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The poor looking down the barrel

Govt's promised support yet to reach many; efforts not well-coordinated

SOHEL PARVEZ

Over a week into the stay-home order across the country, hungry and half-fed faces have started to grow in a huge number.

With their meagre earnings already spent and the shutdown extended further by a week, 5.17 crore people in the informal sector are now staring down the barrel as the government's promised support for the poor and vulnerable failed to reach many of them.

The government allocation and efforts are also short of requirement and less coordinated, find The Daily Star correspondents talking to the people in need of help, and representatives of local government and local administration of nearly three dozen districts.

Take the example of Harun-ur-Rashid, one of around 4,000 transport workers living in areas adjacent to Sonadanga bus terminal in Khulna. He was yet to get any support till Wednesday.

"Where is my allotted 10kg rice?" asked Harun, who feeds a six-member family, after returning empty-handed from the office of a ward councillor.

"No one came to us to give any assistance until now."

Similar complaints and allegations have been common in the capital, port city Chattogram, divisional cities and other parts of the country where day labourers, rickshaw pullers, transport workers and construction workers are going through hard times.

The Daily Star talked to sufferers, and representatives of local government and local administration of nearly three dozen districts, and found that the government allocation of food falls short of requirement.

The workforce in the informal sector accounts for 85 percent of the total employed population of 6.08 crore, according to the Labour Force Survey 2017 by Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

Informal jobs generally lack basic social or legal protections or employment benefits.

Economists say apart from the poor who make up 20.5 percent of the total population of 16.56 crore, the consequences of the ongoing shutdown would be for informal workers, many of whom represent lower income groups.

According to a rough estimate, based on official data of average household size of 4.2 persons, the Covid-19 crisis has put livelihoods and food security of nearly one crore families at stake.

These families were above the national poverty line before the Covid-19 pandemic caused massive disruption to economic activities in Bangladesh. An increase in the number of poor people will erode the gains in poverty reduction that the country achieved over the last three decades.

Yet, the support from the state coffers has been less than the demand for impoverished people, according to our district correspondents.

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Unable to find work in the almost deserted kitchen market, a porter sits idly under a foot bridge at the capital's Karwan Bazar. Sellers and store keepers taking a nap, left, as there are hardly any shoppers at the market. The photos were taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON, AMRAN HOSSAIN

Thirteen more Bangladeshis die in NY, New Jersey

Death toll now 50 in the US

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Thirteen more Bangladeshis died of coronavirus in New York and New Jersey in 15 hours, from 7:00am (NY time) yesterday, according to a local journalist.

So far, at least 50 people died from Covid-19 in the two cities, Zakaria Masud, editor of local weekly Ajjal and former president of Jackson Heights Bangladesh Business Association, told The Daily Star.

Several Bangladeshis Uber and taxi drivers have tested positive, the journalist said when he was asked about the Bangladesh community affected by the virus.

Seeking anonymity, a Bangladesh policeman working for NY Police Department said Bangladeshis living in New York are not taking the lockdown seriously. They are roaming around even if they have no emergency, he said.

According to the New York Times, the number of virus-related deaths in New York was 1,374, till yesterday.

Still jittery, fewer doctors on duty

MOUDDUD AHMED SUJAN

At least a dozen people with different illnesses died in Dhaka and other places after they were refused treatment by doctors since March 8 when the first case of coronavirus was reported in the country.

Experts said a sense of insecurity caused by the persisting shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) among healthcare professionals should be blamed for the situation.

Besides, the lack of well-prepared facilities for Covid-19 patients left healthcare professionals exposed to the risk of getting infected, they said.

The health ministry on March 25 warned doctors of punishment if they did not treat patients. The ministry ordered doctors to treat patients with Covid-19-like symptoms even if they didn't have the PPEs. The ministry withdrew the notice on March 27 amid widespread criticism.

Doctors have been working sincerely since the government started supplying PPEs to different hospitals across the country, according to representatives of healthcare professionals.

The attendance, however, is still low and the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) has no data because it suspended the finger print-based office attendance monitoring recently, insiders said.

Only 15 of 573 government hospitals are sending attendance data to the DGHS, officials said.

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All play, no school, Arhaans bored witless

RASHIDUL HASAN and TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Stuck at home for the past two weeks, Arhaan Habib, a kindergarten student, looks dejected. As he cannot go out amid the nationwide shutdown, he spends most of his time playing with toys and watching YouTube videos on mobile phone. He finds it extremely hard to concentrate on his studies.

The daily life of the seven-and-a-half-year-old boy has changed drastically since the government shut down schools to contain the spread of coronavirus.

"Nothing seems to be going right for my son. How long can you keep a child indoors?" asked Arhaan's mother Priyanka Wasim. The family lives in the capital's East Razabazar.

Priyanka said usually Arhaan wakes up around 6:30am to go to his school. But now that it's closed until April 11, he gets up around the same time only to find he has nothing to do. He loiters around for a while and then gets busy playing either with toys or his parent's mobile phones.

"I try hard, but he just can't concentrate on studies. As all his activities outside home have stopped, he seems sad and bored," Priyanka told this correspondent yesterday.

Like Arhaan, thousands of children are bearing the brunt of the current situation that arose after the coronavirus outbreak, which has apparently thrown their daily routine out of gear.

In such a situation, psychiatrists and psychologists say, if parents fail to handle the situation properly, it may have a negative impact on the children.

They suggested that the guardians should give more time to the children and make a daily routine for them, incorporating time for study, sports and other fun activities, to give them relief from monotony.

All educational institutions were declared closed on March 17.

A TOUGH TIME

"I wish I was a grown-up. At least I could go outside sometimes," said Zairaia Hasan, a grade-I student at Birshreshtha Munshi Abdur Rouf Public College in the capital.

"We are confined in our home and mother keeps telling us about the dos and don'ts all the time," she said, adding, "I really want to go out and play."

Nahid Islam Suravi, who lives with her family in Saheb Bazar area at the capital's Azimpur, said she was going through a

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CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC 50,000 dead, 1m infected

Spain sees hope despite soaring deaths; Italy extends lockdown

AGENCIES

The number of new confirmed coronavirus cases crossed the grim milestone of one million and the death toll topped 50,000 yesterday.

The virus claimed thousands more lives in its relentless march across the globe, including nearly 1,000 new deaths in Spain, despite measures putting more than half of the planet on some form of lockdown.

And it continued to wreak havoc on the global economy, with the US announcing that a record 6.65 million workers filed for unemployment benefits last week and Spain reporting its biggest monthly increase in jobless claims ever.

Since emerging in China in December, COVID-19 has infected more than 10,00,000 people -- including at least 500,000 in Europe -- and claimed more than 50,000 lives, according to a tally by AFP from official sources.

The crisis has put enormous strain on national health care systems and on nurses, doctors and other medical staff working in the most difficult of circumstances.

"Every morning before I start work, I make the sign of the cross, and pray that everything will go all right," Ester Piccinini, a 27-year-old nurse at the Humanitas Gavazzeni

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COVID-19 CASES Those with no travel history outnumber returnees

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

The number of confirmed cases is higher among people with no travel history than those who have come back from abroad, according to the country's coronavirus tally.

As of yesterday, the country reported 56 positive cases of coronavirus. Of them, only 16 have come back from foreign countries.

The highest numbers of overseas Covid-19 patients came from Italy followed by the USA and Saudi Arabia. Six from Italy, three from the USA and two from Saudi Arabia.

The rest were one each from Germany, Bahrain, India, Kuwait and France, according to data compiled by the Institute

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2 more cases of Covid-19 confirmed

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Another two die after showing symptoms; Govt orders 1,000 tests

STAR REPORT

Two more people tested positive for Covid-19 in the country, taking the total number to 56, the Directorate General of Health Services said yesterday.

At least 1,000 samples from suspected patients will be collected across the country by yesterday, said Habibur Rahman, director of DGHS's management information system.

The two new patients are male. One of them is aged between 30 and 40, and another between 70 and 80, he told the regular press briefing on Covid-19 via video conference from his office in the capital.

"We are investigating to know how they got infected," he added.

Seventy-eight people are now kept in isolation. Samples from 141 suspected patients were tested in the last 24 hours.

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STAY HOME, STAY WELL

PSYCHIATRIST SUGGESTS 5 ways to enjoy the time

TANVEER AHMED, from Sydney

We are not hardwired to be stuck at home for extended periods. We are social, mobile creatures. One of the worst forms of punishment for prisoners is extended periods in solitary confinement. Astronauts speak of the incredible loneliness they feel sitting in cramped quarters for months. A study of those quarantined through SARS in Canada found that almost a quarter started suffering pathological levels of anxiety, depressed mood and even symptoms of traumatic syndromes, such as nightmares.

The march of coronavirus throughout the globe has created the extraordinary situation of almost a quarter of all humanity stuck at home. The situation is especially difficult in countries with dense populations like in Bangladesh, challenged broadband connections and limited public spaces for exercise. Maintaining distance from the most vulnerable groups such as the elderly is also very difficult, given extended families often live together in small spaces.

Here are some ways to improve the experience of being at home for long periods:

1. **Learn something new**
The long periods at home has led to a boom

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'No gloves, no masks'

Romania medical workers fear for lives in virus fight

AFP, Bucharest

"We don't have gloves, masks, anything," says one of the medical team at southeastern Romania's RamnicuSarat hospital, one of those designated to treat Covid-19 patients.

"Everything is done on the cheap," protests the staff member, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

It's a complaint echoed in other parts of the country, where doctors and nurses have begun speaking out about what they say are life-threatening shortcomings in the fight against the new coronavirus.

Feeling ill-equipped and scared, some have taken to social media or public TV to voice their concerns; dozens staged protests in the grounds of two hospitals.

Several felt so strongly that they resigned, leaving an already struggling healthcare system in one of the European Union's poorest countries even more vulnerable.

"Nobody instructed us so we're encouraged to learn from videos," the RamnicuSarat medical staff member told AFP.

"We were promised equipment, but when will it arrive?"

The hospital has been placed on a long list of "support units" selected to receive patients who have tested positive for Covid-19.

But the move has sparked fear among local residents that the virus could spread in the area and an online petition has been launched.

All play, no school

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tough time. She finds it extremely difficult to keep her two children indoors.

"They've become restless. They are not paying heed to my words," she said. "They keep asking me what they shall do."

Suravi said she was trying to spend more time with her 10-year-old daughter and six-year-old son to strengthen their mental bond.

Nusrat Tuly, mother of second grader Saiful Islam Babu, said, "My son is now going to bed and waking up late. I might find it difficult to make him habituated to the usual routine once the situation would become normal."

She said her son, 11, was spending a lot of time playing games on mobile phones and watching TV.

Sumanta Mohanta, a private service holder, is also worried about his eight-year-old daughter. He said the girl sometimes seems irritated and remains busy with mobile phones.

EXPERT'S TAKE

Speaking on the matter, Prof Shalaluddin Qusar Biplob, chairman of psychiatry department at the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU), said in the given situation, children were being barred from social interactions and playing sports and doing other physical activities outside home.

The situation is forcing them into a life full of monotony, he said, adding that out of that monotony, children between 12 and 15 could engage in arguments with their parents and other guardians.

Besides, their dependency on mobile phones and TV can increase as parents tend to allow their children use the devices amid the shutdown to keep them at home.

In such a situation, sleep timing and the daily routine of a child can change, he added.

"If parents fail to handle this situation properly, it may have a negative effect on children. It can create some problems when the situation will become normal."

This situation, however, has some positive aspects, noted Prof Shalaluddin.

There are some children who don't listen to their parents, are not attentive to their studies, and are irregular in school. Parents should utilise this time to develop a stronger bond with them to bring them back on the track, he said.

"Both parents and children have a lot of free time now. Parents can develop a good relationship with their children with their positive behavior."

WHAT GUARDIANS SHOULD DO

Prof Shalaluddin said guardians should keep their children busy by encouraging them to study, play sports and do other fun activities. "Everyone should participate in such indoor activities."

Parents should create a daily routine for children, including these aspects, so that they can replace it with the previous routine when situation would return to normalcy.

Prof Mahjabeen Haque, chairperson of Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology at Dhaka University, said guardians should not spread panic over coronavirus among children.

Rather, the guardians should teach them in an easy way how to adapt and deal with the shutdown, she told The Daily Star.

She said parents should handle this tough situation with calm while dealing with their children. "Guardians should give more time to their children and should not leave them on their own."

Children should be engaged in different household activities so that they stay busy during this leisurely period, she said, adding that it would be beneficial for their mental health.

Parents should not shout at their kids even if they don't listen to them, she added.



5 ways to enjoy the time

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in online courses. Many universities are trying to function entirely digitally. This may be a time to allow greater depth in our family relationships as well as trying to learn something new, such as a musical instrument or delving into an interesting topic that you did not have time for before. Maybe a short course on epidemics and public health? There is potentially much time to read and expand our knowledge base on any number of subjects. There may even be time to acquire entire diplomas or degrees if there are further extensions to lockdown policies.

2. Dress like you are going to work or school

It is important not to laze around at home in clothes wearing which you usually sleep. You are more likely to be productive if you can at least recreate the psychology of being at work. While it may not require a suit or sari, something other than casual clothing may help feel more engaged in productive activity.

My daughters are being schooled through online classes with a teacher present. The school's policy is that they

wear their school uniforms.

3. Organise meetings with others at set times

We are creatures of habit and are comforted by regular routines. One such meeting may involve meeting online with co-workers. The meeting may be formal or casual, merely to discuss mundane aspects of work.

At least once a week, make the meeting more formal with a set agenda and topics for discussion. This will help maintain discipline and morale.

Another such meeting should be organised for social reasons. While video chat and phone calls are critical to maintain contact with our friends and family, it is group socialising that is most hurt by our current circumstances. We have to be innovative with technology to coordinate such contact. All around the world artists and musicians are organising concerts or gatherings online. For Bangladeshis, it might be time to organise the online dawat dinner party equipped with adda and biryani.

Much like Europe, those skilled at singing or performance should perhaps



engage in performing from their balconies occasionally... but please only the talented ones.

4. Limit overeating

In times of stress a common way to cope is to eat sweet or fatty foods. This is known as comfort eating and is a common psychological cause for obesity. Bangladeshis already have among the sweetest teeth in the world due to our love of mishti. While it is understandable that eating tasty food makes us feel better in such challenging times, it is also important that it does not lead to a situation where we forgo our physical health.

5. Exercise to stay healthy

One of the big challenges of trying to remain physically healthy is to maintain regular exercise. This is already difficult in big cities like Dhaka or Chattogram where there are few public parks and walking spaces are limited. Many are taking to online exercise classes in their living rooms. A similarity Bangladesh has to places like Italy or Spain is that there are often accessible rooftop areas.

News pictures in Europe have shown people skipping or jogging on their

rooftops, being careful to maintain social distancing of course. A Frenchman in Paris even ran a marathon going back and forth on his seven-metre balcony. While we don't need to run marathons, this kind of exercise is feasible and recommended.

Other important strategies to minimise anxiety is keeping up to date with trustworthy information and impart this to the children. It is important to inform our loved ones that the risks are overall low if we maintain good hygiene and keep our social distance, around two metres from people other than those we live with. Conspiracy theories should be avoided as they flourish in times like these when there is a real threat, but this can be minimised through simple, factual information.

Anxiety is worse when we experience it as isolated individuals. We have never been more collectively united in our sense of threat and being stuck at home. This is currently our most important psychological resource.

The writer is a Bangladesh-born psychiatrist based in Sydney.

The poor looking down the barrel

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And amid a cry for food, instances of fraud were found.

Some unknown people distributed slips with the mobile numbers of Zila Parishad (District Council) Member Abul Bashar and Municipality Councillor Jesmin Akhter among needy people in Manikganj, saying food would be distributed among the poor. Dozens went to the spot on Wednesday to get aid but returned empty-handed.

In another case, police arrested a dealer of the food department for selling 1.2 tonnes of rice meant for a government programme in Satkhira's Asashuni area.

Until yesterday, the disaster management and relief ministry gave 48,000 tonnes of rice and Tk 16 crore to local administration, city corporations and municipalities all over the country.

It asked local administration and local government to distribute food and cash among the poor especially beggars, day labourers, rickshaw-pullers, transport and restaurant workers, hawkers and roadside tea sellers.

But there have been complaints of bias and misallocation.

"I have not yet got any support even though I have seen relatively better-off people getting rice," said Khademul Islam, a rickshaw-puller at Chirirbandar in Dinajpur.

Akram, another rickshaw-puller in the capital's Rayerbazar area, said rice was given mainly to supporters and neighbours of the ward councillor in his area.

Similar complaints were made by rickshaw-puller Habibur Rahman in Mymensingh and slum dwellers in Rajshahi.

In Rajshahi city, most of the 39,077 people in 105 slums were yet to receive government relief.

According to a research of an NGO, some 70 percent of the slum population in the city are out of social safety net.

In Gaibandha's Kuamara, Madarpur and Joyrupara villages, around 1,200 Santal and Bangalee families, most of whom now don't have any work, were still waiting for government help.

50,000 dead, 1m infected

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hospital in Bergamo, northern Italy, told AFP.

"It's not really for myself, I'm not really worried about me, since I'm so protected. But I hope everything will be all right for my patients."

Europe has been at the centre of the crisis for weeks, with at least 34,000 now dead, but there have been signs the epidemic could be approaching its peak.

Spain yesterday said it had suffered a record 950 deaths in 24 hours, bringing its total number of fatalities to 10,003.

The number of confirmed Spanish

cases passed the 110,000 mark, the government said, although the rates of both new infections and deaths continued a downward trend.

"The data show the curve has stabilised" and the epidemic has entered a "slowdown" phase, Health Minister Salvador Illa said.

Italy has also seen its infection rates slow and eyes will now be on Britain and France, which both reported their highest daily death tolls on Wednesday.

The virus has chiefly affected the elderly and those with pre-existing medical conditions, but recent cases have highlighted that it can kill people

of all ages. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, himself in isolation after testing positive, announced plans for a massive increase in virus testing after it emerged that just 2,000 of hundreds of thousands of staff in the state-run National Health Service (NHS) had been tested.

In Russia, President Vladimir Putin extended a period of paid non-working days until the end of April as the number of confirmed cases jumped by more than a quarter to 3,548, with 30 deaths.

Most of the Russian population is on lockdown, with Moscow in

community organisations are critical for informal workers and their families to survive this horrific health shock.

"Such measures must go beyond targeting the very poor and the unemployed to include workers in vulnerable occupations. The government has announced free food, medicine and housing for the poor. It will be critical to make sure these reach the working classes, the urban poor and migrant laborers who make the economy tick in normal times."

"The best way to find practical and appropriate interventions is for national and local leaders and decision-makers to work together on a coordinated disaster response involving grassroots community organisations and associations," he noted.

Some 55.5 percent or 8.80 crore of the country's population having daily income from \$1.90 to \$3.8 belong to the vulnerable group, Research Director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue Khondaker Golam Moazzem said, citing a World Bank estimate.

"This section of population who had a reliable source of income will be more or less affected because of lack of jobs and income. Moreover, their limited savings provide less risk-coping capacity under a situation of absence of job or income for a prolonged period due to coronavirus-related shutdown."

"Economic condition of this section of people, in general, will deteriorate, and a section of them will fall below the poverty line unless they are protected," he said.

(The Daily Star senior staff correspondent Helemul Alam and correspondents from Manikganj, Mymensingh, Kishoreganj, Jamalpur, Netrakona, Sherpur, Tangail, Sylhet, Habiganj, Sunamganj, Moulvibazar, Chattogram, Noakhali, Rajshahi, Bogura, Gaibandha, Dinajpur, Rangpur, Lalmonirhat, Nilphamari, Pabna, Thakurgaon, Chapainawabganj, Khulna, Bagerhat, Satkhira, Kushtia, Meherpur, Chuadanga, Jashore, Patuakhali, Barisal, Bhola, Jhalakathi and Pirojpur contributed to this report)

particular facing tough isolation rules.

Thailand became the latest country to impose strict measures with the introduction of a curfew from today, pushing the number of people in confinement to 3.9 billion, or half the world's population.

The United States, which now accounts for almost a quarter of reported global infections, saw its death toll pass 5,000 by the early hours of yesterday, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University.

Among the latest known US fatalities was a six-week-old baby who was taken to a Connecticut hospital late last week.

2 more cases

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Habibur said the tests would be done by today.

He added that they were trying to increase the number of tests.

The move came as health experts have been stressing the need for more tests to assess the situation as they fear the number of infected people could be higher as many carriers of the virus could be off the radar due to limited testing.

Around 1,900 tests were done in the country from late January until yesterday.

Meanwhile, two people died after showing Covid-19-like symptoms in Sunamganj and Laxmipur since Wednesday night, while multiple houses have been locked down in different districts to slow down the transmission of the deadly virus.

In Sunamganj, a 49-year-old Oman returnee died at home in Dowerabazar upazila yesterday.

He returned from Oman on March 17 and completed his 14 day's home quarantine on March 31, said Shamsuddin Ahmed, Sunamganj civil surgeon.

He was suffering from pain in stomach since early yesterday. A quack, during a home visit, gave him medicine for stomachache around 7:00am. Later, he breathed his last around 10:00am, said the civil surgeon.

His samples were sent to IEDCR for tests, and he was buried following the WHO protocol, he added.

Following the death, the victim's house and nine other adjacent houses have been put under lockdown, and members of these families have been asked to stay indoors, said Sonia Sultana, Dowerabazar upazila nirbahi officer.

A man, who was in home quarantine, perished at Dalal Bazar in Laxmipur Sadar upazila on Wednesday night. Following his death, 15 houses, adjacent to the deceased's home, were isolated by the local administration yesterday.

The victim, 70, was suffering from fever, cough, and sore throat for the last couple of days. He died around 8:00pm on Wednesday, said Nizam Uddin, upazila health and family planning officer.

An Italy returnee recently visited his home. So, it is suspected that he contracted after coming in contact with the returnee, he said.

His samples will be sent to IEDCR for tests, said Abdul Gaffar, civil surgeon of Laxmipur.

In another development, Bangladesh Institute of Tropical and Infectious Diseases (BITID) in Chattogram tested 13 samples in the last 24 hours till yesterday afternoon, and found no Covid-19 cases, said Sheikh Fazle Rabbi, Chattogram civil surgeon.

The BITID tested 55 samples since March 25, and the results were negative, he said.

A suspected patient was undergoing treatment in the isolation unit of a hospital in Chattogram, he said.

In Cumilla's Monohorganj, the local administration yesterday isolated a house in Kharkharia village after a man of the house showed Covid-19-like symptoms. His samples were sent to IEDCR for tests.

A 35-year-old man, who died with fever in Tangail's Madhupur on Tuesday, tasted negative for coronavirus.

Our correspondents from Sylhet, Noakhali, Chattogram, Tangail, and Cumilla contributed to this report.

Those with

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of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR).

Officials said though it is not conclusive but the highly contagious virus spread in the country through overseas travellers. People who came in close contact with them were infected most.

Dr ASM Alamgir, principle scientific officer of IEDCR, said, "Basically, people who came into close contact with the travellers were infected. For example, we got six coronavirus positive patients from a single family. That's why non-travellers are getting infected more."

The first case of coronavirus in Bangladesh was identified on March 8 and till yesterday a total of 56 patients were identified, while six died.

Analysing the identified cases, it was seen that people aged between 31-40 years are the worst victims of the infection, as 14 infected people were in this age bracket. The next most affected age group is 41-50 years.

Out of 56 corona positive patients, 32 patients do not have any comorbidity, which means the risk of death is very low. But when it comes to fatality, all the Covid-19 patients are aged above 60, according to the data.

It has been well-publicised that Covid-19 discriminates by age and by underlying health conditions.

But it has become increasingly apparent that it also discriminates by sex, with men more likely to test positive and more likely to die from the disease. The trend was first seen in China, where one analysis found a fatality rate of 2.8% in men compared to 1.7% in women.

Since then, the pattern has been mirrored in France, Germany, Iran, Italy, South Korea and Spain.

In Italy, men have accounted for 71% of deaths and in Spain, data released on Thursday suggests twice as many men as women have died.

The picture is also same in Bangladesh, out of 56 confirmed patients, 34 were male and the rest are female. Four deaths of coronavirus were of male patients, while two were of female patients.



STAGNANT ... Dozens of cargo trucks lie idle tightly packed near Tejgaon Truck Stand, as businesses have screamed to a halt amid the nationwide shutdown to prevent the spread of coronavirus. This photo was taken yesterday noon.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Covid-19 testing starts at M'singh Medical College

Four people test negative on first day

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Mymensingh Medical College (MMC) started testing for coronavirus cases yesterday. Four people were tested for the virus using the Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) machine.

Prof Dr Chitta Ranjan Debnath, principal of MMC said on the first day, samples of four suspected covid-19 cases of three women and a man hailing from Madhurpur in Tangail, Bajitpur in Kishoreganj, Bhaluka in Mymensingh, and Kalmakanda in Netrakona were collected and tested.

The results were sent to IEDCR yesterday and the reports were found negative, said the principal who is leading the tests.

The principal added that samples of four other suspected coronavirus patients were also collected today but the result had not been obtained till the time of filing this report last night.

The PCR machine, installed at microbiology department of MMC on March 28, is being supervised by Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control (IEDCR) in Dhaka.

The machine is capable of testing samples of 96 persons at a time within three hours.

Two specially-trained doctors and two technologists of the department are working in the laboratory while the technicians in shifts will collect the samples from Infectious and Tropical Medicine Unit of Mymensingh Medical College Hospital, the principal further said.

At the initial stage, the laboratory got 240 kits for testing coronavirus, 100 units of Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) and sufficient N95 masks, college sources said.

CORONAVIRUS FALLOUT

Brac allocates Tk 15cr for low-income families

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Brac has allocated a budget of Tk 15 crore to help low-income families in urban slums, semi-urban and remote areas whose livelihoods have been impacted due to social distancing measures taken to stem the Covid-19 pandemic. Each family would be provided Tk 1,500 as an emergency food assistance fund, that started yesterday, with 100,000 families to be covered in the first phase -- using Brac's own fund disseminated through its different programmes, according to a press release. "Covid-19 is a humanitarian crisis with a public health dimension. In countries like Bangladesh, it also has a dire economic consequence. According to World Bank data, only 15 percent of Bangladesh's population makes more than Tk 500 a day. Most villagers depend on remittances from the cities or abroad. Because this is a global crisis, people everywhere are out of work. Income has stopped," Brac Executive Director Asif Saleh said. "Our emergency assistance will be targeted towards low-income families

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'National committee to prevent dengue'

LGRD minister calls for collective effort

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A collective effort is being taken to tackle the mosquito menace in order to prevent the spread of dengue fever in the capital, said Local Government and Rural Development (LGRD) Minister Tajul Islam yesterday.

A national steering committee, led by the LGRD ministry, will be formed engaging representatives of all ministries, government departments and agencies to make the effort a success, the minister said.

The decision was taken in an intra-ministerial meeting held at the ministry office in Dhaka with Tajul Islam in the chair.

As part of the efforts, the two city corporations, cantonment areas and the civil aviation authority will launch simultaneous drives in this regard as per the schedule set by the LGRD ministry.

Tajul Islam, at the meeting, said ministries or directorates concerned will monitor maintenance works of the government buildings, waterbodies and parks while the task to tackle the mosquito menace will be conducted by the two city corporations.

According to Directorate General of Health Services control room, a total of 271 dengue patients were admitted to different hospitals across the country since January 1. Of them, 63 are from outside Dhaka.

On March 30, while talking to

government officials of 64 districts through videoconference from her official residence Gono Bhaban, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina asked the authorities concerned to take immediate steps to check mosquitoes, in order to prevent dengue.

The problem will amplify if dengue emerges in the country during the crisis caused by the spread of coronavirus, the premier had said.

Following the prime minister's call, the LGRD ministry held the meeting and undertook the decision, Tajul Islam said.

The meeting also decided that all the waterbodies, empty spaces between two buildings, kitchen markets, government offices and residential establishments will have to be cleaned on an emergency basis. Also, toilet lids and containers at government and private offices during national holidays have to be covered properly.

The meeting decided to take legal steps against owners of under-construction buildings where aedes mosquito larvae will be found.

Cleaning drives will be conducted under the leadership of local ward councillors. If necessary, a social volunteer team will have to be formed where there will be eight sub-committees, involving 20 eminent personalities of a ward.

The two city corporations will have to

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Reaching out to the less fortunate

Mission Save Bangladesh lends a hand to underprivileged groups

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Taslina Khatun's livelihood was dependent on selling flowers on streets, but for the last one week, the roads were empty and there was no one to buy flowers from her.

All her joys seemed fading away.

Recently, a video of her plight was shared on social media and it came in notice of team Mission Save Bangladesh (MSB), an initiative aiming to support underprivileged families facing hardship amid shutdown imposed to contain Covid-19.

Without any delay, the group reached out to Taslima (45) at her slum near the city's Dhaka Udyan area where she lives with her daughter and son-in-law, and provided her with groceries and necessary commodities.

The joint initiative by The Daily Star, Sheba.xyz, and Samakal, have supported more than 2,000 families in the past eight days.

MSB also aims to provide financial support for small businesses and deliver community-based support such as disinfecting homes and



Belal Hossain receives a care package from a volunteer.

distributing required materials to contain the virus' spread, said Tajdin Hassan of The Daily Star.

Taslina said she sells flowers at the stretch between Aarong intersection and Rapa Plaza on Mirpur Road.

"These days, no one wants to buy

flowers," said Taslima, sharing the hardship she and her family members are facing now.

To help the underprivileged, MSB has joined hands with renowned brands which came forward with financial and strategic support. The Shakib Al Hasan Foundation, a charity initiative of the ace Bangladeshi cricketer, joined the cause recently.

At a time when the government was taking preventive measures to tackle coronavirus, people had to lock themselves in their homes, resulting many daily wage-earners to face uphill battle to maintain their livelihoods.

Recently, MSB also supported Belal Hossain, a differently-abled person in the port city of Chattogram.

Belal said a small shop was his source of income, but he had to close it following the outbreak.

As his savings ran out within just a few days, he communicated with MSB on its Facebook page.

MSB members in Chattogram gathered necessary information and subsequently helped Belal with some basic requirements.

Activists step up for stray animals in Ctg



Members of Animal Care of Chattogram showed up with food for the street dogs at Patharghata area recently.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Chattogram

A group of citizens in Chattogram have come forward to aid of stray animals, who have been scrounging for food in the deserted streets of the city.

Usha Acharjee, an apprentice lawyer, was seen distributing food among a number of street dogs in port city's New Market area on Wednesday.

"Street animals would usually find food in dustbins and in the areas around restaurants and tea stalls," Usha said, "As the country has been under a shutdown, restaurants and tea stalls are closed and survival has become difficult for them."

Besides, many people who used to feed stray animals have now stopped, as they fear of coronavirus contamination from animals, she added.

However, there is no conclusive evidence that the virus can spread from dogs, cats and birds. "Humans can speak and ask for food but these innocent animals cannot express their suffering. We should help them during this situation," said Usha.

She said she cooked food for 50 animals every day for a week and distributed it in Pathoghata, Kotwali, Firingibazar, Sadarghat, New Market and Station Road.

"I not only distribute food among strays on the street but also throw food in the roof of houses and buildings so that birds have something to eat," she said.

Like Usha, many animal lovers have

extended helping hands to stray dogs in the port city.

Animal Care of Chattogram is one such voluntary organisation. With 65 active members, the organisation started its journey in 2015. They have been feeding dogs in the city.

"Stray animals have been suffering as they cannot find food in the present situation," said Sumi Biswas, co-founder of the organisation.

"Survival of dogs, cats and crows are important as they act as 'natural cleaners' for the city," she added.

Sumi said there are around 2,000 stray dogs in different areas in the city, while they did not know the number of cats.

"We cannot feed them all but we try to feed as many as possible," she said.

Iyana Haque, another co-founder of the organisation, said they have a shelter for animals in Halishahar area. "We provide them treatment in the centre," she said.

"We distributed food among animals in Patenga, EPZ, Agrabad, Halishahar, Nasirabad, Khulshi, Jhautola and Panshlaish," she said. "We've also distributed food in different private university campuses."

"We will go to Chittagong University in a day to two to look after the stray animals on the campus," she said, adding, "We do not know how they are doing after the university was closed."

Esrat Karim, Raba Khan on Forbes 30 Under 30 Asia list

STAR REPORT

Two Bangladeshis have been named on this year's Forbes 30 Under 30 Asia list.

Esrat Karim, founder of AMAL Foundation, was named under Social Entrepreneurs category while Raba Khan of The Jhakanaka Project, was named under Media, Marketing and Advertising category.

The US-based business magazine also published short biographies of Esrat and Raba.

Forbes presented this year's edition of Forbes 30 Under 30 Asia list after choosing from over 2,000 entries which were thoroughly researched by a team of reporters and vetted by an A-list panel of judges, it said.

After completing her master's degree from University of Colorado, Esrat Karim returned home and co-founded the non-profit organisation AMAL Foundation.

The foundation operates centres that equips victims of child marriage and domestic violence as well as divorcees and widows with skills such as sewing, handicraft, and more. AMAL is currently working with more than 52,000 people in villages across Bangladesh.

Raba Khan is an entertainer known for her short comedy videos on Facebook and her YouTube channel, The Jhakanaka Project. She has become a household name among young Bangladeshis for her amusing videos.

Rab arrests 3 'militants'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Rapid Action Battalion claimed to have arrested three members of banned militant outfit, Ansar al-Islam, in Rajshahi on Wednesday night.

The arrestees are Yousuf Ali Sourav (21), Souvik Hasan Sourav (20) and Shakil Khan (20).

A team from Rab-5 Mollapara camp held them in Rajshahi City Hat area around 11pm, Rab said in a press release yesterday.

The elite force also seized some "jihadi" books and training materials from their possession. They gathered in the area for holding a clandestine meeting to conduct subversive activities, the release said.

Dr Manisha to the rescue

Barishal physician-politician leads Covid-19 response

M JAHIRUL ISLAM JEWEL

As the crisis originating from the coronavirus deepens, people, especially the poor and needy, are looking up to their local leaders to deliver. However, in this time of dire need, many local politicians have chosen to stay locked up in their homes, not even checking up on the areas where streets are adorned with posters carrying their faces.

In Barishal city, an exception can be found in Dr Manisha Chakrabarty. Under the banner of Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal, Manisha has been on the frontline of crisis management activities in the city, whether in providing essential health care, preventive measures or distributing essential resources.

During the ongoing crisis, when many doctors have shut their doors, Manisha has opened a health centre to treat patients of the city, said admirer Prof Maksudur Rahman Khan of Kalibari Road.

"Didi not only prescribes us but also arranges for free medicine," said Shabita Rani, who came to the medical centre for treatment on Tuesday. Shabita mentioned that Manisha is well known for her benevolent work for all.

"We are currently operating eight


medical centres across eight areas of the city. We have a team of twenty volunteers working at these centres," Dr Manisha said. The team also prescribes patients over phonecalls, she added.

Everyday around a hundred patients take treatment at the health centres. Besides running the centre, Manisha has also run from slum to slum to assist the people who live hand to mouth, and to raise awareness regarding the virus among slum dwellers and day-wage workers.

"Apa comes to us regularly to make us aware of the effects of the coronavirus. She has shown us how to keep ourselves clean in order to battle the virus," said Shirin Akter, a house wife from Chandmari Slum.

"Dr Manisha gave me a mask and showed me how to keep myself safe from the virus. She has also arranged for some food for my family so that I can stay at home," said Shafuiddin, a rickshaw puller from the same slum.

Manisha joined politics in 2010, when she was still a student of Sher-E-Bangla Medical College, Barishal. From the very start, she has remained engaged in humanitarian work.



করোনাভাইরাস নিয়ে ভীত হবেন নাঃ প্রধানমন্ত্রী শেখ হাসিনা

- করোনাভাইরাস দ্রুত ছড়ানোর ক্ষমতা রাখলেও ততটা প্রাণঘাতী নয়।
- এ ভাইরাসে আক্রান্ত সিংহভাগ মানুষই কয়েকদিনের মধ্যে সুস্থ হয়ে উঠেন।
- নানা রোগে আক্রান্ত এবং বয়স্ক মানুষদের জন্য এই ভাইরাস বেশ প্রাণ-সংহারী হয়ে উঠেছে।
- আপনার পরিবারের সংবেদনশীল মানুষটির প্রতি বেশি নজর দিন।
- আতঙ্কিত হবেন না।
- আতঙ্ক মানুষের যৌক্তিক চিন্তাভাবনার বিলোপ ঘটায়।
- আপনি, পরিবারের সদস্যগণ এবং প্রতিবেশিরা যেন সংক্রমিত না হন সে বিষয়ে সতর্ক থাকুন।
- আপনার সচেতনতা আপনাকে, আপনার পরিবারকে এবং সর্বোপরি দেশের মানুষকে সুরক্ষিত রাখবে।

তারিখ: ১৩

Nur Nahar Halim no more

CITY DESK

Nur Nahar Halim, mother of Mercantile Bank Ltd Managing Director Md Quamrul Islam Chowdhury, passed away yesterday in her daughter's home at New Eskaton, Dhaka. She was 82, says a press release.

She left behind three sons, one daughter, grandchildren and a host of relatives and well-wishers.

Her first namaz-e-janaza was held at New Eskaton after yesterday. Her body will be brought to her village home at Saharpar in Sonaimuri, Noakhali. Nur Nahar will be buried today at her family graveyard after the second janaza.



DU students helping those in need

CITY DESK

A group of Dhaka University students are on a mission to help those who are most struggling during the coronavirus outbreak. They are raising funds through donations and distributing daily essentials among impoverished people.

DU student Rafiul Chowdhury started the initiative when he decided to provide packages consisting of 2kg of rice, 500g of lentils, onion, salt and a bar of soap. The whole package costs Tk 100 each. After learning about Rafiul's initiative, his friend Tahmid Hasan, an economics student, joined in, said a press release.

Following a Facebook post which went viral, more friends joined them. They then decided to properly organise their work, and consequently, the non-profit organisation Pashe Achi-Initiative was born.

So far, they have provided food packets to around 500 people in different areas of Dhaka city. They take proper safety precautions every time they go out for distribution.

The students have planned to help those in need as long as possible. They urged people across the country to do the same, in whichever way they can.

Those interested can contribute to Pashe Achi through bKash (01707117066, 01772032528, 01515203207, 01812821421, 01783429171) and their bank account (Tahmid Hasan, A/C: 1061440479332, Eastern Bank Ltd).

Asia Distilleries starts making hand sanitiser

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Asia Distilleries Private Ltd of Panchagarh, a sister concern of Razzak Group, has started producing hand sanitisers in response to a growing demand for hygiene products during the coronavirus outbreak.

It has so far produced 7,500 litres of the product worth about Tk 35 lakh last five days, said Habibul Islam Bablu Chairperson of Razzak Group.

It got approval to make hand sanitiser on March 23 from Directorate of Drug Administration, and started production on March 27. Habibul said the product will be available in markets all over the country in two weeks.

Brac allocates Tk 15cr

FROM PAGE 3

who have lost their source of income due to coronavirus. We will support 100,000 such families, however the requirements are far greater. I urge compassionate individuals and organisations to come forward and help us scale up the initiative to reach many more," he also said. This initiative will be implemented in close coordination with the local public representatives and administration, particularly to avoid duplication, Saleh added. Families in 12 city corporations, eight municipalities, 38 sadar upazilas, haor villages, neighbourhoods and market areas near river ports, as well as the host community living adjacent to the Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, will receive this assistance. Brac has also launched a fundraising appeal to scale up the effort and increase the coverage of their programme, details of which are available on their website. The organisation is also driving a nationwide hygiene awareness and behavioural change campaign with its network of over 100,000 staff, volunteers and health workers with support of the local administration.

National committee

FROM PAGE 3

place their plans to the ministry by the next seven days, the meeting said, adding that the city corporations and Dhaka Wasa will work in a coordinated way to control aedes mosquitoes.

Among others, newly-elected Dhaka North City Corporation Mayor Atiqul Islam, LGD Senior Secretary Helaluddin Ahmed, Housing and Public Works Secretary Md Shahidullah Khandokar and Agriculture Secretary Md Nasiruzzaman were present at the meeting.

Bangladeshis in Spain

FROM PAGE 12

The mission also said the local association of Bangladeshi community and other socio-political organisations had identified about 2,000 helpless Bangladeshi expatriates there.

They have started distributing essentials, including rice, lentils and edible oil among those in most need.

As of Thursday, Spain saw 1,10,238 confirmed coronavirus cases and 10,003 fatalities. Of the confirmed cases, 26,743 people were recovered.

The letter also mentioned that some 32 Bangladeshi expatriates in Spain were diagnosed with Covid-19 positive as of March 23. Two of them have recovered from the disease.

Following the virus' outbreak, Spain's government announced countrywide "lockdown" on March 14 and extended it until April 11,

according to the mission.

As per the directive, coming out of home except for any purpose except buying food or seeking medical help will be considered as a criminal offence there.

Mutasimul Islam, first secretary at the labour welfare wing of Bangladesh mission in Madrid, told this newspaper that they had collected names and details of about 100 expatriates through whom they want to disburse some financial support.

He said as the movement has been restricted, they were trying to help the expatriates through reaching Bangladeshi community members using different means, including social media.

He also said the government of Spain had announced free coronavirus treatment for both regular and undocumented expatriates.

"The situation is worrisome

especially for the undocumented ones and those who were not involved in permanent jobs," he added.

He, however, said there is some respite for the Bangladeshis as Spain government has written off house rents for all in the current situation.

Kamruzzaman Shundar, general secretary of Bangladesh Association in Spain, the association and some solvent Bangladeshis living in the country have come forward to financially support others who are in dire need.

Contacted, WEWB Director General Hamidur Rahman said recently they have disbursed Tk 10 lakh to Bangladesh mission office in Madrid from the board's welfare fund.

Apart from providing dry food to the migrants, the money will also be used for buying protective gears including masks and sanitisers for them, he said.

Inspector

FROM PAGE 12

found hanging from the ceiling fan of Manoranjan's room at the police station on March 27, three days after he was detained.

Following his death, Amtali OC Abul Bashar was withdrawn and attached to Barguna Police Lines. Two other cops, including Manoranjan, were suspended on the same day for allegedly torturing Shanu to death.

Shanu's family said police detained him on March 23 night from his home in Kalagachia village of Amtali upazila on suspicion of his involvement in a murder last year.

They said Shanu was not accused in the murder case.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Shanu's wife Jharna Begum and son Shakib Hossain alleged that police demanded Tk 3 lakh for his release.

As they failed arrange the money, police tortured Shanu to death, they complained.

"When I wanted to see my father at the police station, the OC asked me to bring the money first," Shakib said.

OC Bashar, however, denied the allegation of demanding money.

Harunur Rashid, OC of the Detective Branch of Barguna police, has been made the investigation officer of the case, filed by Ishraque Hassan, a relative of Shanu.

Contacted, Harunur yesterday said he would launch the investigation after receiving the letter of his appointment as the IO.

2 killed

FROM PAGE 12

In a separate incident, based on information that a group of terrorists were meeting in Tilabuduri area of Atrai upazila, a police team raided the spot around 3:00am.

As the criminals opened fire on law enforcers, a "gunfight" ensued and resulted in the killing of Minhajul, the SP said, adding that he was accused in six cases.

Bangladeshi

FROM PAGE 12

a patrolling team of BSF while going to his in-law's house.

BSF took his body away, the chairman added.

Iran, US

FROM PAGE 12

path and for once, tell their nation they are not against the Iranian people," President Hassan Rouhani told a cabinet meeting on Wednesday.

Medicines and medical equipment are technically exempt from the US sanctions but purchases are frequently blocked by the unwillingness of banks to process purchases for fear of incurring large penalties in the United States.

European nations have delivered medical goods to Iran in the first transaction under the Instex financing mechanism set up to get round US sanctions, Germany said on Tuesday.

But it is more than a year since Britain, France and Germany announced the creation of Instex and Iran has questioned European governments' commitment to seeing it through in defiance of the Trump administration.

Political freedom

FROM PAGE 12

administration will accord recognition to Bangladesh.

BANGABANDHU ADDRESSES WORKERS' CONFERENCE

Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman today says that political freedom has no meaning without economic emancipation of the people. Addressing a workers' conference, Bangabandhu says that his government is fully committed to establishing socialistic economy in the country for the welfare of the people. He adds that the government has taken a bold step in this regard by nationalising the industries, banks and insurance companies. He says what his government has done during the last two and a half months to establish socialism in the country is unique in history. The prime minister says that his government firmly believes that without socialism, people's progress in Bangladesh is impossible.

Stressing the need to maintain peace and order for the effective running of the industries, the prime minister says that the abandoned industries have been virtually left without capital. Their owners have drawn overdrafts. After taking them over, the government has to make arrangements

so that the industries run smoothly and at the same time, the workers receive their salaries.

Bangabandhu declares that khash mahal land will be distributed among the landless peasants. He also assures that arrangements have been made to procure enough food grains. "Nobody will die for want of food," says the prime minister.

GOVT TAKING STEPS TO BRING BACK BANGALEES

Bangabandhu today says that the government is taking all possible measures to bring back the Bangalees from Pakistan. Talking to a group of wives and relatives of the stranded Bangalees today morning in front of his office at the Secretariat, Bangabandhu sympathises with their difficulties and grievances and advises them to have patience.

TORNADO TOLL NOW UP TO 200

The death toll in the tornado that hit seven unions of Fulbari thana about 10 miles from Mymensingh on April 1, 1972 evening is stated to have risen to 200, according to unofficial reports.

SOURCES: April 4, 1972 issues of Ittefaq, The Bangladesh Observer, Azad, Morning News, Dainik Bangla and Purbodesh.

Time for treatment from afar

FROM PAGE 12

consultation for general ailments and offer medical advice over the phone and digital platforms.

Daktarkhana, for example, is a platform of 80 young general physicians who are currently providing a free telemedicine service.

With the help of an acquaintance, Mukut came to know about Daktarkhana. With the prescribed medicine and regular advice of a doctor through the service, he was soon feeling better.

"When I called the doctor, he first took my medical history and symptoms. He then prescribed some medicine, gave some advice, and asked me to update him about my health condition over the next five days," he said.

Abul Ala Al Mesbah, an internal auditor at a private company, said he had a dry cough since he returned from a work trip in Dinajpur a couple of weeks ago.

"I wouldn't have been anxious if the coronavirus outbreak hadn't happened."

Common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, tiredness, dry cough and breathing difficulty.

He called a doctor through Daktarkhana and took the medicine and medical advice he was prescribed. The experience prompted him to share his experience on social media so that more people are aware of services such as this during this time.

Following the coronavirus outbreak, Daktarkhana started the telemedicine service through six phone numbers from March 19, said its founder Dr Ratindra Nath Mondal.

From March 27, it started providing telemedicine services from doctors in all 64 branches in the country.

Till March 30, the organisation has served 396 patients over the phone. Patients can also communicate their health condition over direct message on Daktarkhana's Facebook page.

The service has mostly been getting calls about the seasonal flu symptoms, which share some similarities with coronavirus symptoms.

Olwel, a Finland-based startup aiming to bring healthcare services to patients' doorsteps by sending doctors to their home, has also started a video consultation service from March 21.

Every day, on average, it has been serving at least 15 patients.

Patients call the hotline first and later, a video call is arranged with an internal panel of doctors, consisting of both general practitioners and specialists.

"To get consultation from general practitioners, a patient needs to pay Tk 200. For specialists' services, patients have to pay between Tk 400 and Tk 800 through bKash," said Dr Farzana, medical officer at Olwel.

Eminent physician Dr ABM Abdullah opines that such services are commendable -- especially when people with quite general health complications are panicking at this time.

"I recommend these services continue during this crisis." **HOSPITALS JOINING IN** After seeing a decline in the number

1 DAKTARKHANA'S FREE MEDICAL CONSULTATION
 Banasree: **01711542505**
 Rampura: **01621747426**
 Mirpur 60 Feet: **01670108002**
 Mogbazar: **01311798785**
 Doctors at Daktarkhana's 64 branches can be reached through FB page: Daktarkhana-GP Center.

2 BMA SATKHIRA FREE HEALTHCARE SERVICES
 Medicine and communicable diseases -- **01710975297**
 Pediatrics and diarrhea -- **01957410585**
 Medicine, neurology and rheumatic fever -- **01777270282**
 Gynaecology and obstetrics -- **01687601908**
 Asthma and skin disease -- **01408507324**

3 OLWEL
09666-766000
 (Tele and video consultation: charges applicable)

4 LABAID SPECIALISED HOSPITAL
10606
 (Tele and video consultation -- charges applicable)

5 UNITED HOSPITAL
10666 or 02-0852466
 (Video consultation through Skype -- charges applicable)

6 POPULAR MEDICAL COLLEGE HOSPITAL
09613787800
 (free telephone consultation)

7 DMCH
10656
 (free teleconsultation)

8 MUGDA MEDICAL COLLEGE HOSPITAL
01844665585,
01844665336,
01844665337
 (free teleconsultation)

of outdoor patients and absenteeism of doctors due to lack of protective gears, the government hospitals too are turning to telemedicine and teleconsultation.

Brig Gen AKM Nasiruddin, director of Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH), said they are going launch the service soon through a hotline number.

"Doctors of surgery, obstetrics and gynecology, pediatrics, cardiology, emergency, and the administration's numbers will be linked to the hotline number so that the patients can choose who to talk to. It will be a 24/7 service," he said on Wednesday.

If they receive positive feedback, they will expand the service in the future to all departments, he added.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) has also started a telemedicine platform recently, said Vice Chancellor Kanak Kanti Barua.

Still jittery, fewer doctors

FROM PAGE 1

In nine of those hospitals, only 2.46 percent employees went to work while the rate is only 2.03 percent in six medical college hospitals.

In a meeting via video conference yesterday, the DG of DGHS Prof Abul Kalam Azad asked all divisional directors and civil surgeons to take action against the absenteeism.

"Healthcare personnel have been frightened. We have increased the supply of PPEs for their protection. We are working on it," Belal Hossain, director (admin) at DGHS, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Prof Muzaherul Huq, former World Health Organisation regional adviser for Southeast Asia, said, "We have to bear in mind that the healthcare professionals are also people like others. Their fear is logical; they are the most vulnerable group in this health emergency. We have to ensure enough PPEs for them first."

As of yesterday, the DGHS has supplied

3,57,250 PPEs to government hospitals, according to the Covid-19 control room.

Nirupom Das, spokesperson for Bangladesh Doctors Foundation, said, "Doctors are returning to work because there are PPEs. Many hospitals have prepared isolation wards and dedicated employees to treat Covid-19 patients."

He added that more PPEs would be needed.

To treat Covid-19 patients, hospitals have dedicated 4,600 beds, said Aminul Islam, director (hospitals and clinics) of DGHS.

Prof Nazrul Islam, former vice chancellor of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, said, "The government's latest initiatives will boost confidence among healthcare professionals."

Prof Selim Reza, president of BCS Health Cadre Association, said, "The problem is, the symptoms of Covid-19 are like the common cold. After the government started supplying PPEs, the doctors have started seeing patients."

Antarctica

FROM PAGE 12

(12-13 Celsius) and average temperatures during the warmest summer months of about 68-77 Fahrenheit (20-25 Celsius).

That is exceptionally warm for a location near the South Pole, where the average annual temperature now is around minus 40 Fahrenheit (minus 40 Celsius).

A modern temperature analogue may be New York City, according to marine geologist Johann Klages of the Alfred Wegener Institute's Helmholtz Center for Polar and Marine Research in Germany, lead author of the research published in the journal Nature.

The dark-brownish gray soil was

composed of fine-grained silt and clay bearing remains of fossil roots in a dense network, pollen and spores spanning 65 types of plants, with individual cell structures clearly visible.

"If you would go to a forest near you and drill a hole, it would probably look pretty similar," Klages said.

Klages said the plants included conifers, ferns and flowering plants. While they did not find any animal remains, Klages said there likely were dinosaurs, flying reptiles called pterosaurs and many insects. Dinosaur fossils from Antarctica have been known for years.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Bangladesh Police
 Police Headquarters, Dhaka

Corrigendum of International Tender Notice
 Memo No. 44.01.0000.024.01.020.19/809 Date: 01 April 2020

Invitation for International Tender published in different national dailies as per Memo No. 44.01.0000.024.01.020.19/579 Date: 02 March 2020 is hereby amended only for Purchase of Goods (Vehicles for Bangladesh Police) as follows:-

Sl No.	Description	Published	Revised
11.	Tender selling date	13 April 2020	29 April 2020
12.	Tender closing date and time	15 April 2020 at 12.00pm	30 April 2020 at 12.00pm
13.	Tender opening date and time	15 April 2020 at 12.30pm	30 April 2020 at 12.30pm

Other terms and conditions shall remain same as before.

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 BP 7299088433
 Addl. DIG (Transport)
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 Police Headquarters, Dhaka
 Phone: +88029564779, Fax: +88029575663
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GD-717

'LOCKDOWNS' AROUND THE WORLD

RUBBER BULLETS, BATONS, WHIPS

SOUTH AFRICA: Soldiers towered over youngsters in South Africa's Soweto township, forcing them to do push-ups and roll on the floor as punishment for not adhering to a lockdown meant to halt the spread of coronavirus. Rubber bullets, tear gas and whips have been used to maintain social distancing in shopping queues and to discipline citizens caught outside their homes without any valid reason.

'SHOOT THEM DEAD'

PHILIPPINES: Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has told security forces they should shoot dead anyone causing "trouble" in areas locked down due to the coronavirus pandemic. About half the country's roughly 110 million people are currently under quarantine -- including millions in deep poverty, left jobless by tough restrictions on movement.

TOTAL AND PARTIAL SHUTDOWNS

CHINA: Nearly sixty millions of people were caught in Hubei or stuck outside it for two months after China shut down the central province to curb the spread of coronavirus. Residents were barred from leaving homes, requiring them to order food and other supplies online. Several other Chinese cities were also put under a virtual lockdown and travel between provinces was severely limited by the cancellation of long-distance buses and trains.

INDIA: Police have strictly enforced the nationwide lockdown even though PM Modi said essential services would be maintained. Already there have been reports of police beating to death a man who left his house to buy groceries. People venturing out without good reason could be arrested, fined up to 1,000 rupees (US\$19.03) and jailed for as long as six months.

ITALY: The country implemented its first lockdown in late February in 11 municipalities in the north. A nationwide lockdown was put in place on March 9. It has banned all but core strategic activities, while shuttering restaurants, most shops, bars, schools and universities. Anyone caught on the streets without a valid reason risks a fine of up to 3,000 euros (US\$4,697). Authorities have charged more than 40,000 people so far for violating the lockdown.

STAY-HOME ORDERS

THE UNITED STATES AND GERMANY: At least 21 states, representing more than half the American population of 330 million, have closed non-essential businesses and told residents to stay home. Despite being the third worst-hit European country after Italy and Spain, Germany has not introduced stringent measures. It has urged the population to stay indoors and limit contact with other people as much as possible.

GENDER-BASED PROHIBITIONS

PANAMA: The Central American country has separated citizens by gender in a stringent effort to slow the spread of the coronavirus. Starting from April 1, men and women can only leave their homes for two hours at a time, and on different days. Men will be able to go to the supermarket or the pharmacy on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, while women will be allowed out on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Sunday is no-go day for all.

'NO NAGGING' WIFE

MALAYSIA: The Malaysian government was forced to apologize after its Women's Development Department published a series of sexist "tips" to help deal with the ongoing coronavirus lockdown, including advising women to continue to wear makeup and to "avoid nagging." Malaysia has enacted strict nationwide controls locking down all travel in or out of the country and heavily restricting movement within the country.

SOURCE: AFP, THE STRAITS TIMES



A vegetable vendor sets up her stall on a marked area on the floor maintaining social distancing at a bus stand during a government-imposed nationwide lockdown as a preventive measure against the COVID-19 coronavirus, in Chennai, India, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

CORONAVIRUS LOCKDOWN

India eyes phased exit

Turns trains, stadiums into isolation wards as COVID-19 cases rise

REUTERS, New Delhi

India will pull out of a three-week lockdown in phases, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said yesterday, as officials battle to contain the country's biggest cluster of coronavirus infections in the capital, New Delhi.

The shutdown, which has brought Asia's third-largest economy to a shuddering halt, is due to end on April 14.

Modi had ordered India's

1.3 billion people indoors to avert a massive outbreak of coronavirus infections, but the world's biggest shutdown has left millions without jobs and forced migrant workers to flee to their villages for food and shelter.

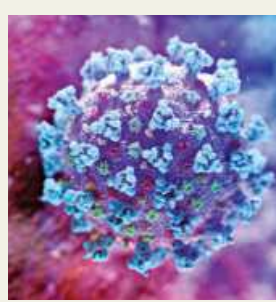
He told state chief ministers that the shutdown had helped limit infections but that the situation remained far from satisfactory around the world and there could be a second wave.

India has 1,965 confirmed infections, of whom 50 have died.

Health experts have warned that the death toll could surge

CASES AND DEATHS IN SOUTH ASIA

Pakistan	2,291 cases	31 deaths
India	1,965 cases	50 deaths
Sri Lanka	148 cases	3 deaths
Afghanistan	196 cases	4 deaths
Maldives	28 cases	0 deaths
Nepal	6 cases	0 deaths
Bhutan	5 cases	0 deaths



across South Asia, home to a fifth of the world's population and with weak public health systems.

India has begun converting railway carriages and sport stadiums into isolation wards to deal with an anticipated surge in coronavirus cases.

Indian Railways on Wednesday said work had begun on modifying 20,000 carriages into medical facilities, with each carriage containing 16 beds.

This means that a total of 320,000 patients could be cared for in the "quarantine coaches", a statement from the railways said.

Apart from converting railway coaches, Indian states have also begun converting sports stadiums into quarantine facilities and temporary hospitals, taking a cue from other countries which resorted to similar measures to cope with the huge number of cases.

Stadiums in New Delhi, Hyderabad, Assam have been converted into a quarantine centre to deal with the rising numbers of COVID-19 patients.

Should we wear masks or not?

WHO expert panel expected to recommend the protective gear for public

AGENCIES

Should more of us wear face masks to help slow the spread of coronavirus?

Reports said a panel of the World Health Organization will be meeting in coming days to reconsider its decision to tell healthy people not to wear face masks to protect themselves from the coronavirus.

A recent Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) study found that coughs and sneezes can spread virus particles up to 27ft (8m) raising questions about the current safety precautions put forward by health experts including WHO.

The WHO currently does not recommend that people without the illness wear face masks because there is little evidence they help and they would be better used by healthcare workers and patients who test positive.



The WHO recommends keeping a distance of at least 1m from anyone coughing or sneezing to avoid the risk of infection. It advises that healthy people only need to wear them if they are caring for others suspected of being infected or if they themselves are coughing or sneezing.

The UK, along with other countries including the US, advises that social distancing should mean staying at least 2m apart.

This advice is based on evidence showing that viruses can only be transmitted while carried within drops of liquid.

The understanding is that most of those drops will either evaporate or fall to the ground near to the person who released them.

According to Prof David Heymann, head of WHO's Strategic and Technical Advisory Group for Infectious Hazards advisory panel,

the new research from MIT and other institutions will be evaluated because it suggests that droplets from coughs and sneezes could be projected further than originally thought.

He said that if the evidence is supported, then "it might be that wearing a mask is equally as effective or more effective than distancing."

But he adds a warning that masks need to be worn properly, with a seal over the nose.

He adds that masks need to be worn consistently.

"It's not on to wear a mask and then decide to take it off to smoke a cigarette or eat a meal - it must be worn full time," he said.

Besides the new studies, the use of masks in parts of Asia with relatively low numbers of infections and deaths from the virus, including Japan and Hong Kong, has led some to theorise mask-wearing is making the difference.

Trump doubts China coronavirus numbers

AFP, Washington

President Donald Trump cast doubt on the accuracy of official Chinese figures on its coronavirus outbreak after US lawmakers, citing an intelligence report, accused Beijing of a cover up.

"How do we know" if they are accurate, Trump asked at a press conference. "Their numbers seem to be a little bit on the light side."

Republicans in Congress, pointing to a report by Bloomberg citing US intelligence, expressed outrage that Beijing apparently misled the international community on China's infections and deaths that began in late 2019 in the city of Wuhan. China has publicly reported 82,394 confirmed cases and 3,316 deaths as of yesterday, according to a rolling tracker by Johns Hopkins University.

That compares to 216,722 cases and 5,137 deaths in the United States, the country with the world's largest reported outbreak.

Republican Senator Ben Sasse attacked Beijing's numbers as "garbage propaganda." "The claim that the United States has more coronavirus deaths than China is false," Sasse said in a statement.

CHINA COUNTY IN LOCKDOWN

A Chinese county of around 600,000 residents has gone into lockdown after a woman who visited the area tested positive for the coronavirus, underscoring concerns over a second wave of domestic infections.

The tightening comes as China reported 35 new confirmed cases yesterday, drastically down from the peak of the crisis. But they were all imported, bringing the tally of such cases to 841 and adding to fears about infections brought in from overseas.

Jia county in central Henan province said in a social media post Wednesday that it was tightening restrictions on villages and residential compounds, and was not allowing people to enter or leave their homes without the relevant authorisation.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Directorate General of Health Services

Office of the Director, Stores & Supplies

Central Medical Stores Depot

30, Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Sharani, Tejgaon, Dhaka-1208

Corrigendum

IFT No. CMSD/G-1907/ICT/2019-2020/D-2/71

Dated: 17/02/2020

Procurement of Lab Equipment (NCL)

Invitation for Tender (IFT) No. CMSD/G-1907/ICT/2019-2020/D-2/71 dated 17/02/2020 and the relevant portions of the tender documents is hereby amended to read as under:

Reference	Existing entries	Amended entries
Section 2. Tender Data Sheet (TDS): ITT 36.1, ITT 42.2 & Column of IFT No.10 & 11		
Last selling date	05/04/2020 (during office hours)	21/04/2020 (during office hours)
Tender submission date	11:00 hours Bangladesh Standard Time (BST=GMT+6 hrs.) on 06/04/2020	11:00 hours Bangladesh Standard Time (BST=GMT+6 hrs.) on 22/04/2020
Tender opening date	11:30 hours Bangladesh Standard Time (BST=GMT+6 hrs.) on 06/04/2020	11:30 hours Bangladesh Standard Time (BST=GMT+6 hrs.) on 22/04/2020

Director (Stores & Supplies) &

Line Director, Procurement, Storage & Supplies Management

of Health Services (PSSM-HS), Central Medical Stores Depot

30, Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Sharani, Tejgaon, Dhaka-1208

Telephone: 9129231

Fax No.: 88-02-9126547

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GD-718

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Bangladesh Police

Police Telecom & Information Management Headquarters

Police Telecom Bhaban, Rajarbag, Dhaka

www.tim.police.gov.bd

Corrigendum of International Tender Notice

Ministry	Ministry of Home Affairs.
Agency	Bangladesh Police.
Procuring entity name	SP (Logistics), Police Telecom & Information Management.
Tender package name	UHF DMR Radio System for FPU.
Invitation Ref. No.	44.01.0000.057.11.048.19/1286/Betar
Date	02-03-2020.
Tender last selling date	13-04-2020.
Corrected tender last selling date	16-04-2020
Tender closing date and time	Date (dd-mm-yyyy) Time
	15-04-2020 11.00am
Tender opening date and time	Date (dd-mm-yyyy) Time
	15-04-2020 11.30am
Corrected tender closing date and time	19-04-2020 11.00am
Corrected tender opening date and time	19-04-2020 12.00pm

Haroon-ur-Rashid Hazaree

SP (A&F)

Additional Charge of SP (Logistics)

Police T&IM, Rajarbag, Dhaka

Ph: 8301105 Fax: 8301404

E-mail: splog.telecom@police.gov.bd

GD-716

STOCKS		COMMODITIES		ASIAN MARKETS				CURRENCIES			
DSEX	CSCX	Gold	Oil	MUMBAI	TOKYO	SINGAPORE	SHANGHAI	USD	EUR	GBP	CNY
Closed	Closed	\$1,608.00 (per ounce)	\$27.30 (per barrel)	Closed	1.37%	0.52%	1.69%	BUY TK 83.95	89.67	98.12	11.69
					17,818.72	2,453.03	2,780.64	SELL TK 84.95	93.47	101.92	12.29



আপনার নিরাপত্তাই আমাদের অগ্রাধিকার

ব্যাংকিং হোক ঘরে বসেই

- ফাঙ্ক ট্রান্সফার
- মোবাইল টপ-আপ
- ক্রেডিট কার্ডের বিল শ্রদান
- ইউটিলিটি বিল শ্রদান
- ব্যাংক চেকটমেন্ট

SIBL Social Islami Bank Limited

Star BUSINESS

DHAKA FRIDAY APRIL 3, 2020, CHAITRA 20, 1426 BS starbusiness@thedailystar.net

TAMING CORONAVIRUS RAMPAGE

BB asks exporters to apply for loans from stimulus package immediately

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Export-oriented industries will have to apply for loans immediately if they want to get funds from the Tk 5,000 crore stimulus package to pay wages to workers, said the central bank yesterday as it published terms and conditions.

The industries will have to submit the loan application to their respective banks as the central bank has asked the lenders to place loan requirement by April 20.

The owners of the export-oriented industries, which will be allowed to enjoy the loans, will have to pay back the fund within two years, or else they will be considered as defaulters, said the BB in a notice.

The BB issued the notice as per instructions of the finance ministry for disbursement of the stimulus package aimed at helping exporters tide over the economic fallout of the global coronavirus pandemic.

The interest-free loan, which

will be used to pay wages to the employees of the industrial units, will carry 2 per cent service charge and has a repayment period of two years, including a grace period for six months from July to December this year.

Exporters will have to pay back the loans in 18 monthly instalments from January 2021 to June 2022. The central bank will realise the amount by deducting funds from the lenders' current account with the BB.

If the borrowers fail to pay back the loans on time, they will face 2 per cent penal interest.

Exporters are eligible to take the loans to pay wages for three months from April to June.

The BB will deposit the funds with the banks in three phases

over the next three months. The funds will be paid into the banks' accounts on the last working day of the month, according to the central bank notice.

Exporters will get loans equivalent to the average wage amounts of three months from December to February.

As per the guideline, factory owners would have to submit the salary sheets of workers from December to February of 2019, the list of workers and their banking or mobile banking accounts to banks.

Once the verification is complete, banks will disburse the salaries to the workers' mobile banking or bank accounts. This means no fund will be given to the account of the factory owners.

Factories that export at least

80 per cent of their products are eligible for the loans. Active factories that paid salaries and wages to workers from December to February would also be considered.

The exporters will have to obtain certification from their respective trade body to enjoy the loans. For instance, a readymade garment factory will have to take the letter from the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) and the letter has to be signed by the president and the general secretary, the central bank explained.

The government has come up with the rescue package as the export sectors have been reeling from the impact of the global coronavirus pandemic.

As of yesterday, \$3 billion worth of garment orders were cancelled by international retailers and brands, according to data compiled by the BGMEA.



Tk 3,500cr yarn, fabrics pile up in mills

REWAFAT ULLAH MIRDHA

Yarn and fabrics worth Tk 3,500 crore have piled up in some 250 spinning and weaving mills because of the ongoing movement restriction to curb the spread of coronavirus.

These millers manufactured the yarn and fabrics targeting two upcoming festivals Pahela Baishakh and Eid-ul-Fitr, Mohammad Ali Khokon, president of Bangladesh Textile Mills Association (BTMA), said in a letter.

The affected millers mainly produce yarn and fabrics for the local market, Khokon said in the letter, which he prepared to submit to the finance ministry and other government offices next week.

This year, the government imposed a ban on large gatherings to celebrate the first day of the Bangla calendar, when clothing items worth around Tk 1,500 crore is sold, Khokon said.

The millers may miss both the two major sales events this year, as the government may curtail the celebrations of Eid-ul-Fitr also, he said.

Of the 450 BTMA-member spinning mills, 250 were in a fix, as they produce fabrics and yarn for products such as lungi, sari, salwar kameez and fatua.

The situation was the same for 500 of the 850 weaving mills which produce fabrics for the local markets.

This has trickled down on some 200 units of dyeing and finishing mills which mainly serve these spinning and weaving mills, Khokon said.

The spinning and weaving mills, which produce raw materials for the export-oriented garment sector, can benefit from the government's Tk 5,000 crore stimulus package.

Some 1.5 million people have been directly affected from the drop in sales in the primary textile sector, Khokon also said.

In the letter, he demanded withdrawal of VAT on all kinds of yarn and fabrics sold between March 20 and June 30 this year.

He also sought exemption of interest on term loans for six months and extension of term loan repayment period by two years for the affected millers.

He demanded enabling payment of utility bills like gas and electricity for the next six months starting from March in 12

monthly instalments while withdrawing associated VAT, interest and surcharge.

He also demanded that the government facilitate duty free import of textile dyes and chemicals until June 30 this year.

The BTMA chief also urged the government for withdrawing all demurrage fees for imports at the Chattogram port between March 20 and June 30 this year.

Meanwhile, local garment accessories makers have urged the government to include them in the list of beneficiaries of the stimulus package.

With the work order cancellations by the buyers, the accessories sub sector is also affected, said Abdul Kader Khan, president of the Bangladesh Garment Accessories and Packaging Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGAPMEA), in a statement yesterday.

More than 1,700 BGAPMEA members meet nearly 95 per cent of the demand for accessories of the garment industry and help reduce import dependency for accessories of the export-oriented sector, including the garment sector.

Khan said the accessories and packaging sector was one of the main export oriented sectors that was supporting other export-based sectors in producing their finished products.

AKM Salim Osman, president of the Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA), in a statement yesterday said the association's member factories would be able to run their units after April 4 while ensuring adequate health safety measures for workers.

Earlier, Osman in a statement asked all the BKMEA members to shut factories down in line with the government announcing a 10-day general holiday from March 26.

The BKMEA also strongly suggested its members clear workers' wages for March in time to avert any labour unrest.

Meanwhile, the commerce ministry has withdrawn the ban on export of face masks and hand sanitisers from Bangladesh.

The ministry in a statement said the office of the chief controller of imports and exports passed the order in a circular yesterday.

Earlier, the ministry imposed a ban on export of face masks and hand sanitisers until March 12, according to the statement.

Stocks display worst-ever showing in first quarter

AHSAN HABIB

Stocks delivered their worst first quarter of a year as nervous investors went for massive selloffs, initially prompted by anti-market measures and then by the fast-spreading coronavirus, which dealt a heavy blow to the economy and businesses at home and abroad.

The DSEX, the benchmark index of the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE), plunged 849 points, or 19.07 per cent in the January-March quarter, to display the most dismal first quarter in its history.

The index began the year on a high note at 4,453 but because of the coronavirus-induced panic, it nosedived to 3,603 on March 18, the lowest since May 12, 2013.

This prompted the regulator to step in to prevent further slides. The Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC) set the floor price of all stocks by calculating their last five days' average prices. This allowed the index to avoid further slides although analysts say the price was not market-driven.

The index ended at 4,008 on March 25, the last trading session before the closure of the trading owing to the ongoing countrywide lockdown.

The DSE30, the blue-chip index that comprises well-performing stocks, ended the quarter at 1,323.77, down 19.83 per cent from its January start.

The benchmark index of the Chittagong Stock Exchange (CSE) was down 18.96 per cent in the first quarter. The broad index of the port

city bourse stumbled 1,553 points to close at 6,859.9.

The stock market had been on a downward trend for the last few months, prompting the prime minister to order banks to buy stocks to boost investor confidence.

But most lenders did not oblige. As a result, investor confidence was hit and the key index was sent tumbling, said Mostaque Ahmed Sadeque, a former president of the DSE Brokers

Association of Bangladesh.

With this backdrop, the coronavirus made its entrance and has since ravaged economies the world over for the last three months with Bangladesh's economy being one of its latest victims.

Because of the COVID-19 fallout, stocks fell further, Sadeque said. Globally, the virus has killed more than 48,320 people and infected more than 952,171. Some 180 countries are affected with the

virus, according to data compiled by Johns Hopkins University.

In Bangladesh, 56 people were infected when this report was written while six deaths were linked to the deadly pathogen.

With the latest hit, stocks of multinational companies did not see buyers amid the mounting fear of economic uncertainty, said Sadeque, also the managing director of Investment Promotion

of Services, a brokerage house.

The market was already sinking and the COVID-19 outbreak only intensified the plunge, a merchant banker said.

Most listed companies shut down their factories due to the ongoing countrywide lockdown. Many of these businesses will be adversely affected after reopening their operations due to the shrinking economy, he said.

Bangladesh's gross domestic

product may contract by as much as 1.1 per cent in the hypothetical worst-case scenario of a significant outbreak of coronavirus in the country, said the Asian Development Bank in an analysis in the first week of March.

Not only the stock market in Bangladesh fell: markets are suffering in other parts of the world such as the US as well.

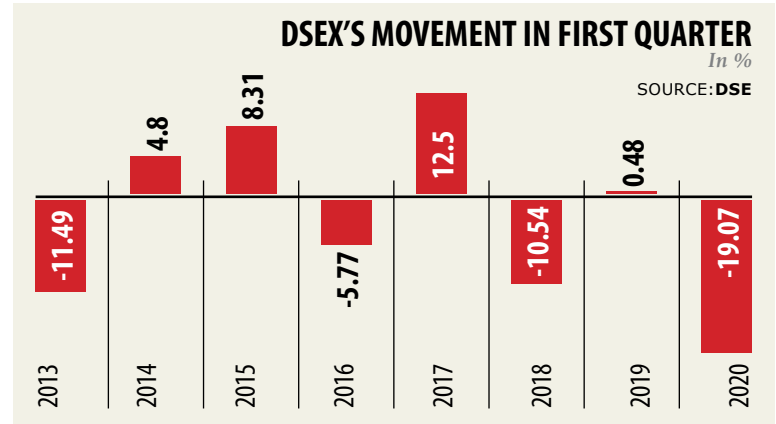
The Dow Jones Industrial Average, an index that measures the stock performance of 30 large companies listed on stock exchanges in the US, lost 7,925 points, or 27.45 per cent during the quarter, which is the gloomiest first quarter in its 135-year history.

The US market was overvalued after it was on the brink of collapse following the coronavirus pandemic. But in Bangladesh, the stock market was already at a very low stage before the virus began to spread due to panic among investors, said Shahidul Islam, CEO of VIPB Asset Management, a fund manager in Bangladesh.

"The country's stock market saw a depressed first quarter due to the panic among investors and COVID-19."

Bangladesh's economy has been growing at higher rates but its stock market is falling. This is because the country's many anti-market measures shocked foreign investors, Islam said.

Islam cited the measures related to Grameenphone and the telecom regulator tussles and the imposition of 6 per cent and 9 per cent as deposit and lending rates respectively.



37 private banks to donate Tk 140.8cr to PM's relief fund

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Thirty-seven private banks will donate Tk 140.80 crore to the prime minister's Relief and Welfare Fund in an effort to help the government mitigate the health and financial risk which stems from the coronavirus pandemic.

Older banks will provide Tk 5 crore each while nine fourth generation lenders will contribute Tk 20 lakh apiece to the welfare fund.

On March 29, the Bangladesh Association of Banks (BAB), a forum of private bank sponsors, urged various financial institutions to provide the funds within March 31.

The forum will hand over the funds within the next week, said a bank's senior executive, who is well aware of the matter.

This will help the government accelerate its ongoing fight against the coronavirus outbreak, he said.

Besides, four state-run commercial banks -- Sonali, Janata, Agrani and Rupali -- have also taken the same measure.

The aforementioned commercial banks will each donate Tk 1.25 crore to the fund.

"State-run banks have already completed all measures to donate to the fund. We will hand over the money at a convenient time next week," said Mohammad Shams-Ull Islam, managing director of Agrani Bank.

Agrani will also provide 5,000 personal protective equipment to the welfare fund for distribution, he added.



Heavy chains and locks secure rickshaw vans to an electricity pole in the capital's Azimpur amidst demand for the movement of goods reducing to a trickle for a government shutdown aimed at curtailing the spread of the pandemic. The photo was taken recently.

ADB gives \$1.34m to avoid dropout of skills trainees for lockdown

STAR BUSINESS DESK

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) provided \$1.3 million financial assistance on Wednesday to avoid trainees from dropping out of the ongoing training under Skills for Employment Investment Programme (SEIP).

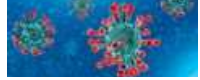
The SEIP is providing sector-focused and job-ready skills training through partnerships with public institutes, industry associations and other organisations, covering skills requirements in 10 industry sectors.

"Each of the 22,619 current trainees will get Tk 5,000 as one-time assistance," said ADB Country Director for Bangladesh Manmohan Parkash.

"The Covid-19 pandemic has caused adverse impacts on the trainees' livelihood and this assistance will help the trainees to continue their training as they are from poor households and chances of their dropping out are high due to the prolonged lockdown."

"We have requested the government to transfer the money timely to the trainees through their bank accounts," Parkash added.

The assistance is additional to the \$350,000 emergency grant approved on March 27, and other ADB support package being put together in the health and financial sectors for tackling Covid-19 challenges in Bangladesh.



TAMING CORONAVIRUS RAMPAGE

Robi launches AI platform to track coronavirus cases

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Mobile operator Robi has launched an online platform powered by artificial intelligence that will analyse movements of potential COVID-19 carriers and evaluate risks posed to those around them in an effort to help the government contain the novel coronavirus outbreak.

The platform was unveiled by ICT State Minister Zunaïd Ahmed Palak during an online press conference yesterday.

Using the platform, which collects data on network users to compile a list of suspected coronavirus cases, the government will be able to easily decide which areas to put under lockdown.

So far, the Access to Information (a2i) programme under the Information Communication Division has identified 3.70 lakh users who have made various queries on the coronavirus.

Now, with the help of technology and data analytics, the government is trying to ascertain the exact number of people at risk of infection, said Anir Chowdhury, a policy advisor of a2i.

Over the past couple of weeks, numerous individuals have dialled either 333, 16263 or *3332# to get updated details on the coronavirus pandemic and how to deal with it.

The Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) leads the analysis of such questions and whether test kits and other items should be sent out, Chowdhury said.

The national helpline centre "333" has received over four lakh calls related to coronavirus while the DGHS's "16263" service has received about 1.70 lakhs calls on the same issue.

With the support of mobile network operators, the government sent short messages to find if any user developed any symptoms. So far, seven lakh users have replied.

"We are now using different technological tools to form a suspected coronavirus patient list," he added.

Only two questions were asked by the 333



and 16263 operators while the *3332# service asked five questions. With the data collected, the government will now attempt to form a heatmap for the virus.

During the digital press conference, Dr Asif Naimur Rashid, chief information officer of Robi, explained how data analytic solutions function and how it can help the government make data-driven decisions to combat the pandemic.

The analytical solution developed by Robi's

analytics team compiles data from decentralised crowd sources.

Crowdsourcing via mobile phones allows high value data acquisition. Combined with the application of data science to crowdsourced data, Robi's platform can perform robust data validation checks to ensure that the solution works with high quality datasets, Rashid said.

The government is also taking user information from three other operators -- Grameenphone, Banglalink and Teletalk -- for a deeper analysis to form a proper report.

The ICT state minister also said the data complied would be highly protected so as to prevent theft or misuse.

"I assure you that we have taken steps to protect the customers' data so that it does not leak," he said in reply to a question.

Only the customer's mobile number and geographical location will be used for government purposes, Palak added.

Professor Abul Kalam Azad, director general of the DGHS, said he was hoping for the data analytics solution to help eradicate the coronavirus threat.

"We are extremely proud to join hands with the government to combat the ongoing pandemic," said Robi's Managing Director and CEO Mahtab Uddin Ahmed.

If everyone actively participates in this project, then Robi can help the government ramp up its efforts to ensure public health in a targeted manner based on the data modelling provided by the solution, he added.

The National Telecom Monitoring Center will also play a vital role in a coordinated effort to combining all the data compiled on mobile network users.



Earning from leftovers

MIRZA SHAKIL, Tangail

Md Rafiq Miah had like everyone else suspended operations at his home-based garments production workstation in Tangail's Mirzapur following recent government directives on containing the novel coronavirus.

Unwilling to sit back and wait for normalcy to return, he figured out that he could turn the odd pieces of leftover cloth lying around his workspace into face masks, which was in high demand.

Using two of his sewing machines, Rafiq and his wife Nasrin Begum are now making around 100 face masks every day.

These are being wholesaled at Tk 7 while retail at Tk 10 to nearby shopkeepers and hawkers to meet local demand.

The father of three dropped out of school after studying up to class V due to financial insolvency. He had worked in garment factories since 1990 but quit around two years ago.

Returning to his Agchhawali village under Mohera union, he set up 12 sewing machines in his house and employed women in his locality to make clothes for

women and children.

The 50-year-old buys rolls of cloth from markets in Narsingdi and Gazipur to make around 200 clothes every week, which he sells at the weekly market in Karatia of Tangail sadar upazila.

"I closed my small factory on the third week of March. The women and girls who work at my factory also left. I learnt about a crisis of face masks in the markets and that it was selling at a high price," Rafiq said.

He then started thinking of making face masks with the cloths that remain in his factory. "Making face masks is not our job, but we are producing it to adjust with the current situation," he said.

"I, however, am happy to supply my face masks to people at low prices amidst this crisis," he added.

Dulal Hossain of adjacent Korail village, one of Rafiq's customers, says other local shops and markets were selling similar face masks at Tk 20 to Tk 30.

Rafiq's wife Nasrin said, "I had also worked at a garment factory. Later, I started working with my husband after he set up the small factory inside the house."



The demand for bleaching powder rose by more than 20 times in Chattogram in the last three weeks since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic.

STAR

Price of bleaching powder triples in Ctg as demand soars

MOHAMMAD SUJMAN, Chattogram

The retail price of bleaching powder in Chattogram almost tripled over the past month due to a rise in demand for disinfectants following the coronavirus outbreak.

The wholesale price of the product has also doubled at the Chaktai-Khatunganj market.

Yesterday, wholesale traders were found selling each 50-kg drums of bleaching powder at Tk 3,800 to Tk 3,900, up from Tk 1,850 at the beginning of March.

The 25-kg drums were priced at Tk 1,850 to Tk 1,950 while it was Tk 950 just last month.

Retail prices for the disinfectant hovered between Tk 100 and Tk 110 per kilogramme in Khatunganj, where over 15 wholesalers and retailers were seen selling bleaching powder.

Retailers in Chawkbazar, Kazir Dewri and Bahaddarhat Bazar area are currently selling the product at Tk 120 to Tk 140 per kilogramme, up from a maximum of Tk 40 per kilogramme a month ago.

The demand for bleaching powder has increased by about 20-fold in the last three weeks, Rashed Hossain, a worker at Makhani Lal Bonik shop in Khatunganj, told The Daily Star.

The demand for bleaching powder has increased all over the world, said

Arif Hossain, a Chattogram-based importer, who regularly buys the product from India.

"It had previously been used at tanneries, hospitals and various factories. But now it is used almost everywhere, including homes, offices and shops as a disinfectant against Covid-19," he said.

Bleaching powder is needed every day to disinfect various objects in clinics, said Ariful Islam, an employee of a private clinic, who came to Khatunganj to buy bleaching powder.

"But for the past two weeks, we have been facing a shortage of the powder," he added.

Lentil prices shot up amid rising demand, supply shortage

DWAIPAYAN BARUA, Ctg

Lentil prices shot up in Chattogram in the last two weeks thanks to a sudden rise in its demand as a relief item, countrywide restriction on movement and poor supply.

Wholesale prices of different varieties of red lentil marked a sharp rise by Tk 10 to Tk 20 per kilogram at Khatunganj wholesale hub.

Traders blamed the supply disruption on the shortage of workers to process raw lentils and transport crisis to deliver the goods from the port and warehouses to the market.

Wholesalers at the hub said they are in a shortage of ready grains as only 15 out of 40 lentil processing mills of Chaktai and Khatunganj areas are now in operation.

Moreover, the mills that are open are processing lentil on a limited scale, as most of their workers have left for their village homes since the beginning of the 10-day government holiday on March 26.

A lack of transport facilities is obstructing the imported grains to reach the hub from warehouses, off-docks and the port, said Sanjoy Deb, a mill owner.

The recent upward trend of global lentil prices by around \$100 per tonne also left an impact on the local market, he said.

Demand for the big-sized red lentil imported from Australia and Canada has risen this week as different government and volunteer organisations have recently geared up food donation activities for the low-income people.

The price of big-sized red lentil rose by Tk 12 to 15 a kilo to Tk 70 to Tk 72 against the last week's price of Tk 55 to Tk 60.

The importers have hiked the prices of the raw grain imported from Australia and Canada by Tk 200 to Tk 250 per maund (37.32kg) and have been selling it at Tk 2,150 per maund, said Solaiman Badsha, proprietor of wholesale firm Taibiya Traders at

Khatunganj.

Best quality small-sized lentil grown locally was selling at Tk 128 to Tk 130 per kg yesterday while the price was Tk 110 a kg 15 days ago.

The price of small-sized Indian lentil rose by Tk 10 to Tk 120 a kg.

Good quality yellow petite lentil known as mung dal saw the highest increase. Its wholesale price increased by Tk 20 per kilo to hit Tk 140.

Medium quality mung dal was selling at Tk 128 against the previous price of Tk 112.

Price of split chickpeas known as chana dal, however, saw a little hike as the price rose by Tk 4 a kg to Tk 38.

Retail prices also rose. Retailers in the kitchen markets were selling Australian big-sized red lentil at Tk 78 to Tk 80 a kg while the price was Tk 65 two weeks back.

Indian red lentil was sold at Tk 125 to Tk 128 a kg, up from Tk 120.



Nazmus Saqib, an assistant manager of Singer Bangladesh, hands over washing machines, microwave ovens and irons to Brig Gen AKM Nasir Uddin, director general of Dhaka Medical College Hospital, at the hospital in the capital on Wednesday for suspected coronavirus patients and their attending doctors.

NEXT STEP

Making a DIFFERENCE

Bangladesh is rapidly moving towards middle income status by 2021. Our businesses definitely offer immense opportunities for the growing economy and this diversity needs a stage for the stories untold. See Bangladesh make its mark on the global map as Making a Difference brings you our proudest success stories from across the country.

How to stay productive while working from Home

As coronavirus continues to spread, working from home has become the new reality for many Bangladeshi personnel. To reduce the spread of infection, companies are closing their doors and asking the employees to work remotely. This may cause the employees to struggle with time management, motivation to work and communication among staff members. While all this can be difficult, finding a strategy that works can help you make it through.

START EARLY AND GET READY

Commuting to your office helped you wake up and get energized to work by the time you reached your desk. At home, however, the transition from your bed to your computer can be much more brutal. The mental association between work and your office can make you more productive. Simply getting a project started first thing in the morning is key to work progress.

DESIGNATE A WORKSPACE

For the sake of productivity, dedicate a specific room or zone in your home to work. Try to avoid your bedroom or the couch-spaces associated with leisure time. The

workspace will separate working hours from your spare time,



thereby getting you in the right frame of mind.

LIMIT YOUR HOURS

One of the dangers of working from home is working too much. You should schedule your work hours to match your typical workday. It is also vital to take regular breaks as your brain too, needs to rest. When you have a structure, you become more efficient.

COMMUNICATE REGULARLY

Make a point of emailing and calling your co-workers and especially your boss a few times a day. This will en-

sure they are getting what they need from you and you are receiving the feedback you need to



keep working.

SET SOCIAL MEDIA BOUNDARIES

As much as you are tempted to take a quick peek at your social media accounts, this convenience can be detrimental to your productivity. Try removing them from your browser shortcuts and logging out of every account. This will help counteract your social network's ease of use during work hours.

OROBI BAKHTIAR

Concern for Kajol during the pandemic

KAMAL AHMED

DOES anyone know what had happened to Utpal Das? If you cannot remember who Utpal is, no one would blame you. Because, he is not a celebrity like all those familiar faces on our TV screens. Utpal, however, was in the news for quite some time in 2017, following his abduction and eventual return after two and a half months from confinement by his abductors. Before his abduction, Utpal was working as a journalist at a little-known online news portal called Purbapashchimbd. news. Till today, neither Utpal nor the law enforcing agencies have told us where he was for such a long period and who were behind his mysterious disappearance.

There's a popular perception in society that those involved with the media are well looked after by the media. So, it was expected that the media fraternity would investigate this case and reveal the truth. Unfortunately, it didn't happen. Utpal's silence is akin to that of all other survivors of alleged enforced disappearances in the last decade who had experienced unimaginable trauma.

Shafiqul Islam Kajol, editor of the Bangla daily Pokkhokhal, who remains missing since March 10, reminds us of the ordeal endured by Utpal and many other victims of alleged enforced disappearances. In fact, Kajol's fate seems even worse as attention shifted, justifiably, to a rapidly deteriorating coronavirus situation with fears gripping all within the country and beyond. Kajol's case remains shrouded in mystery due to several suspicious events that occurred prior to and after his disappearance. It has now emerged, after 21 days of his disappearance, that a second case under the Digital Security Act was registered against him three hours after he went missing. According to the rights group Amnesty International, the second case too was filed by a leader of the women's wing of the ruling party.

Firstly, Kajol is a co-accused in a defamation case under the much-criticised



Family members, friends and colleagues of the missing journalist Shafiqul Islam Kajol form a human chain demanding steps for his safe return.

FILE PHOTO: COLLECTED

Digital Security Act, filed by an influential ruling party MP on a flimsy ground. Secondly, CCTV footage released by the Amnesty International shows that he was being closely monitored and followed by a group of people, which gives us sufficient reasons to suspect foul play. Even though their faces are clearly visible in the footage, no one has yet been identified, let alone arrested. Thirdly, the refusal and reluctance of the police to registrar a case on behalf of his family gives a genuine sense that something is not right. Thanks to the resolve of his

family and friends, a High Court bench of the Supreme Court intervened after 9 days of his disappearance. But since then, except for filing a case, police have not given us any update. These are factors that raise questions about the role of the state in this regard.

Government spokespersons frequently argue that some of such disappearances are voluntary for various reasons. According to them, some of them disappear to dodge business partners to avoid repaying defaulting debt, or some as a result of family quarrel. Some of the disappeared who later returned

alive remained silent about their ordeals, which worked well for their abductors. But data compiled by rights groups show a disturbing trend as a majority of these abductions remain unsolved. Data compiled by the rights group Odhikar shows, in 2019, there were at least 34 incidents of alleged enforced disappearances. Eight of the disappeared were later found dead, 17 were shown arrested, while the fate and whereabouts of the remaining nine remain unknown. It is unclear whether any of these deaths and missing cases has been

investigated, and if so, their outcome was not made public.

And it is quite natural that people shown arrested from different places and times than the original abductions would prefer to remain silent about their ordeal. Some of them accused in acts of terrorism, however, made such allegations during their trial. But those claims were largely ignored. Rights groups now describe this phenomenon as unacknowledged detention by the state.

In Kajol's case, the government seems unmoved despite pleas from his family and various national and international rights organisations. His family members' allegations against security forces for picking him up seem more plausible since the emergence of the CCTV footage. Kajol's son, Monorom Polok, has rightly said that tracing a person in this modern era was not difficult for the government. Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and the Committee to Protect Journalists have all stressed on the urgency to investigate his disappearance.

True, the coronavirus pandemic has put us all in a very difficult situation. But wherever Kajol is now and in whatever conditions, his ability to fight against the contagion is likely to have diminished to a great extent. It further adds to the family's agony. It is high time the authorities took the issue of freeing Kajol as a priority, whether he is under unacknowledged detention by any state agency or any non-state actors. Please heed to his son's plea, "All I want is to get my father back, safe, and unhurt." The harsh reality is, if we assume that he is unhurt and will be freed, he still has to fight an undue and unjust legal battle to clear his name under the draconian Digital Security Act, a most abused legal tool to suppress freedom of expression in the country. The pandemic is a cause for concern for all other alleged unacknowledged detainees too, and freeing all of them should be considered urgently.

Kamal Ahmed is a freelance journalist based in London.

Corona-shaming exposes the fault lines of our society

ZOBALDA NASREEN and GOPA BISWAS CAESAR

IN Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Scarlett Letter*, we read about how adulterers had to wear the sign "A" across their chest. We even have examples in local literature and popular culture like the one of Hurmati, from Shahidullah Kaiser *Sangshaptak*, or that of Rakhee Gulzar's character in the 1998 hit Indian film *Soldier*.

Yes, after a collective shout, we are stamping overseas returnees with "PROUD TO PROTECT BANGLADESH/ HOME QUARANTINED UNTILL..." in a similar way. We believe it is important to explore the meaning(s) this mark bears in the present scenario in Bangladesh. It denotatively means that the returnees bearing this temporary mark need to be quarantined for 14 days, to limit the contagiousness that has caused the present pandemic. But, for the returnees, the "isolation" associated with the aforementioned mark/stamp connotes "untouchability". And, with the series of viral videos of angry returnees at the Ashkona Hajj Camp to the carefree *rashgolla*-loving biker from Shariatpur, the Covid-19 disease has "earned" the status of a *kharap rog* where many ranging from patients, doctors and nurses to friends, family members and neighbours of the returnees tended to hide the symptoms. However, when the stamp should have only indicated that they have returned from abroad, they are all facing a strong surge of stigma even though many of them do not have the disease. Things have escalated to a level that local residents are almost on the verge of banning the returnees from entering their own *mohallas*, because they have decided by now that these "stamped" people are bad news.

For long, "living in a foreign country" was a symbol of status but things have changed dramatically. Now, in this era of corona, the news of someone's coming from a foreign country provokes a sense of fear, social shaming and stigma. We are advised to keep ourselves away from a sneezing neighbour, to shut doors on our ailing caretakers, etc. for safety measures. We even learned how not to hanker after the money (i.e. banknotes)!

But this has been socially understood and collectively practiced in a "strange" way that requires attention. Rather than limiting public gatherings or maintaining social distance and personal hygiene, somehow our netizens seem more interested in pinning the blame on something or someone. Therefore, soon after the government decides that the bodies of the patients who died from Covid-19 would be buried at Khilgaon-Taltola graveyard, the locals protested and put up a notice at the entrance gate asking the government to not bury the bodies there, and suggested they should find some "safer" place outside of Dhaka instead. The intensity of our will to cut all contacts with them became pictorial when "grown-ups" of Diabari protested after it was announced that Diabari would make space for institutional quarantine of the returnees. The idea of living our last painful days alone, without any kith and kin around, followed by the most deserted cremation is getting on our nerves. Such a formidable crisis has never crossed our thresholds—and now, when it did, we are barely trusting anyone. This is the era in which we have learned how to un-trust, we are flooded with distrust, and as a nation susceptible to rumour, we have learned how to mistrust, too.

In Jashore, we red-flagged residences of the overseas returnees, but another in Manikganj is seen to spread *maya-mohabbat* among his village mates. In response, netizens are trolling them. Journalists hopped in and probably "duly" ran sensational stories about how sassy, selfish, and untruthful the returnees are. We are starting to see them as an uncouth and rude group of people who are putting our safety at stake by refusing to practice the ideal model of conduct which means social distancing and self-quarantine. Some of them are asked to go for forced "isolation" and that immediately creates the dichotomy of us-vs-them.

A us-vs-them narrative is already gaining a lot of popularity. We are often taking breaks to raise questions like why we are still allowing flights from coronavirus-stricken countries and occasionally, ridiculing "surreal" comments made by important people of the country that give the impression as if they cannot care less. But the panicky

selfs within us gradually learn to overlook the lack of preparedness which was required as we almost got a three months' notice before the virus came to our shores. But all our minds seek is to find a bad guy—in this case, overseas returnees and the dead. We are trying to banish them from our very own utopic "land of the living" which looks like a very long shot, right now.

How does this dichotomy act in our society? Is it making us inhumane to some extent? Except for a few hospitals, most of the

hospitals are denying patients with flu, cough, sneezing, breathing problems and other symptoms which are common in a Covid-19 case because they are not at all equipped to provide treatments to such patients. Moreover, handling even one patient can lead to the quarantine of the entire hospital along with infecting all the staff and other patients. A few days ago, a person died at Shivganj, Bagura. He returned home from Gazipur

with fever and cough and fainted due to high fever. His wife's attempt to call for an ambulance did not work out, a phone call to the hotline failed. Nobody responded to his family's plea for getting medical attention, as all are afraid they might get infected with the virus too. Having one member in the family with possible symptoms might make the whole family pay a high price socially. It might lead to having police interrogating the entire family of a suspected Covid-19 patient and getting the entire area surrounding the

proper treatment was denied in many cases. The first Covid-19 patients and their family members were inundated with hate messages and social-shaming. The exacerbation of social shaming is leading people to hide their symptoms from the health professionals as well as neighbours.

Despite the IEDCR's repetitive denial of the transmission of Covid-19 at a community level, it keeps requesting people to contact their hotline numbers if they have any symptom of the coronavirus. However, people keep complaining that they are not being able to get through the hotline.

The way the state is handling the pandemic is fuelling the stigma and xenophobia in society. And as we write this piece, we came across the news of a local hotel in Sylhet kicking out an international guest with Covid-19 symptoms, who lied in the street for a while before a rescue team took him to the Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital.

In regular press briefings, the IEDCR director states that they cannot reveal the identities of the deceased as they may face social harassment—while it would be just enough to say that it is because of medical ethics. All the claims made by netizens in social media about their severe lack of preparation in handling an epidemic of this magnitude fall into places, thanks to the ceaseless attempts to sweep their shortcomings under the carpet.

When one of us asked our domestic help to take a break during the lockdown, she replied with gloomy eyes, "Why? I do not have that *kharap rog*." It makes us wonder how the coronavirus is gradually becoming a *kharap rog* and how we are collectively contributing to the social manifestation of this disease. It is high time that we addressed these social issues. It is because of such stigma and sometimes xenophobic behaviour that an Indian citizen of Chinese descent, who has never been to China, had to stand in front of his vandalised laundry store with a placard claiming, "I have never been to China!"

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A group of Italy-returnees stage a protest inside the Ashkona Hajj Camp after they were quarantined there upon their return, on March 14, 2020.

FILE PHOTO: COLLECTED

hospitals are denying patients with flu, cough, sneezing, breathing problems and other symptoms which are common in a Covid-19 case because they are not at all equipped to provide treatments to such patients. Moreover, handling even one patient can lead to the quarantine of the entire hospital along with infecting all the staff and other patients.

A few days ago, a person died at Shivganj, Bagura. He returned home from Gazipur

house locked down. The behaviour of all the residents of that area, including the security guards, changes overnight, even before one is confirmed as a Covid-19 patient. Such stigmatised gaze is getting more intense as citizens countrywide are counting their locked-down days.

Not just in Bangladesh, Covid-19 patients across the world have reportedly suffered from such social stigma and xenophobia, and

QUOTABLE Quote

WILLIAM MORRIS
(Born 1865)
British designer, writer and activist

The true secret of happiness lies in taking a genuine interest in all the details of daily life.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Collections
- 5 Twosomes
- 10 Book basis
- 11 "Li'l Abner" creator
- 13 Arm bone
- 14 Kid's wheels
- 15 Exercise program
- 17 Period of history
- 18 Trapper's job
- 19 Immoral act
- 20 Soggy
- 21 Weasel relative
- 22 Narnia lion
- 25 Viper's weapons
- 26 Those folks
- 27 Lawn material
- 28 Have lunch

DOWN

- 1 San Antonio team
- 2 TV's DeGeneres
- 3 Polynesian nation
- 4 Flight's place
- 5 Inventor's protection
- 6 By the way

29 Being rude, in a way

33 Onassis nickname

34 Funny

35 Tot tender

37 Stadium event

38 Car part

39 Prayer finish

40 Farm animals

41 Not so much

7 Frozen over

8 Enters quickly

9 Frugal

12 Mischievous acts

16 Bearing

21 Bard's song

22 Relaxed

23 Generous virtue

24 "Frozen" song

25 Latte topping

27 Boutiques

29 Fragrance

30 Start of a Caesar quote

31 New parents' choices

32 Valleys

36 Aunt, in Acapulco

WRITE FOR US. SEND US YOUR OPINION PIECES TO dsopinion@gmail.com.

YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

S	H	A	M	E	D	A	L	E	S
N	E	W	A	G	E	D	I	R	T
A	R	A	G	O	N	D	O	M	O
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BEETLE BAILEY by Mort Walker

BABY BLUES by Kirkman & Scott

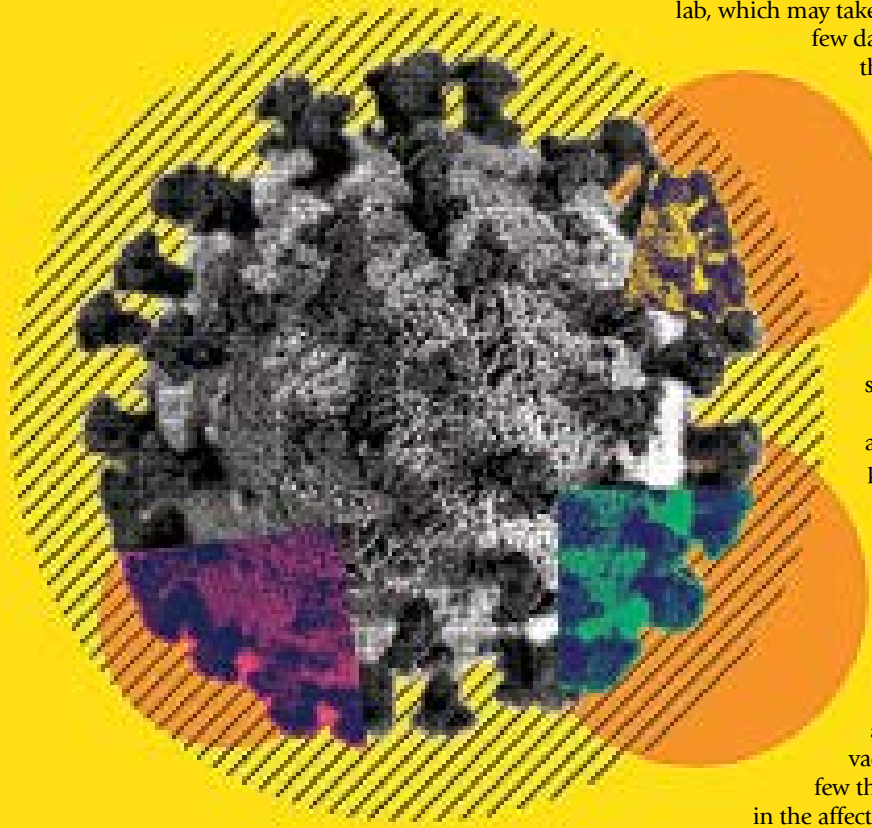
The process and timeline of the vaccine for COVID-19- explained

ZARIF FAIAZ

With the world entering its fifth month of the coronavirus pandemic, one question has been crossing everyone's mind: when will we have a vaccine ready? The answer is not so simple. And we try to explain why.

The race for the vaccine
As we write this article, 35 pharmaceutical companies and academic institutions around the world are in a race to discover the vaccine for COVID-19. Four of them have already completed their trials on animals with one entering the first phase of human trials.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE VIRUS
Luckily, the nCoV-19 is a positive stranded RNA virus, a structure with which scientists are familiar with. The nCoV-19 also shares almost 80% similarity with the virus responsible



for the 2002-SARS outbreak. All of these makes the path of coming up with a vaccine easy for scientists and researchers. But things start to get complicated from here on.

THE PROCESS

The process of coming up with a new vaccine is tricky and lengthy. It often takes months, if not years, for a new vaccine to be perfected completely. Most of the vaccines we rely upon today took at least five to fifteen years to be perfected. The tedious amount of time is due to steps which need to be followed to discover a vaccine.

After a prototype is discovered in the lab, which may take anywhere from a few days to a few months, the vaccine is put on animal trials to be tested on rats, guinea pigs and apes. Most prototypes fail at this stage. If the vaccine shows no adverse effect in the animals, it's then passed on for step two: human trials. The human trials are done in three phases. In the first phase, the vaccine is tested on a few dozen healthy adult candidates. In the second phase it is tested on a few hundred in the affected areas and in the third, the vaccine is tested on a few thousand candidates in the affected areas. Each of

these phases can last up to six to eight months. If the vaccine shows no adverse effect and successfully creates the right immune responses in a large sample of human bodies, it's then passed on for approval by the WHO and the FDA. Even with the approval process going on, the vaccine is constantly studied and tested by regulators for flaws and corrections.

Once approved by the authorities, the vaccine will now be sent for mass commercial production, which requires large amount of funding among other necessities. Commercial production of vaccine is hardly the end of the story. Before it reaches to the doorsteps of every country in the world where coronavirus has spread, which stands at 201, as of 31st March, 2020, a year or two may pass easily.

THE GOOD NEWS

Despite everything, there's a glimmering ray of hope as the FDA has given many pharmaceuticals the go for conducting animal and human trials simultaneously to speed up the process. Many organizations have stepped up to fund the research. Norway-based CEPI, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, has announced \$2 billion of new funding for organizations researching the vaccine. Pharmaceuticals like Inovio, GlaxoSmithKline and Moderna, who have completed the first human trial, have already received CEPI's fundings.

After all the testing, a new vaccine may be available to us in 18 months, a figure provided by Annelies Wilder-Smith, professor of emerging infectious diseases at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine to the Guardian last month.

Like it or not, the coronavirus is here to stay for a while.

New cars this week



Ferrari Roma

Ferrari's new grand tourer created a lot of confusion among petrolheads, namely for looking like an Aston Martin and stretching the definition of a GT car. Its 3.9 liter twin-turbo V8 produces an ungodly 611 HP, and the transmission comes standard with a Race mode. Moreover, the car has Ferrari's latest Side Slip Control system, meaning

this car is as capable of going on a long drive and as it is at shredding lap times. Does this mean the owners of this Italian Stallion will take it to the track? Unlikely, as Ferrari's own advertisement openly admits the Roma will spend most of its life being looked at on exotic locations and will likely never see a track in its entire life. We can hope otherwise.



Audi A3 Sportback

The most budget-friendly Audi just entered its fourth generation and it looks sporty. The new A3 is slightly bigger than its previous generation, with a new aggressive exterior featuring a large front grille and large bumper intakes. On the interior, the car is now much more driver-focused, with the car's shiny new 10.1-inch infotainment screen being

canted toward the driver to prove the point. For all the visual sportiness, the car's powerplant remains the same, with that base model three-cylinder putting out a pedestrian 110 Hp. Still, it has more than enough for the streets of Dhaka, and with its amazing weight distribution and suspension, it would run circles around any fielders that dares to challenge it.

How to manage your team while social distancing

OROBI BAKHTIAR

We have our masks ready and soap supply tight. We are not going out. But we still have our jobs to do and managing a team remotely has become a new trick to be mastered for many. Difficulties are amplified and the chaos is dialled up to 10. It does not have to be this difficult.

BE MORE FLEXIBLE

As a manager, you must accept the fact that working from home will not be the same as everyone working together at the same place and time. The employees have been used to working together under the same operating conditions with the same work schedule. They will need time to get accustomed to the self-paced work and personalization. You should allow them the flexibility to work on their terms. Time to reset your expectations for how work gets done and let go of when and how the job is carried out.

STAY CONNECTED

It's easy to feel disconnected from the people you work with when you are working remotely. Managers have to make sure the teams are not losing morale. Checking in with every employee, either through messages or calls, can build a sense of social connection both within team members and between you and your team. Managers should ask for regular updates from the team to avoid any information vacuum within.

ENCOURAGE TEAM CULTURE

Working alone at home can be quite tedious and demoralizing. The "Buddy system" has been proven to

be an effective strategy to boost team esprit de corps. You should divide the team into pairs so that they can get the appropriate mutual support. This would also decrease your workload as attending to each individual's needs would drain your managerial vitality. Another way to promote leadership would be to assign a leader in each pair so that they can check in regularly and evaluate the overall engagement and well-being.

RESPECT THE QUIET

No communication can also be a form of communication. Being available on instant calls and messages does not necessarily show whether a person is working or not. As a manager, you should trust your team and allow them a "Do not Disturb" period during the day. The constant stream of messages may be overwhelming for someone who prefers to work in silence. Make sure to keep a balance between the blocks of interrupted time and check-ins.

STIMULATE OPTIMISM

Laughter and optimism are contagious. As a manager, you must display hopefulness and confidence so that the team stays motivated in these stressful days. Social distancing can block out initiative and creativity in the team. One way to promote creative spirit would be to assign a fixed time of the day when the entire team can video call and share new ideas as a stimulus. It is also essential that you create a supportive environment and exercise empathy both towards yourself and your team.





Trouble on the horizon for chess players

ANISUR RAHMAN

“Working from home” has suddenly become a buzzword for the professionals the world over following the outbreak of coronavirus, but for professional athletes that hardly holds meaning as all they can do is some light practice to stay fit.

However, chess players are having a different experience because they can practice indoors and in isolation just as easily, but there are financial drawbacks.

Grand Master Ziaur Rahman, who is considered the country's lone professional chess player, talked about the advantage of practicing indoors as a chess player and the challenges ahead of him while he was speaking to The Daily Star.

“Having no tournaments due to coronavirus is a problem for us because players like me, who earn their bread and butter through chess, came this far through hard work. Now I have no options left but to spend the money I deposited for the future of my family,” the 45-year-old Zia said.

“I will be able to bear my expenditure from the deposited money for one year because I need less money to run my three-member family in our own apartment. I am lucky that my son is a good one who is also



Grand Master Ziaur Rahman has been keeping sharp by playing games with his son, a formidable opponent in his own right, as they practise social distancing. PHOTO: COLLECTED

playing chess and earning money from different tournaments. If the situation doesn't improve, then I will definitely face problems,” he continued.

“I know some chess players who hardly take part international tournaments. Instead, they earn their bread and butter playing different tournaments at home. And they are definitely going to face a tough time in future. The arbiter of the chess tournaments is also going to face the same problem,” he said.

Zia however has been enjoying time with his son Tahsin Tajwar Zia

and wife.

“I have been practising with my son, giving time to the family by helping my wife a lending hand in doing household chores. Sometimes, I am even cook. Sometime I'm helping my Indian students through online sessions and taking part in courtesy tournaments online,” Zia informed.

Zia was very conscious about the need to stay home since the emergence of coronavirus in Bangladesh. He said he would take time and would be cautious before taking part in any international tournaments.

“I forgot from when I have been in quarantine at home [laughs]. Maybe from March 10. I did not even allow my son to take part in any tournaments, including the national youth championship where I think he could have won the title,” he said.

Zia also wants chess players to utilise the time at home saying that chess players can practice at home and online. A player can even analyse his game and pen down which system they want to use. Zia also requested everyone to stay at home and stay positive in the fight against coronavirus.

Reminiscence: 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. Mazhar Uddin from Dhaka, 1998



I had never before experienced such freezing weather and it was perhaps the chilliest of winters in Dhaka back in January 1998. Me, then a 12-year-old boy, had become so hooked to cricket after Bangladesh won the ICC Trophy the previous year that I made up my mind to become a cricketer.

So, I began practising under former national leg-spinner Wahidul Gani at the Bangabandhu National Stadium. One day he called and asked me to collect a tracksuit from him, told me to wear it and wait outside the stadium

cricketing heroes roaming beside me just like normal people, knocking the ball and I can remember that I even threw one ball to Aamer Sohail.

Going back to the game, it was also one of the most memorable matches in history. I saw the elegant and flawless Saeed Anwar striking a magnificent hundred along with Ijaz Ahmed as Pakistan posted a huge 314 for 5 in 48 overs. During the break, I got a box of polao and a soft drink from the authorities, which I enjoyed a lot, eating right in front of thousands of spectators, separated from them by a barbed wire fence.

But I was still waiting for the



India opener Sourav Ganguly plays a square cut on way to scoring a match-winning century against Pakistan in a thrilling final of the Silver Jubilee Independence Cup on January 18, 1998. PHOTO: COLLECTED

premises before the third final of the Silver Jubilee Independence Cup between India and Pakistan in Dhaka. I was still unaware that I was chosen as the ball boy along with a few other youngsters, including Mohammad Ashraf and Shahriar Nafees, who would be watching the game from the boundary ropes and help fielders return the ball from the fence.

I can still remember wearing the red Coca Cola tracksuit and entering the ground to witness my first ever international cricket match, that too between fierce archrivals India and Pakistan.

For the first few minutes I was stunned – I couldn't move or, truth be told, even feel -- when I saw the likes of Saeed Anwar, Mohammad Azharuddin, Sachin Tendulkar, Sourav Ganguly, Inzamam-ul-Haq and others emerge from the dressing room and head to the ground for the warm up session.

After a while I managed to gather myself somewhat and realised that this was my chance to take the autographs of all the players and I didn't miss out on that.

I was in heaven with all my

potential coup de grace, which I had previously always witnessed on TV. Sachin and Sourav walked by me towards the pitch to open the innings for India and it gives me goosebumps even writing this.

In reply I witnessed yet another masterclass from Ganguly who struck a hundred equally entertaining as Anwar, while Sachin however was dismissed in the forties.

Robin Singh also chipped in and it turned out to be a very interesting affair when the weak floodlights had forced officials into a dilemma at the end of the match. It was decided that the match would be finished and then, it was Hrishikesh Kanitkar who struck the winning boundary off the penultimate delivery to help win India a thriller by three wickets.

Back then, totals over 300 in ODIs were quite rare and I couldn't thank my luck more for what I had witnessed as it was then a world record for the highest successful chase in ODIs.

22 years have gone by and I can hardly recall many of the past incidents of my life, but I will never forget my first ever cricket match, experience from the field, till I die.

Morgan bats for closed-door cricket

AGENCIES

With international sport either cancelled or postponed because of the coronavirus pandemic, host captain Eoin Morgan says it could be the way forward to advance the game.

Australia are among those countries visiting the UK this year, with three Twenty20s and three one-day internationals scheduled in July.

But while English grounds are used to bumper attendances for international fixtures, Morgan pointed out that is not the case everywhere.

“I've played county cricket for a long time and Test match cricket in Dubai and Abu Dhabi, and that's the exact same, I'd say,” World Cup-winning captain Morgan said.

“From a very serious point of view, if medical experts advised us it was OK to play behind closed doors and it was on TV, I think that would be a huge step forward for the game.”

Two Englands once more?

KEKUSH TAPADER



Is it possible that a representative national team would play two Tests at the same time against two different oppositions, that too on opposite sides of the world, on the same day? As ridiculous as it sounds, this incredible feat was achieved by England in January 1930 when they sent two teams 8,700 miles apart from each other, one in Christchurch to play against New Zealand and the other in Bridgetown to be pitted against West Indies.

The coronavirus pandemic has halted sporting events around the globe indefinitely. All domestic cricket in England has been postponed until May 28 at the earliest. However, England's World Cup-winning captain Eoin Morgan has already entertained the idea of them playing two series, albeit different formats, with separate squads at the same time as the long layoff could lead to a compressed international schedule after resumption.

While the idea of playing different formats at the same time in the modern era may have stemmed from the need to fit a potentially crammed international schedule, back in 1930, when Test was the only format, the sole agenda behind sending two teams to two different continents was to help promote cricket.

Back then, both West Indies and

New Zealand were just recently added to the Imperial Cricket Conference (ICC) -- the forerunner to the modern International Cricket Council (ICC) -- alongside the likes of Australia, England and South Africa after a meeting in May 1926. While West Indies had played three Tests before playing the Freddie Calthorpe-led England side from January 11, New Zealand were playing their first ever Test when they met the Harold



FREDDIE CALTHORPE HAROLD GILLIGAN

Gilligan-led England starting from January 10 in Christchurch.

Even though the two England sides were playing Tests at different parts of the world on the same day, they were not in action simultaneously. The second day of the Christchurch Test, on January 11, was washed out. And hence, the English side playing in the Caribbeans from January 11 were not in action simultaneously as the one in Christchurch. The next day, January 12, was a Sunday and was a rest day for both Tests. And by the time the match in Barbados started on January 13, the three-day match in Christchurch was

already over with England winning comfortably by eight wickets.

The two England sides were again scheduled to play Tests on the same day on the aforementioned tours and this time both matches -- the third Test in Georgetown and fourth Test at Eden Park in Auckland -- both started on February 21. And this time both Englands were caught in action simultaneously.

Owing to time differences, the second day's play in New Zealand on February 22 coincided with the last session of the first day's play in Georgetown, where it was still February 21. With February 23 a Sunday -- rest day -- the final day in Auckland, on February 24, would have coincided with the rest day in Georgetown.

As a result, even though the bizarre instances of one team playing two Tests on the same day have occurred twice in the past, due to time differences and weather, it was less than even two hours that the two English sides actually played simultaneously at the same time.

History could well be repeated with perhaps more simultaneous playing hours by the same side but with two different teams in the future, if the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) do wind up heeding the idea of playing a separate Test squad against West Indies or Pakistan while playing a different ODI and another T20I squad against Australia in July 2020.

Lewis, of 'DLS method' fame, dies at 78

AFP, London



Tony Lewis, one of the men behind the Duckworth-Lewis-Stern method used in weather-affected limited overs cricket matches, has died aged 78, the England and Wales Cricket Board announced Wednesday.

“Tony, alongside fellow mathematician Frank Duckworth, devised the Duckworth-Lewis method which was introduced in 1997 and adopted officially by the ICC (International Cricket Council) in 1999.

“Renamed the Duckworth-Lewis-Stern Method in 2014, the mathematical formula continues to be used in rain reduced limited overs cricket games across the globe,” the statement said.

A career academic, and not the Welshman of the same name who captained England, Lewis received an MBE (Member of the Order of the British Empire) for his services to cricket and mathematics in 2010.

Duckworth, the more outspoken of the founding duo -- fellow



The formula came about in response to the extraordinary climax of a rain-interrupted 1992 World Cup semi-final in Sydney. The method then in use was based on removing the lowest-scoring overs from each team's innings. But it produced a farcical finish to a showpiece semi-final when South Africa, who had faced the challenging but achievable target of 22 runs off 13 balls to beat England, were left with the impossible task of scoring 21 runs off one ball after a rain delay.

statistician Steven Stern helped revise the formula several years later -- said: “I recall hearing (commentator) Christopher Martin-Jenkins on radio saying 'surely someone, somewhere could come up with something

better' and I soon realised that it was a mathematical problem that required a mathematical solution.”

The big difference between Duckworth-Lewis and previous methods was that it gave credit to sides defending a target for taking wickets as well as chasing sides for

understand without having access to a chart that shows where teams need to be over by over, for however many wickets they have lost.

Several sides have still confused the target needed to tie with the total they require to win, with co-hosts South Africa being knocked



scoring runs.

Significantly, this meant the target could be adjusted proportionately in the event of more than one stoppage.

An enduring criticism of the system is that it is difficult to

out of the 2003 World Cup when they made this mistake against Sri Lanka in Durban. The formula has also been criticised for not being suited to Twenty20 matches

No alternative method, however, has yet found favour with the ICC.

Pape Diouf dies of coronavirus

AFP, Marseille

Former Marseille president Pape Diouf has died aged 68 after contracting the new coronavirus, a family source told AFP on Tuesday.

Diouf, who was born in Chad but had French and Senegalese citizenship, led the club between 2005-2009 and helped build the side who lifted the Ligue 1 title in 2010.

He was hospitalised in Senegal after contracting the virus there and became the country's first COVID-19 fatality.

Diouf had been due to leave for Nice earlier on Tuesday to be treated in France, but a sharp deterioration in his health -- which saw him placed on a respirator -- prevented him from boarding the plane.



Cristiano Ronaldo may be in self-isolation, but the Portuguese has always taken his fitness seriously and posted this picture yesterday to reassure fans that he had not lost his edge. PHOTO: INSTAGRAM



PADMA BRIDGE RAIL LINK PROJECT IS BEING BUILT WITH BSRM
COUNTRY'S NO. 1 STEEL EXPERT **BSRM** building a safer nation

GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS RECOGNIZES
World's Largest VRM
SHAH CEMENT

Time for treatment from afar

Doctors' advice, prescription thru phone or video conference can come handy during outbreak

NILIMA JAHAN

SM Mominul Islam Mukut, who works at a bank, went to a private hospital in Uttara on March 21 after suffering from fever and low blood pressure.

The doctors at the hospital refused to treat him and suggested he go to a government hospital which provides coronavirus treatment.

"The doctors heard that I had a fever and refused to examine or treat me," said Mukut.

"I was getting worried as I continued to weaken."

So, what do you do if you have a medical need or emergency when many hospitals are allegedly turning away patients with symptoms of regular flu or fever as doctors don't have enough PPE? When a transport shutdown is being enforced and you also don't want to risk going to a hospital where there are too many people?

You may not be able to physically visit your doctor and vice-versa, still a "visit" is possible via phone or videoconferencing.

Though telemedicine is yet to be popular in the country, some medical organisations do provide remote

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A pickup packed with men on Dhaka-Chattogram highway in the capital's Matuail yesterday morning. People have been ignoring the risks of contracting and spreading coronavirus by defying the government requests to stay home and maintain physical distance.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

2 killed in Naogaon 'gunfights'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

Two suspected criminals were killed in separate "gunfights" with law enforcers in two upazilas of Naogaon early yesterday.

The dead are Zahidul Islam, 38, from Balukha village of Patnitala upazila and Minhajul Islam, 36, from Tentulia village in Atrai upazila, said Abdul Mannan Mian, superintendent of police (SP) of Naogaon.

Being tipped off that a group of drug dealers were having a secret meeting in Dibar area of Patnitala upazila, a team of detectives raided the area around 2:30am, he said.

Sensing presence of the law enforcers, the criminals opened fire on them, forcing them to retaliate which triggered a "gunfight", said Mannan.

Police later recovered the body of from the spot and took it to Patnitala Upazila Health Complex for an autopsy.

Zahidul was accused in five cases filed with different police stations, SP Mannan said.

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Bangladeshis in Spain suffering

Many of 30,000 there have no sources of income amid coronavirus lockdown

JAMIL MAHMUD

Many of about 30,000 Bangladeshis living in Spain have been spending days in uncertainty with no source of income as the country has been under a nationwide lockdown since March 14 to contain the coronavirus outbreak.

The financial hardships came off worse for these expatriates who are already in a fear of getting infected with the deadly virus.

Spain is one of the worst-affected countries from the coronavirus pandemic both in terms of fatalities and the number of confirmed cases.

Most of the Bangladeshis living in the Mediterranean country are either wage-earners or mostly involved in small-scale businesses related to tourism, according to a letter recently sent by Bangladesh mission in Madrid to Wage Earners' Welfare Board (WEWB) under the expatriates' welfare and overseas employment ministry.

In the letter, issued on March 23, the mission sought financial support on a priority basis from Bangladesh government to help the expatriates.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

Political freedom must embody economic emancipation



Bangabandhu is seen with the representatives of workers at Wapda auditorium on April 3, 1972.

APRIL 3, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

BANGABANDHU'S ULTIMATUM TO THE US

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman gives the Nixon administration 10 days' time to recognise Bangladesh or the Bangladesh government would close down the US Mission in Dhaka. This is disclosed by Senator Bill Hagle, who calls on Bangabandhu today at Ganabhaban. Senator Hagle, who is very critical of the Nixon administration, says the US Mission in Dhaka does not even know when the Nixon

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



Bangladeshi shot dead by BSF

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

A Bangladeshi man was shot dead by Indian Border Security Force (BSF) yesterday morning, said Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB).

The dead is Joynal Abedin, 36, of Ranishankar upazila in Thakurgaon.

Lt Col Shahidul Islam, commanding officer of 50th BGB battalion in the district, said the incident occurred around 10:45am.

The man was shot around 200 yards inside Indian territory along Chospara border in Baliadangi upazila of the district, he added.

The Bangladeshi citizen had been living at his in-law's house in North Dinaipur of India for the last 10 years, Lt Col Shahidul said.

Aminul Islam, chairman of Boro-Palashbari Union Parishad, said Joynal was shot dead on the spot by

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Antarctica once had rainforests



REUTERS, Washington

Antarctica is now a harsh land of ice and snow, but has not always been that way.

Earth's southernmost continent long ago was home to temperate, swampy rainforests teeming with life, scientists said on Wednesday based on pristinely preserved forest soil they retrieved by drilling under the seafloor off Antarctica's coast.

The sediment core obtained by scientists working aboard the research icebreaker RV Polarstern in the Amundsen Sea near the Pine Island Glacier dated to about 90 million years ago during the Cretaceous Period when dinosaurs were the dominant land animals.

The researchers estimated based on the soil content that this location, 560 miles (900 km) from the South Pole, experienced average annual temperatures of about 53-55 degrees Fahrenheit

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Inspector sued over Barguna custodial death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A case has been filed against Manoranjan Mistry, suspended inspector (investigation) of Amtali Police Station in Barguna, over the death of a detainee at the police station on March 27.

He was made the lone accused in the case filed under the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act-2013 on Wednesday night, said Md Shah Alam, officer-in-charge of the police station.

Shanu Hawlader, a 55-year-old farmer, was

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PRAYER TIMING APRIL 3

Fazr Juma Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4-40 12-30 4-45 6-21 7-45
JAMAAT 5-15 1-15 5-00 6-24 8-15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



NO PLACE LIKE HOME

Bulbous nests fashioned and clumped onto trees by weaverbirds used to be a part of the rural landscape not so long ago. The now rare weavers were seen putting the finishing touch on their nest in Bogura's Gabtali upazila last week. The lengths these birds go to build their homes is astounding.



PHOTO: MOSTAFA SHABUJ

Iran, US heat up war of words over Iraq

AFP, Tehran

Iran yesterday said it "only acts in self-defence" after President Donald Trump warned it against attacks on US troops in Iraq, as a new war of words heated up despite the coronavirus pandemic.

Tensions between the arch-foes flared in Iraq where the United States deployed Patriot air defence missiles prompting neighbouring Iran to warn of consequences and demand a US withdrawal.

Both countries have been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has claimed more than 5,000 lives in the United States and more than 3,000 in Iran.

"Unlike the US -- which surreptitiously lies, cheats & assassinates -- Iran only acts in self-defence," Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif tweeted.

"Don't be misled by usual warmongers, AGAIN," he said, addressing US President Donald Trump.

"Iran starts no wars but teaches lessons to those who do," he added.

Trump warned Iran on Wednesday that it would pay a "heavy price" in the event of further attacks on US troops.

He tweeted that "upon information and belief, Iran or its proxies are planning a sneak attack on US troops and/or assets in Iraq."

In response, Zarif wrote on Twitter that "Iran has FRIENDS: No one can have MILLIONS of 'proxies'"

Iran responded angrily to the US Patriot

deployment warning that Washington risked leading the Middle East to disaster in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic.

Iran and the US are in a tense battle for influence in Iraq, where Tehran has powerful allies and Washington has close ties to the government.

Bases in Iraq housing US troops and foreign embassies, particularly the American mission, have been targeted in more than two dozen rocket attacks since October that Washington has blamed on Iran-backed armed groups.

Tensions have risen sharply since Trump withdrew from a landmark nuclear agreement in 2018 and reimposed sweeping sanctions.

They escalated in January when the US killed Iran's Major General Qasem Soleimani in a drone strike near Baghdad airport.

Iran retaliated by firing at bases in Iraq housing US troops.

While on high alert for a response, Iranian air defences accidentally shot down a Ukrainian airliner minutes after takeoff from Tehran, killing all 176 people on board.

Iran has repeatedly called on the Trump administration to reverse its sanctions policy, which has been opposed even by US allies, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

"This was the best, historic opportunity for the Americans to reverse their wrong

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