options available.

With the basics of a proper Wi-Fi connections set in place, and a functioning PC or laptop, one can easily set up their workstation.

EXPANDING THE SCOPE

Working from home is no longer relegated to the freelancers and has encompassed

Universities have employed a wide variety of options to bring teaching into an online space with the help of specific learning management systems, opening up windows for online discussions as well as options to submit assignments, quizzes, and exams.

Shahriyer Shuvo, the head product designer at Gaze, an artificial intelligence start-up, says that working from home allows a balanced approach to work, as remote guidelines can be set in consultation with the management team paving the way for better time management and resource allocation from his part. Being a student, it also helps him to arrange flexible working hours and make space for both his studies and the iob.

Working from home can be chaotic and blissful at the same time. In the office, where there is constant physical monitoring, there is more space for both employers and employees to expand their scope of work by allowing different strategies of work and restructure the stratification of the work processes. Tools like Trello, and Tomates for iDevices allow for the navigation of the restructuring of role and duties with a focus-based approach on the overall management of

For a sizeable number of people, working from home brings a great number of challenges when it comes to proper and efficient networking due to fluctuations in Internet connectivity, alongside adjusting to the technological prowess of apps and devices. In such cases, having daily video calls becomes a hassle.

To create a more streamlined flow of work, certain firms have kept alternate days of work, allowing certain employees to work within the premises in a given timeslot, balancing the rate of the progress while at the same time, helping employees to relax into their positions. The system of responsibility sharing alternates between the employees.

The mental set-up of working from home without the presence of colleagues remains critical to carving a proper mental state, and thus many firms begin the day with an online meeting. The physical and mental preparation of working from home needs to be taken into stride to make sure the homely feel of a vacation does not become overwhelming and boundaries are set to deter any kind of discrepancies and disturbances when working

Communication becomes a hassle, particularly when engagement of groups come into question, with more intensive and extensive networking and planning needed to be put in place, perhaps even beforehand, given there is little to no chance of a physical face to face contact. What was considered to an obscure rarity is now developing and pushing the frontier of work, enabling greater modes of thinking and engagement amongst employees and employers alike. It has also become a necessity for now.

the set period.

Abdullah Bakr, CEO of Jarvis Digital, a digital marketing and advertising agency, says, "Working from home comes with a set of challenges and perks at the same time, as we engage in automated delivery of the services and work in groups." A cohesive digitised workplace is set up with the use of the air table, a spreadsheetdatabase cloud-based app, which tracks the progress of the work designated to the members, alongside the regular check-in, instant notifications, and checkouts.

"We start the day with the daily video

THE FEARLESS OLIVE

BY REEMA ISLAM

a multitude of professionals, allowing the shifting of duties and shuffling of working strategies.

Md Saiful Islam, a lecturer of Computer Science and Engineering from BRAC University, says that doing classes from home is a challenge for teachers and students alike.

"This is a completely new experience for me, with live sessions taken over the Internet with discussion forums, videos, tutorials, and assignments, all of which take place with clockwork precision in line with pre-set class schedules," he remarked.

the firm, with breaks and alarms set in between.

NOT ALWAYS A BED OF ROSES

A recent graduate working as an operations analyst in an energy company finds the concept of working from home a daunting task, as there is the problem of communication permeating during times of decision making. The lack of handson approach at times makes it difficult to understand the workload. Real life meetings allow confidentiality and does not allow the overlapping of personal and professional worlds.

By Israr Hasan Photo: LS Archive/Sazzad Ibne Sayed





Albert Vegetable dosa, with seasoned mash potato filling

As the world reels under the panic of a pandemic and our homebound lives, interjected with house work, looking after our children and working, turn haywire, it is very important to keep our spirits up in any way we can.



Teo Asparagus with eggs! Spring comfort food!

Food in the time of COVID-19 from around the world

Food of course, is the best way to bring us together, and the joy of eating a well-cooked meal is still one of life's best pleasures. So, I once again rallied around my friends, and this time, I got a very positive response given that everyone was looking for an option to brighten up their meal times.

I hope our contributions of staying home go a long way in fighting this pandemic. Best wishes and stay safe, everyone!

MOROCCO

My friend Wafaa Afkir from Morocco sent me some lovely images, but she has been taking these pictures of her food in any case to prove to her mother, in another city, that she is indeed eating well!

Moroccan authorities imposed a nationwide lockdown on 20 March, and citizens are only allowed to get their most urgent jobs done like getting medicines and grocery. However, they are required to carry identification and proof of residence and authorisation from their employer and Moroccan authorities in order to attend work. However, people were already quite aware of the situation and many opted to go into voluntary isolation before the authorities announced the lockdown. CANADA

I got two enthusiastic friends from Canada, Nusrat Matin and Tahmid



Monir bitter gourd

Huq to share their time in quarantine, but by the looks of it, they seem to be having daily feasts!

Canada's response has been appreciated by many, not only because Trudeau reached out to his nation on a daily basis, but because they seemed to take it as seriously as was needed. However, on a private note, I see a bright future as amateur chefs for both my friends Tahmid and Nusrat!

INDIA

Mumbai sent me these tantalising images of simple, yet gourmet worthy food. An avid foodie, Albert seems to be taking the sudden nationwide curfew well, and is trying to bring some life into his meals by making them as colourful as possible. **AUSTRALIA**

Monir Hossain from Australia is a dear friend who is an avid photographer turned promoter of holistic wellbeing and healthy food. He took the bitter gourd or korola from his sister's vegetable patch a week back and is properly using his time to hone his biriyani-making skills.

"I am already fed up after a week's self-isolation. Initially, my office was expecting me at work but I had reminded them the need for me to stay back, but now, I hope my gardening, the orchids in my kitchen, and my cooking can keep me positive." GREECE

My friends Theodosia and Jasmine sent pictures of their meal from Greece, and a mixture of nostalgia and happiness surged through me, not just because the images reminded me of Greek food, but because Greece is doing a wonderful job of handing this pandemic. The situation is well under control, with people being allowed to walk their dogs or go running or doing groceries. However, they need to send a message before leaving their homes about where they are going. The Citizens' Services Centre has delegated peopl held on balconies around Italy.

"We're all home safe and trying to stay informed and using this time to realise how our isolation helps to save other's lives, the more fragile ones specifically. It is also a great time to meditate, spend time with your loved ones and hope for a better future," she said.



Andy Oyster mushrooms, fresh garlic, a little onion, and some kind of kale

USA Tanjina Islam is a Bangladeshi singer and a woman of many other talents from the US, among which are her culinary skills, of which I was not aware! She shared a healthy recipe for her vegan koftas, amidst USA's initial lukewarm response for a lockdown.

Ingredients

2 cans chickpea 1/2 can corn 2 baked potatoes 1 onion, chopped 2 packs firm tofu 1 tsp cumin power 1 tsp coriander powder 1/2 tsp Kashmiri chilli powder, or cayenne pepper 2 tsp soya sauce 2 tsp corn flour 3 tsp Italian bread crumbs 3 tsp olive oil salt, to taste Method

Simply mix them all, shape them out into balls and in an oiled baking dish, bake them until they seem cooked. Andy Gladish on the other hand took this opportunity to cook himself up a spectacular meal!

"I just made a simple, hearty breakfast and everything is from local farmers, people that I know and trade with, except the goat cheese brie on top of the eggs," he said.

Photo courtesy: Reema Islam

Closer to home, Albert Barton from

with biscuits

Wafaa kahwa



e-mail: sports@thedailystar.net DHAKA WEDNESDAY APRIL 1, 2020, CHAITRA 18, 1426 BS

JOGINDER HAILED BY ICC

Joginder Sharma bowled the key final over when India beat arch-rivals Pakistan in the first Twenty20 World Cup cricket final in 2007, but says he faces more pressure as a police officer making sure people stay home during the coronavirus crisis. The International Cricket Council (ICC) and others have hailed the efforts of the 36-year-old as he hits the streets of India in his role as an officer of the law. "Obviously this contribution is much bigger because people are losing their lives," Sharma told AFP from Hisar in Haryana where he is now a superintendent.





Bashundhara Kings captain Daniel Colindres is maintaining a healthy routine to pass the days at home during these difficult times, allocating time for reading books and sipping coffee, but the Costa Rican World Cupper also takes his fitness quite seriously.

Local forwards lack belief in their qualities: Colindres

ANISUR RAHMAN

World Cupper Daniel Colindres has become a household name in Bangladesh football after he played a key role in Bashundhara Kings' Bangladesh Premier League triumph in his debut appearance last season.

The Costa Rican was in the spotlight right after he landed here in September 2018 as he was came to Bangladesh soon after representing his country in the 2018 FIFA World Cup. The now 35-year-old forward has continued displaying his talent in domestic and international circuit for the Bashundhara Kings.

Since the Bangladesh Premier League has been halted due to the outbreak of coronavirus, Colindres, like other footballers, is staying indoors, at his Bashundhara residence and continuing with a fitness regime.

"I am fine, thank God, I have Maldivian outfit TC Sports 5-1 in daily routine -- I get up, eat breakfast, exercise, bathe, eat lunch, read a little, have coffee in the afternoon, watch TV for a while, talk to my family, have dinner and go to bed," – this is how Colindres explained his current routine when asked via a team official.

The captain of Bashundhara Kings is following instructions of his team's trainer to stay fit as he works out at the free space of his house. However, he is a bit anxious about his homeland Costa Rica where the number of infections is growing even though none of his family members have yet been infected by the coronavirus.

Last season, Colindres had Marcos Vinicius of Brazil as his strike partner, but this time he is missing a genuine partner upfront at the domestic circuit. At the international circuit, though Colindres found Argentine striker Hernan Barcos as his partner, and the two combined to thrash

their AFC Cup debut match.

"Barcos is a great player. It is very easy to adapt with his game even for the team because he brings a lot of quality and experience," said Colindres, who was asked whether he is missing Barcos in the league.

"If much, for his qualities and leadership, but we also miss other players like Emon [Babu], Motin [Mia], [Masuk Mia] Zoni," said the 5ft 11inch forward, who scored a brace against Rahmatganj MFS to help Bashundhara Kings clinch the Federation Cup title.

Colindres believes the competition in the Bangladesh Premier League has increase, hence retaining the league title is going to be difficult. He also believes they need to fine-tune things to move up from the sixth position that the team currently lie on the 13-team table.

"We are fighting the top, but we lost last two games, we are three points away from the first-

placed teams and we must improve some details to be on top," said Colindres, who has so far scored four goals in five matches following 11 goals in the league last season.

"I hope I can see Bashundhara Kings as league champions again and fight to win the AFC cup," hoped the Costa Rican, who is happy that the foreign forwards are fulfilling the demand of the club management by scoring goals regularly.

"For foreigners it is good because they [clubs] hire us to give results. As for the local forwards, from my point of view, they lack belief in their qualities," opined the inspiration forward.

"Professionally, it seems to me that I have met expectations, together with the team we have achieved great things and will fight to put Bashundhara Kings in the international eye. Outside of the profession, I have enjoyed my experience in Bangladesh, concluded Colindres.

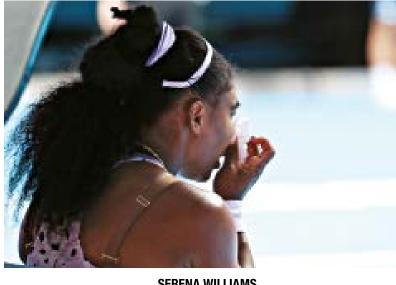
CORONAVIRUS LOCKDOWN Mental health risks for athletes, experts warn

AFP, Hong Kong

Fear, stress and money worries: coronavirus lockdown is hard for anyone, but athletes are facing extra mental health risks as they go from highly active lifestyles to isolation and boredom, experts warn.

While some housebound athletes have posted upbeat videos of themselves, the stress caused by the extreme adjustment and uncertain future looks likely to take its toll.

Long-term effects on athletes after the SARS and swine flu outbreaks included anxiety, obsessive handwashing and fear of getting close to people, Carolyn Broderick, Tennis Australia's chief medical officer, told



Bundesliga eyes May restart

AFP, Berlin

German Bundesliga clubs on Tuesday approved measures to suspend the season for a further four weeks due to the coronavirus crisis, amid reports that games would resume from the first weekend in May.

(DFL) directors announced plans last week to extend the current two-week suspension until April 30, a decision approved by Germany's 36 professional clubs in a video conference on Tuesday.

"The board felt a lot

Reminescence: My first match

In these times of social distancing, we must be safe while remembering that we do not get too used to the world being at a standstill. We were meant to go watch matches together, agree with a few of our neighbours and

disagree with the rest. So, we are taking turns at The Daily Star Sport talking about our first live experience at a sports venue. AL-Amin from Madras, 1995

> For journalist who has been in the profession for 30 years, it is very hard to vividly recall his first assignment on

a sporting event. It was in December 1995 when I was assigned by The Daily Star to cover the South Asian Federation (SAF) Games, staged in the Indian city of Madras.

working all their World Cup heroes, including stick-wizards Shabaz Khan and Tahir Zaman.

But from the start to the final whistle it was the vibrant Bangladesh players who captivated the audience with a high-octane brand of hockey that almost stunned the world champions. The match eventually ended at 3-3 thanks to a controversial ruling from Indian umpire Shakil.

German Football League

of support (from the clubs)," said DFL president Christian Seifert, adding that league was "sticking together".

Games had been halted

hopes are growing that they

Earlier Tuesday, Kicker

resume the season from the

first weekend of May, with

games to be played behind

weekly had reported that

the DFL now planned to

since mid-March, but

might resume a month

from now.

closed doors

AFP. But the impact of the current pandemic is unprecedented, with athletes sidelined worldwide.

Those affected range from wellpaid superstars such as tennis's Serena Williams to journeyman pros and Olympic hopefuls whose lives have been thrown into turmoil.

Williams admitted that social distancing because of coronavirus had left her feeling "a ton of stress".

"Every little thing makes me crazy.

SERENA WILLIAMS

And by anxiety I mean I'm just on edge. Any time anyone sneezes around me or talked about it in a conference call this coughs I get crazy," she said on TikTok. Concerns have been raised about

Australia's swimmers and cricketers, after athletes in both sports suffered well-documented psychological problems in the past.



SHORT CORNER

Wimbledon to be cancelled, claims German tennis official

The vice-president of the German tennis federation has predicted that Wimbledon will be cancelled on Wednesday and slammed the French Tennis Federation for moving the French Open.

Dirk Hordorff told French sports daily L'Equipe that he expects Wimbledon, scheduled for June 29-July 12, to be scrapped due to the coronavirus pandemic.

"This is not a rumour, they will announce that they are cancelling Wimbledon," he said.

In a move that surprised the tennis world, French Open organisers postponed their tournament and moved it to September 20.

"You could reorganise Roland Garros for September or October, but not Wimbledon, the grass would be too damp," Hordorff said.

Hordorff hit out at FFT president Bernard Giudicelli for his handling of the rescheduling of Roland Garros, the claycourt Grand Slam.

"What president Bernard Giudicelli did is a disgrace, for tennis and for France," Hordorff said.

The controversial switch leaves the French Open starting a week after the US Open finishes, if that event retains its original slot in New York.

Ajax cancel Nouri's contract

Ajax Amsterdam have cancelled the contract of Abdelhak Nouri, who suffered serious and permanent brain damage after a heart attack playing for the Dutch club in a pre-season friendly in mid-2017.

Ajax continued to pay his salary but have now formally cancelled the contract, which was due to automatically renew on July 1, the Dutch media reported on Tuesday. The club are in talks with Nouri's family about a future solution for the player, who has been moved to a specially adapted room at his home after years in hospital, the daily De Telegraaf added.

There has been a lengthy dispute between Ajax and Nouri's family, who are looking for a settlement after Ajax admitted providing "inadequate" on-field medical treatment for Nouri after the midfielder collapsed during a friendly against Werder Bremen in July 2017. --REUTERS

It was the first overseas assignment for a TDS reporter and considering the communication and information technology available at that time -- a typewriter was the most prized possession of a reporter and the fax machine was the tool through which to transmit reports at that time -- a journey from Dhaka to the South Indian city was itself an arduous three-day venture with Coromandel Expressproviding



the fastest train journey from the then Calcutta to now Chennai. It was the small matter of a 32-hour trip.

The seventh edition of South Asia's biggest sporting jamboree took place from December 18-27, and itwas not at all a happy harvest as far as Bangladesh's ambition for gold was concerned. Football was one of the events that Bangladesh wished to win but eventually failed. At that time Bangladesh were fiercely competitive in the track and field events as well as in swimming.

But one particular game that I have watched from the stands etched a lasting memory in my mind. It was a field hockey game involving Bangladesh and Pakistan at the brand new Radhakrishnan Stadium. It was a league game and Bangladesh were out to make an impression after conceding a big defeat against hosts India.

It may be mentioned here that Pakistan appeared in the tournament as defending world champions and hockev has been introduced in the SAF Games for the first time.

The Pakistan team included almost

Shakil awarded a penalty stroke at the fag end of the game with Bangladesh leading 3-2. The umpire later acknowledged to the devastated Bangladesh players that it was a mistake on his part, which eventually cost Bangladesh a dream final against India.

Twenty-five years have passed since then and I have witnessed some of the finest sporting moments and a few heart-stopping defeats in other fields,

In that game Bangladesh's two centre-forwards, Mohammad Sadek and Mahabub Harun, were simply unstoppable. Sadek was mesmerising, his stickwork was breathtaking and his telepathic communication with Harun was amazingly precise.

but that was a game still remains the most fulfilling for me, considering the context and the opposition.

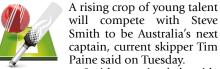
In that game Bangladesh's two centre-forwards, Mohammad Sadek and Mahabub Harun, were simply unstoppable. Sadek was mesmerising, his stick-work was breathtaking and his telepathic communication with Harun was amazingly precise.

Sadek scored a beautiful field goal and set-up the other for Mus Miah to score from a penalty stroke. Rabiuddin probably scored the other goal from a penalty corner. It may be mentioned here that Pakistan scored all their goals from penalty strokes.

It was a game every Bangladeshi would probably love to watch again and again, especially at a time when they are confined to their homes in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak. But unfortunately, the SAF Games has never been considered a lucrative tournament and the game has not been recorded for posterity. Still, it will remain a treasure trove in the minds of those players and officials and some Bangladeshi reporters lucky enough to be there.

Paine backs Smith for captaincy

AGENCIES, Sydney



Smith to be Australia's next captain, current skipper Tim Paine said on Tuesday. Smith captained the side

before Paine but was slapped with a twoyear leadership ban over his part in the ball tampering scandal during a Test in Cape Town in 2018.

The ban expired this week, prompting renewed speculation that Smith could soon resume the leadership duties.

While 35-year-old Paine has acknowledged he is in the twilight of his career, the wicketkeeper said he was not yet ready to walk away from the game.

He refused to lay out a timetable for his departure, particularly with the uncertainty created by the COVID-19 shutdown, saying only that coach Justin Langer and selectors knew of his plans.

"I know what I'm thinking, in terms of how far I can play on and we're on the same page," he told reporters via video conference.

Paine said he had not spoken with Smith about the captaincy but the 30-year-old batsman would not be the only candidate for the role.

"I haven't had that conversation with Steve, I probably will at some stage no doubt," Paine said.

"It's obviously something that he loves doing ... so if Steve Smith decides that's the way he wants to go, then I will fully support him in trying to do it again.

"We've got a number of guys to choose from who can put their hand up," he added.

"There's Steve Smith, who's done it before, or the people who are developing underneath like a Travis Head or an Alex



Obviously I've had a few conversations with people. You don't have to be Einstein to realise that it's probably unlikely, particularly in June Australia's tour of Bangladesh. Whether it's cancelled completely or it's pushed back we're not quite sure at the

moment.

TIM PAINE

AUSTRALIA CAPTAIN

Carey -- Marnus Labuschagne and Pat Cummins are other ones.

'We're starting to build some real depth so that when my time's up we've got a number of options.

International cricket, like most other sports, has been shut down while the world battles the pandemic and Paine said it did not take "Einstein" to conclude that Australia's tour of Bangladesh would probably not go ahead in June.

The Baily Star



No way to get home

Several thousand Bangladeshis are stuck in 9 Gulf countries with no flights to Dhaka

RASHIDUL HASAN and JAMIL MAHMUD

Several thousand Bangladeshis have been stranded in nine Middle East countries amid suspension of air communications to and from Dhaka for containing Covid-19 spread over the last two weeks.

Of them, at least 1,000 are stuck in Saudi Arabia; many of them went there to perform Umrah, said Golam Moshi, Bangladesh ambassador in the Gulf country.

The eight other countries are Oman, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait, Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt. The Bangladeshis went there for business, travel and other purposes.

Talking to this newspaper over phone on Monday night, Moshi said as most of these nations have imposed restrictions to different extents including lockdown, it has become very difficult to communicate with the stranded Bangladeshis.

Many of the Bangladeshis must be passing days in hardship as they are running out of money, he also said.

According to worldmeters.info, the nine nations saw nearly 5,000 confirmed cases of coronavirus and 73 fatalities as of Monday.

Following the COVID-19 outbreak, the authorities in the countries took some unprecedented measures to contain the virus transmission.

They include curfew, countrywide shutdown, ban on commercial passenger flights, closure of land borders, SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



Some 3,000 passenger boats lying idle on the bank of the Buriganga amid the 10-day countrywide shutdown to prevent the spread of coronavirus. The boatmen, whose only source of income has come to a standstill, are spending days in uncertainty. The photo was taken recently from Telghat area in capital's Keraniganj.

PHOTO ANISUR RAHMAN

Three killed in 'gunfights' STAR REPORT

Three men -- two alleged robbers and a suspected drug dealer -- were killed in "gunfights" with law enforcers in Bagerhat, Dinajpur and Pabna yesterday.

In Bagerhat, Faruque Morol, 35, was killed in a "gunfight" with Rab members in the Sundarbans area.

The man was the ringleader of a robber gang locally known as Faruque Bahini, said Rab.

Lt Col Rawshawul Firoz, commanding officer of Rab-6, said they conducted a raid in the area around 8:00am on information. As soon as they reached there, members of the robber gang opened

fire, forcing them to retaliate.

FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES 'Peace must be restored'



APRIL 1, 1972

A prototype with huge potential

Team led by cousins build ventilator for **Covid-19** patients

Zyma Islam

A rough-edged black box with a plastic tube coming out of it, and a small LCD screen -- this could be the lifesaving ventilator for critical Covid-19 patients in the imminent future.

Amid scarcity of ventilators at a time when a possible coronavirus outbreak is looming over

6+ STAY HOME, STAY WELL *Protect the elderly*

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

People over 60 are particularly vulnerable to severe or life-threatening symptoms if infected with coronavirus.

One of the few facts amid the uncertainty swirling around the coronavirus pandemic is: The highest rate of fatalities has been among older people, particularly those with underlying medical conditions. According to figures at worldometers. info, death rates start rising significantly above the age of 50 (1.3 percent in all cases), to 21.9 percent among those aged 80 and over in confirmed cases.

Medical experts say that even if people over 60 in good overall health are infected, they are more likely to exhibit severe, life-threatening symptoms. Keep elder people at a distance even if there is

Four die with Covid-19-like symptoms STAR REPORT

At least four people, including a teenage boy, died after showing Covid-19-like symptoms in four districts yesterday, while three patients exhibiting similar symptoms and fever have been kept in isolation in Chattogram.

Our correspondents from different districts reported on the deaths of people exhibiting Coronavirus-like symptoms and subsequent lockdowns at some places.

In Pirojpur, a 17-yearold boy who sat for the SSC examination this year, died yesterday after suffering with fever and cough for the last three or four days. But he did not go to hospital, said HM Jahirul Islam, Bhandaria upazila health and family planning officer. The boy suddenly started

suffering from bleeding from the mouth and nose at noon and died shortly afterwards, the health officer added.

"The body's samples have been sent to the IEDCR [Institute of Epidemiology, SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

Eight more Bangladeshis die in US

Death toll now 31

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 31 Bangladeshis died of Covid-19 in the US as of last night, according to the US authorities.

Of them, seven breathed their last in New York which is the worst affected state, and one in Michigan in the last 24 hours.

The highest number of deaths -- 27 -- have so far been reported in New York, where a large number of Bangladeshis live. The hospital authorities of the country confirmed the deaths to local newspapers and Bangladeshi journalists living in the US. Neher Siddique, Bangladeshi journalist residing in New York, told The Daily Star that they had to collect information from the hospitals remotely as the authorities banned all unauthorised entry there.

At one point, Faruque sustained bullet injuries. Rushed to the local health complex, doctors declared him dead. Two Rab officials, who also sustained injuries during the "gunfight" received primary treatment, he added.

Contacted, Maloy Mollick, doctor at Mongla Upazila Health Complex, said Rab members brought three men in the morning. One of them was dead and had bullet injuries on his body.

In Dinajpur, Ferdous Fahim, 33, of Birganj upazila, was killed in a "gunfight" with police.

The dead used to smuggle drugs from India and sell it inside Bangladesh, said SEE PAGE 4 COL 1 Shamsuddoza Sajen

MAKE OPTIMUM USE OF LAND Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman today urges farmers to take to cooperative farming for the optimum use of land

and increase agricultural production. Addressing a large crowd at Jessore Airport, Bangabandhu says that all properties now belong to people and the root of exploitation has already been destroyed through revolutionary measures, which include nationalisation. He suggests to the cultivators to pool their capital and start cooperative farming.

Regarding antisocial activities and dacoities in rural areas, the prime minister says that peace will be restored everywhere

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

the country, a team, led by two cousins - a doctor and engineer -- have developed the prototype of such a device.

The cousins are Baized Shuvo, chief executive officer of Axion Engineering, and Kazi Shakkher, medical officer at the capital's Rushmono Specialized Hospital. The team also include

Asif Fahad Kingshuk, a student of computer SEE PAGE 4 COL 1 no coronavirus patient in the house, says a health expert.

"A young person can be an asymptotic carrier but that can be fatal for elderly people. So, keep distance and, if possible, keep them in isolation,' says Dr Md Nazmul Hasan, assistant professor of Department of Internal Medicine at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University.

He suggested it is better to keep aged people in full isolation till the situation improves and if needed elderly people can communicate with other members of the family living in the same house through phone calls.

As people get older, their immune systems weaken, so they are exposed to a greater number of SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

They are not even SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Car crash kills 3 in Cumilla

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

Three people, including a young couple, were killed as a car fell into a roadside ditch in Muradnagar upazila of Cumiila yesterday.

The dead are Saddam Hossain, 27, of Brahmanbaria, his wife Parvin, 23, and the car driver Abdur Rahman, 28, of Noakhali, said police.

Quamruzzaman Talukder, officer-in-charge of Bangara Police Station, said the bodies were handed over to family members and an unnatural death case was filed in this connection.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



PRAYER TIMING APRIL 1 Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha AZAN 4-40 12-45 4-45 6-21 7-45 JAMAAT 5-15 1-15 5-00 6-24 8-15 SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



Volunteers of Bidyanondo Foundation carrying an elderly woman to Chattogram Medical College Hospital. The homeless woman was lying unconscious on the port city's KB Fazlul Kader road yesterday noon.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Bangladesh eligible for EU GSP

Refayet Ullah Mirdha

Bangladesh will remain an eligible country for the EU's Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP) as the European Ombudsman has found no maladministration in a case filed over non-compliance of labour rights.

European Ombudsman Emily O'Reilly on March 24 said she closed the case after finding no maladministration in it, according to EU website.

The case was filed by the International Trade Union Confederation, the Clean Clothes Campaign and HEC-NYU EU Public Interest Clinic in June 2018.

Rubana Huq, president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), yesterday said, "It is a very good news for Bangladesh as we are sometimes blamed for bad practice of labour rights by different quarters."

With this verdict, Bangladesh was again saved from earning a bad reputation of unfair labour practices, the BGMEA chief said in an audio message.

The European Union is the largest export destination of Bangladesh. Being a least developed country, Bangladesh has been enjoying the zero-duty benefit on export to the EU under its GSP since 1971.

With the zero-duty benefit to the EU in force, Bangladesh, eventually became the second largest apparel exporter following China. It now holds 6.4 percent global market share, business analysts say.

According to data from the Export Promotion Bureau, Bangladesh exported garment items worth \$21.13 billion to the EU in 2018-19 fiscal year, up from \$19.62 billion and \$17.75 billion in the previous two fiscal years. SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

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