



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

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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।

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