



The Daily Star



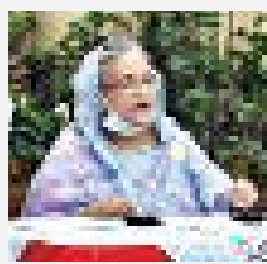
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BANGLADESH UPDATE 18 infected in 24 hours | **88** Total cases | **33** Total recovery | **9** Death | **GLOBAL UPDATE** 66,542 Total deaths | 252,615 Total recoveries | 1,225,360 Total cases

COVID-19 FALLOUT

Tk 72,750cr bailout plan

PM unveils the package to help offset economic shock



"I hope our economy will rebound and we could reach near the desired economic growth, if the stimulus packages, the previous and the fresh ones, could be quickly implemented."

UNB/BSS

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday announced four new stimulus packages of Tk 67,750 crore to overcome the possible economic shock from the ongoing shutdown enforced to prevent the coronavirus spread.

With the previously announced Tk 5,000 crore stimulus package, the amount of the whole package now stands at Tk 72,750 crore.

The announcement was made at a press conference held at her official residence the Gonobhaban which was arranged to brief journalists about the possible impacts of the coronavirus outbreak on the national economy and the ways to face the upcoming challenges.

RELATED STORIES ON B1

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A ferry crammed with mostly ready-made garment workers leaving Dhaka for home yesterday morning. The photo was taken at Mawa Ghat on the Padma. Hundreds of workers walked for hours to reach the city after the authorities had decided to open the factories, but they had to travel back to their villages as the owners changed their decision following widespread criticism. *Inset*, workers at a factory gate in Savar learn that the factories would remain shut.

PHOTO: COLLECTED, STAR

RMG owners divided when lives at risk

No specific govt guidelines on factory closure; workers left in uncertainty; some factories kept open

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Division among influential owners over the closure of garment factories and an absence of specific instructions from the government had sent thousands of workers into a dangerous scramble to get back to Dhaka.

These workers braved risk of coronavirus infection and trudged to Dhaka only to find their factories closed.

The apex body of the garment industry, Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), did not notify workers about the extension of the shutdown declared by the government on April 1.

Citing a lack of authority to close factories, it waited for the government's Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishment (DIFE) to make the announcement as factories need DIFE's permission to shut down.

But the DIFE did not make any such announcement, saying many factories had pending work orders and some were

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No entry, exit of people from capital

Countrywide shutdown extended till April 14

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

People are not being allowed to enter or leave Dhaka except for emergency, police said yesterday as countrywide shutdown imposed to slow down coronavirus transmission was extended until April 14.

"With exceptions to the emergency services, we are not allowing anybody to get into Dhaka or to leave Dhaka until further notification from the government," said a press release of Bangladesh Police yesterday.

"Bangladesh Police seeks cooperation of the respected citizens and all concerned for the proper implementation of the government directives and health instructions to this end," reads the release sent by Sohail Rana, assistant inspector general of police (media).

The decision came as a good number of people keep coming and leaving the capital although the government suspended operations of all modes of passenger services since March 26.

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COMMUNITY TRANSMISSION

It's there, but confined to 5 clusters: IEDCR

Country sees biggest daily jump of 18 new cases; one more death reported taking tally to nine

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The authorities have said that community transmission of coronavirus is indeed happening, but it is limited to five clusters across the country.

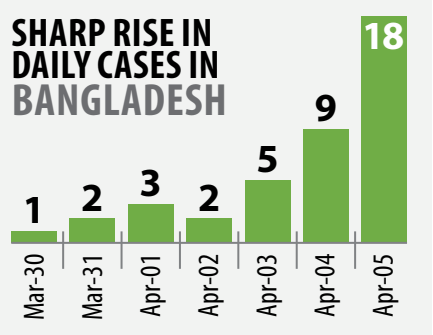
The admission comes after 18 people tested positive for the virus yesterday, highest in a single day.

"We are getting patients from different areas. There are community transmissions, but they are happening in clusters [specific neighbourhoods]. So, there is nothing to worry about," Prof Meerjady Sabrina Flora told a daily briefing via video conference.

The director of Institute of Epidemiology Disease Control And Research (IEDCR) said infections were largely concentrated, often within a family and its circles.

The Institute of Epidemiology Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) yesterday informed that one more coronavirus patient died, bringing the Covid-19 deaths to nine.

She announced that the labs tested 367 individuals in a single day and detected the



18 positive ones.

According to the IEDCR website, the patients are from 11 districts. In the capital, 52 patients have been detected in 30 areas. So far, 88 patients have been detected. The government reported the first three cases on March 8.

The man who died yesterday morning was from Narayanganj, Prof Flora said.

The capital's Bashabo and Tolerbagh

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3 die after showing virus-like symptoms

STAR REPORT

At least three people died with Covid-19-like symptoms yesterday in three districts -- Madaripur, Netrakona and Cumilla.

Besides, multiple houses were locked down and many families were home quarantined in different districts to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

In Madaripur, a 50-year-old man died with Covid-19 symptoms at his home under Koiaria union of Kalkini upazila early yesterday.

"The man was suffering from fever, cold and respiratory problems. But we are suspecting that he might have died of cardiac arrest," said Shafiqul Islam, civil surgeon of the district.

Besides, three others were admitted to the corona unit of Madaripur General Hospital yesterday

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Doomed, either way

RMG workers forced to make arduous journey to the capital only to find factories closed

ZYMA ISLAM and MD AMINUL ISLAM

If you knew that the beginning of next month, you would have no money, none at all, how badly would you try to save your job?

"Work starts from April 5. We don't know how you will manage to come from your villages but you have to join work, or there will be no salary." This is what Ronny*, a jacquard operator from Posmi Sweaters, claimed his line supervisor told him.

"I had called on April 3, to tell them that there is no transport and it is not possible for me to travel from Netrakona to Gazipur right now. But I was told that I must show up to work," said Ronny.

And show up he did. He set off from his home in Mohanganj upazila in Netrakona and reached Gazipur Chowrasta by walking, taking rickshaws, and hitchhiking on pickup trucks—covering a distance of around 150 kilometres.

He set off around 9:00am on Saturday morning and reached Gazipur late at night. But when an exhausted, sleep-deprived Ronny went to report for work yesterday morning, he found the factory gates locked. Security informed the workers that the shutdown had been extended till April 11 and possibly longer, said Ronny.

"Now, I am stuck here with no way to pay rent this month. I had to spend Tk 800 just to come to Gazipur."

Similarly, another male worker from Posmi Sweaters said he had called his assistant manager on the morning he set off. "I called him on April 4 to make sure that there is work the next day. He said yes, and so I started off from my home in Sreebordi upazila in Sherpur," he said.

His home is 160km from his factory. He, too, was met with closed gates yesterday morning.

"I walked around 40km... and whenever I could, hitchhiked on the back of pickup trucks. The police stopped us at several checkpoints along the highway, and made me get down from my vehicle eight to nine times," he said. The trip cost him over a thousand taka.

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A woman buying rice for Tk 10 a kg under the government's open market sale programme in the capital's Mohakhali yesterday. People in the low-income bracket form queues and often wait for hours to buy essentials at affordable prices.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Trump warns Americans of 'toughest week'

Death toll in US climbs past 8,400; Spain sees drop in deaths for third consecutive day

AGENCIES

President Donald Trump warned Americans to brace for a "very horrendous" number of coronavirus deaths in the coming days as the number of people infected in the US has exceeded 3,00,000 with the death toll climbing past 8,400.

Global deaths from the Covid-19 pandemic have soared past 66,500, with Europe continuing to bear the brunt of the virus which has left roughly half the planet confined at home.

There are now more than 1.2 million confirmed cases across the globe since the virus first emerged in China late last year, according to a Johns Hopkins University tally.

Trump said the United States was entering "a time that's going to be very horrendous" with "some really bad numbers."

"This will probably be the toughest week," he said at the White House. "There will be a lot of death." At the same time, the president stressed the US cannot remain shut down forever. "Mitigation does work but again, we're not going to destroy our country," he said. "I've said it from the beginning -- the cure

cannot be worse than the problem."

Over 45,000 global deaths have been in Europe, with Britain reporting a new daily high in fatalities, taking the overall toll to 4,300 out of nearly 42,000 cases.

Spain saw its third consecutive daily decline in the number of people dying from the pandemic as the country recorded another 674 fatalities yesterday.

Queen Elizabeth II was set to make a rare, "deeply personal" speech yesterday to urge people to rise to the challenge posed by the coronavirus, and personally thank frontline healthcare workers.

The pandemic has hammered the global economy, with businesses hit hard as people are forced to stay indoors to help curb the spread of the coronavirus.

Governments have rolled out massive, unprecedented stimulus programs to ease the pain, but economists have warned that the crisis could worsen poverty levels with millions of jobs lost.

Poor economies, such as Iraq, are struggling, with charities and volunteers rallying to provide food to the needy.

"This is more dangerous than Daesh," SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

RMG owners

FROM PAGE 1
Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), the production of which is crucial.

This led thousands of workers to head to Dhaka and its adjoining areas like in Savar, Ashulia, Maona, Gazipur, Tongi, Narayanganj and Mirpur.

Most of the factories were closed on March 26 when the 10-day closure to slow down the coronavirus outbreak began.

A few factories continued production as the BGMEA and DIFE both had said that the factories could run if they had work orders or were making masks or other protective gear.

Shibnath Roy, inspector general of the DIFE, said "The DIFE did not ask for the closure of all factories even in the second circular published on April 1."

They had always said factories could run if they took proper safety measures, he said.

"The situation could have been avoided had the factory owners notified the workers about the extension of the government's general holiday up to April 11."

He said the factory owners had the time to do so but they could not reach a consensus in this regard. Some influential owners were in favour of implementing health and safety measures and continuing production, he told The Daily Star over phone.

The BGMEA and Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA) leaders, and officials of DIFE had a meeting in Teigaon on Saturday afternoon but failed to agree on closing the factories.

Some RMG factory owners wanted to reopen their units from yesterday.

But by Saturday evening, things turned south for the owners, BGMEA and DIFE as widespread criticism poured in. It was only then the BGMEA and BKMEA requested their members to shut down their units.

Rubana Huq, president of the BGMEA, said she on March 20 wrote to the labour ministry seeking measures about shutdown of factories.

A meeting was held on March 21 and many owners said their factories could stay open implementing health and safety measures, she said.

"Even then, the BGMEA went ahead and recommended closure on March 26. We made no announcement from the BGMEA to reopen factories... After seeing the procession of people, we again recommended closure," Rubana said.

"We are urging all our members to pay the workers their March salaries as soon as possible."

She said some 190 factories under the BGMEA membership were open yesterday.

Talking to The Daily Star, Mohammad Hatem, vice-president of BKMEA, also hinted at a division between factory owners.

He said many factory owners had told them that they had emergency shipments pending and could not close their units. Most factories were, however, closed.

Regarding Saturday's coming back of the workers, Hatem said they came mainly for salaries.

"It was really difficult for us to reach a consensus," Hatem told The Daily Star over phone. He said 60 percent of the knitwear factories were running yesterday.

He claimed that most of the workers who came to Dhaka came for their salaries.

Both Hatem and Rubana said that Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi at a meeting last week said the factories could run if safety of the workers was ensured.

Around 100 garment factories in Savar and Ashulia restarted yesterday but most were closed.

Most of the workers returned to Dhaka fearing they would lose their jobs.

Murshid Ali, a sewing machine operator at a garments factory in Savar, yesterday said, "After shutdown of my factory on March 25, I went home in Kumarkhali of Kushtia.

"I had to come back and suffer on the road as a factory official called me and told me to join work on April 5 or get fired," he said.

"I returned to save my job, otherwise I would not have returned," he said, adding, "I had to walk for two and half hours and change five vehicles to reach Savar. I spent Tk 1,500 in fares."

When he reached his factory yesterday, he learnt it was closed until April 11.

"I am worried about when my salary would be paid as the factory authority did not say anything about that," he added.

Kohinur Begum, who works for a factory in Ashulia, said, "A factory official told us that they would pay our salaries by April 7."

Her factory restarted.

Azizul Haque, assistant general manager (admin) of Winter Dress Ltd in Savar, said his factory restarted yesterday.

"We restarted as we have some urgent work orders pending."

RAK Liton, general manager (HR) of AR Jeans Producer Ltd in Ashulia, said, "We have declared our factory closed till April 10 due to coronavirus outbreak. We made the decision to protect our workers."

He said they were sending the workers' salaries via mobile banking channels.

Abdus Sobhan, general manager of Dhaka Export Processing Zone, said there were 100 factories in DEPZ and 50 restarted.

Citing poor work performance, two garment factories in Savar fired around 173 workers yesterday. The factories said the workers' dues would be paid by April 30.

Nazma Akter, president of Sammilito Garment Sramik Federation, said, "Thousands of workers went to the factories on foot, risking their health and the spread of coronavirus. They need salaries and livelihood but many factories laid off workers and fired them without pay."

She said what was being done to the workers was appalling. "How would the workers and their families survive with no jobs and healthcare?" she said.

"Global unions, ITUC, Industrial, UNI, AFLCIO, other unions, should make a joint call on the government, the BGMEA, and brands to ensure workers' pay and put an end to their sufferings," Akter said.

Transparency International Bangladesh in a statement yesterday protested the factory owners' decisions that led to the sufferings of garment workers.

In Chattogram, at least 133 garment and other export-orientate factories were operational yesterday.

Two lakh workers were working in those factories. Most of them came from different parts of country on Saturday suffering a lot on the road.

Factory owners claimed that they opened their factories to keep the work order of buyers.

MA Salam, first vice-president of the BGMEA, told The Daily Star, most buyers cancelled or postponed of their orders due to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, some buyers from the Fareast were waiting for their goods.

He said 38 out of 421 BGMEA-registered factories in Chattogram zone were running. The factories are manned by around 1 lakh workers.

He said there were some factories running outside the EPZs and some were not registered with the BGMEA.

At least 30 factories registered under the BKMEA, 65 factories in three EPZs of Chattogram, producing non-garments goods, opened yesterday.

Trump warns

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said Iraqi volunteer Mustafa Issa, referring to the Islamic State jihadist group that swept through a third of the country in 2014.

TIDE TURNING IN ITALY?
At the Vatican, Pope Francis yesterday appealed for courage in the face of the pandemic.

There was, however, some encouraging news from Europe over the weekend. Worst-hit Italy cheered after seeing its number of intensive care virus cases drop for the first time -- from 4,068 on Friday to 3,994 on Saturday.

Even some of the most cautious Italian health officials seized on the figures as evidence that the tide may be turning in the deadliest disaster the country has faced since World War II.

"This is a very important data point," said civil protection service chief Angelo Borrelli, adding that it "allows our hospitals to breathe."

The daily rise in new infections across Italy has also slowed. It reported 681 new deaths on Saturday, down from a peak of almost 1,000 just over a week ago, reports AFP.

WE NEED YOU

New York state, the US epicenter, saw a record 630 deaths in a single day and Governor Andrew Cuomo warned the worst was yet to come. The state has recorded a total of 3,565 deaths.

Cuomo also cautioned that already strained hospitals were not prepared. New York City appealed for licensed medical personnel to volunteer their services.

"Anyone who's not already in this fight, we need you," Mayor Bill de Blasio said.

Trump said 1,000 military personnel, mostly doctors and nurses, would be deployed to help in the city, which he described as "the hottest of all the hot spots."

U-TURN ON MASKS

Several Western countries including the US, Germany and France have in recent days encouraged the use of masks in public despite earlier saying that only cars needed to cover their faces.

The U-turn has angered and confused some citizens, and spurred a flurry of online tutorials for DIY masks.

The advice came after some studies suggested the new coronavirus can be spread through speaking and breathing, not just coughing and sneezing.

US authorities said wearing a simple homemade mask or scarf could help stem rocketing infection rates.

The World Health Organization is reviewing its guidance but has said it worries that masks could give "a false sense of security," leading people to be more casual about hand washing and social distancing.



Officials wearing personal protective equipment announce a lockdown at Purba Lamapara in Narayanganj. The measure came after a resident of the neighbourhood tested positive for coronavirus yesterday. PHOTO: SANAD SAHA

It's there, but confined to 5 clusters

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are under IEDCR surveillance after 9 and 11 residents respectively of the areas were detected, she said.

They were infected from "cluster transmission", she said, adding that samples of many residents of the areas are being collected for tests.

Another cluster is located in Gaibandha.

Besides, The Daily Star gathered that six members of a family were infected with Covid-19 in Sabujbagh area in the capital.

"An elderly couple, their two daughters and two granddaughters -- one two-and-half-year old and another only six months -- have tested positive," said Mahbub Alam, officer-in-charge of Sabujbagh Police Station.

"We are warning once again: please avoid mass gatherings. Otherwise,

the transmission which is limited in clusters would spread everywhere," Prof Flora said.

Prof Abul Kalam Azad, DG of the Directorate General of Health Services, said 46 people were in isolation and treated at hospitals. Three patients recovered in the 24 hours before 12:00pm yesterday, he said. So far, 33 people recovered from Covid-19.

Prof Mozaherul Huq, former regional advisor of World Health Organization's (WHO) South East Asia region told The Daily Star yesterday.

Prof Mozaherul Huq, former regional advisor of World Health Organization's South East Asia region told The Daily Star: "We should not think of small clusters. Start from a big radius, and then approach a small one. We have to think of putting an entire

district in lockdown immediately after a case is detected, then the upazila, the unions and the wards.

"No dillydallying will work. We need rigorous action to prevent and control transmission, and clinical management of the infected people should be there. All people need to be engaged in the activity."

Speaking at the briefing, Prof Abul Kalam Azad said, "We don't know how long this situation will persist. We have to take decisions considering the economic aspects and other issues."

"If we cannot maintain the [social distancing], we will not be able to tackle the situation with our preparations."

Prof Kalam also expressed concern about the rush of garment workers, which may "transmit infection of the virus."

3 die after showing virus-like symptoms

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with Covid-19-like symptoms, he said.

In Netrakona, a 45-year-old woman died of fever, cold and respiratory disease at Kalihor Joardarpa village in Purbadhala upazila early yesterday.

Later, local health officials collected samples from the body, said Tajul Islam Khan, civil surgeon of the district.

Few hours after her death, some 50 houses in the locality were locked down, said Umme Kulsum, upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) of Purbadhala.

In Cumilla, a 60-year-old man died with flu-like symptoms in Chokrotola village of Daudkandi upazila yesterday.

He had been suffering from cold, fever, cough and respiratory disease for the last couple of days and died around 7:00am yesterday, said Shahinur Alam, medical officer of Daudkandi Upazila Health Complex.

Meanwhile, the local administration has locked down seven houses of the area suspecting that they might have contracted the virus, said Kamrul Islam Khan, UNO of Daudkandi.

In Manikganj, local administration locked down Singair municipality area of the district from early yesterday after a man there tested Covid-19 positive.

In Mymensingh, a rickshaw puller and his family members of Kachimpur village under Ishwarganj upazila were home-quarantined yesterday as the man was suffering from Coronavirus-like symptoms.

Our Faridpur, Mymensingh, Cumilla and Manikganj correspondents contributed to this report.

No entry, exit of people from capital

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Besides, all government and private offices, except for those providing emergency services, remained closed since March 26 and it would remain in force until April 14.

The release said police had been working to ensure the implementation of social distancing and try to keep people at home as per the government instructions.

"Other than the emergency services as required for the smooth continuation of daily life of people, all individual and group movements are prohibited. We are working to ensure it," it read.

Meanwhile, the government yesterday extended the ongoing shutdown until April 14 to contain the spread of novel coronavirus, according to a public administration ministry circular.

Earlier, the government announced closure of all public and private offices from March 26 to April 4 which was later extended until April 11.

However, utility services such as water, electricity, gas, telephone, and internet will be operational during the shutdown.

Transportation of agri products, fertiliser, insecticides, newspapers, food, goods, medical equipment, and daily essentials will be outside the

purview of the suspension.

Besides, kitchen markets, restaurants, drugstores, and hospitals will also remain open, the circular added.

Offices can be opened in case of urgent need, and pharmaceuticals and export-oriented mills and factories will remain open if necessary.

The Supreme Court is going to issue a notification today extending holidays at all the courts until April 14, sources at the SC told The Daily Star.

All educational institutions will also remain closed until April 14, said an education ministry top official. On March 16, the government shut down all educational institutions from March 17 to 31 and later extended it until April 9.

In another development, the government yesterday stretched the ongoing suspension of air communications with all European and 16 other countries until April 14.

The 16 countries are: Bahrain, Bhutan, Hong Kong, India, Kuwait, Malaysia, Maldives, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Thailand, Turkey, the UAE, and the UK.

Flights on all domestic routes will also be suspended until further notice, said Mohibul Haque, senior secretary of civil aviation and tourism ministry.

However, air communications

with China as well as the special and scheduled cargo flight operations will be continuing.

Mokabbir Hossain, Biman managing director and CEO, yesterday said the national flag carrier would continue the suspension of its flight operations on all the 17 international routes as well as on domestic routes until April 14 in line with the government decision.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) yesterday directed its field offices to take necessary steps for stopping carrying of passengers on goods-laden vehicles, defying the government ban.

A letter was sent to its all assistant directors across the country, Lokman Hossain Mollah, director (engineering) of BRTA, told this newspaper.

The government has suspended operations of all public transport until April 11 to slow down the spread of coronavirus in the country and banned carrying of passengers on goods-laden vehicles, reads the letter.

But it was seen that some goods-laden vehicles were carrying passengers, which is a punishable offence, it added.

"In this situation, you [assistant directors] are requested to take steps in consultation with the district administrations and police to stop the carrying of passengers on goods-laden vehicles," it added.

Tk 72,750cr bailout plan

FROM PAGE 1
"I hope our economy will rebound and we could reach near the desired economic growth, if the stimulus packages, the previous and the fresh ones, could be quickly implemented," she said.

The premier said the government simultaneously took four programmes under the work plan to be implemented in phases categorised as "immediate, short and long".

"The four programmes are: increasing public expenditure, formulating a stimulus package, widening social safety net coverage and increasing monetary supply," she said.

In the four new packages, Sheikh Hasina said her government would provide working capital of Tk 30,000 crore for the Covid-19 affected industries and service sector institutions.

The commercial banks will provide the loans from their own resources to the industries or business entities concerned on the basis of bank-client relationship.

The interest rate of this loan facility will be nine percent, of which the loan takers will provide 4.5 percent while the government will provide the rest of the interest to the respective banks as subsidy.

In the second package, which will be for the small and medium industries, the government will provide Tk 20,000 crore as working capital.

The commercial banks will provide the loans from their own resources to the industries or business entities concerned on the basis of bank-client relationship.

Here, the interest rate will be the same as nine percent, but the four percent interest will be borne by the loan-taking industries while the rest of the money will be paid by the government to the respective banks as subsidy.

In the third package, the Bangladesh Bank will expand its EDF (Export Development Fund). Aiming to increase the facility for importing raw materials under the back-to-back LC system, the central bank will enhance its EDF facility from \$3.5 billion to \$5 billion.

As a result, some Tk 12,750 crore, equivalent to \$1.5 billion, will be added to the respective fund.

The current interest rate of the EDF is LIBOR (London Inter-Bank Offer Rate) + 1.5 percent (which is 2.73 percent in total). It will be decreased to two percent, she said.

For the last package, the PM mentioned that Bangladesh Bank will introduce a new loan facility system titled "Pre-shipment Credit Refinance Scheme".

The amount of this loan facility will be Tk 5,000 crore in total where the interest rate will be seven percent.

While addressing the nation on March 25 on the occasion of the

Independence and National Day 2020, Hasina announced a stimulus package of Tk 5,000 crore for export-oriented industries to fight the adverse impact of coronavirus on the economy. This money will be used for providing the salaries and wages of workers and employees only.

"The total amount of these stimulus packages will be Tk 72,750 crore which will be 2.52 percent of the GDP," she said.

Hasina hoped that the country's economy would bounce back if the stimulus packages are implemented quickly. "And we'll be able to go close to the desired economic growth, Inshallah."

She also put emphasis on giving special attention to local products beside the export-oriented sector to overcome the possible global and domestic economic crisis.

In this connection, the prime minister urged all to increase production and the use of local products.

On Thursday evening, Hasina held a high-level meeting at the Gonobhaban in this regard.

Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal, PM's Principal Secretary Ahmad Kaikaus, Bangladesh Bank Governor Fazle Kabir, Finance Ministry Senior Secretary Abdur Rouf, and PMO Secretary Md Tofazzel Hossain Miah were present at the high-level meeting.

Doomed

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"Whatever money I have, I will spend on food. After that I will walk back to my village," he said. He has been told that he will get his salary when the factory reopens.

Moshiul Azam (Shajal), managing director of Posmi Sweaters Ltd and vice president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), denied that the workers had been asked to come back. He asked why the workers had gone home in the first place.

"That was irresponsible on their part. We are trying our best to keep our workers safe."

Ronny was asked why he had gone back to his village in the first place. "Five of us live in one room. We sleep side-by-side on the floor. When we first heard of the virus and that we would have to stay at home, I thought going to the village would be a better choice."

The stories are the same all over. Most garments workers had left to avoid the squalid, overcrowded living quarters thinking it would help protect against the virus. They came back because they were told that factories would open and they would be paid.

Rana who works in Diraj Ltd in Jamgora, Ashulia had to set off before dawn yesterday. "I live deep in the hills of Madhupur. Nobody called me and told me that the factory will be closed. I walked from my village to Madhupur, and then took a rickshaw to Elega in Tangail. After that I walked from Elega to Chandora in Gazipur. Then I took a rickshaw again till Jamgora." This is a distance of around 100km.

"I had gone home because three of us live in a room that is 10 haat long. I came back because I needed the money. If I had known the garments would be closed I would have left my seat in the room for the month and just stayed back in the village."

BGMEA Vice President Azam said that discussions about whether the factories should remain open or not happened until the wee hours of yesterday morning. "We communicated the decision when it was taken," he said, adding that reorienting factories to tackle the shutdown has been a trying exercise.

When asked why the decision to extend the factory closures was taken the night before the factories were meant to reopen, he said coordinating everything has taken some time.

Meanwhile, as workers were rushing back to the factories yesterday, Dhaka Metropolitan Police completely locked down the city borders. "Nobody would be allowed in, and those inside will not be allowed out," said a statement circulated by the police.

On Saturday night, incoming garments workers were stopped at Keraniganj by the police, and they took refuge at the police station. The Keraniganj police called on Bidyananda Foundation to help feed the hungry garments workers who had been travelling all day.

"We got a call from the police late in the night saying that garments workers are stranded at Keraniganj and needed food. We fed around 500-600 people, and even then around 50-100 people were left hungry. There might have been some locals in the crowds too, but garments workers made up most of the hungry people," said Aronno Arafat, a volunteer in the team.

Garments Shramik Samhati Federation slammed the lack of coordination in a press statement circulated yesterday. "How can there be two policies in the same country? Keeping the factories open has led to an inhuman situation," stated the press release.

Not allowed in, going back home
Yesterday, the Shambhuganj Bridge in Mymensingh city was teeming with workers making their way back home.

Md Moti Miah, town sub-inspector who was on duty at the bridge area, said they had been announcing since early morning that the factories have been declared closed but many did not listen and went on ahead to Dhaka.

Hailing from Rowmari upazila of Kurigram, Neela Akter and Momota Begum, along with their husbands, were returning to Gazipur yesterday as they had been asked by the authorities to join their garment factories to receive their wages.

"We have to receive the salary in cash tomorrow [today]," said Neela, who was returning to her factory in Sreepur of Gazipur from Kurigram via Sherpur and Mymensingh. The factory was open yesterday but they were not able to reach in time.

"We had to face at least 20 stops by taking rickshaws, vans, human haulers from Rowmari just to reach Mymensingh," said Momota.

Twenty five-year-old Mannan Mia from Mymensingh's Tarakanda upazila reached his garment factory in Bagerbazar in Gazipur around 11:00pm on Saturday night, contacted with his supervisors, and was informed the factory would be open from yesterday.

"But just an hour and a half later, we were informed about the closure of factories until April 11," said Mamun while talking to our Mymensingh correspondent at the Shambhuganj Bridge area.

As the government tried to stop garments workers in their paths, they closed down the ferries. Garments workers were seen hitching aboard trawlers to cross the Padma river, reports our Faridpur correspondent.

"The worker's name has been changed.

Shaheen Mollah contributed to the report.



As lockdown continues across the country, even busy Bongshal gets to witness some lazy afternoons. Two children play with rickshaw vans left by the street, while people in protective masks busily pass through. These narrow alleyways were once jam-packed and action-filled at all hours, but it's almost as if the clock has stopped now. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Govt to bring back some expat workers

Decision taken at inter-ministerial meeting

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has decided to bring back some expatriate Bangladeshi workers who are in difficult situations overseas, amid the evolving situation over the coronavirus pandemic.

The decision was taken at an inter-ministerial meeting held at the expatriates' welfare ministry yesterday, says a press release.

Some 316 Bangladeshis will be brought back from Kuwait, said Expatriates' Welfare Minister Imran Ahmad, who chaired the meeting.

At the meeting, a proposal was also made to send relief materials and food on the return flight, he said.

On the other hand, the government will arrange a chartered flight of Biman Bangladesh Airlines to bring home 150 workers under employment permit system (EPS) and 26 students from South Korea, the minister said.

"The government has taken all kind of measures to support expatriate Bangladeshis currently staying abroad including food, treatment and overall protection," he added.

For this, about Tk 4.5 crore has been allocated for the Bangladesh missions abroad, he further said.

Imran said the government was making a diplomatic push to extend visas and work

permits of Bangladeshi workers in the respective countries.

Besides, in case any worker loses their job, efforts are on from the government's side so that they do not have to return home, but can be employed at other companies in the same country, he also said.

Furthermore, Bangladeshi missions have been asked to provide necessary support to expatriates if they face problems regarding accommodation, said the minister.

The expatriates' welfare minister also said a decision was taken to send letters signed by him and the foreign minister to different relevant ministries of overseas countries.

Addressing the meeting, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen said some expatriates are being brought back home following requests made by different countries.

As a result, labour diplomacy with those countries will be stronger and Bangladesh will get priority in case of labour recruitment, he said.

"Expatriates are assets to the country. It is our moral duty to stand by their side amid the current crisis," he also said.

Emerging from the meeting, the foreign minister told reporters that four to five countries including the Maldives have reached out to Bangladesh to take back undocumented nationals from their

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Protectors still unprotected

Police walk accused to court in close proximity; most don't have PPE

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

At a time when law enforcers are enforcing social distancing among people to prevent the spread of Covid-19, the agency is failing to apply the same for its own members.

Bizarre as it may seem; police still walk accused to the court in close proximity and without proper safety equipment.

"It seems the repeated calls from the directorate of health department to maintain safe distance [one metre between persons] fell on deaf ears," said Mohammad Lokman, a clerk at the court. If one of them gets infected, not only police personnel but also the court staffers and officials will be at risk, he said.

This newspaper on Wednesday afternoon visited the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court in Dhaka and witnessed how poorly police members are maintaining personal hygiene.

According to Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP), under the present circumstances every day 10 to 12 accused who are arrested for petty crimes are sent from different police stations to court, which then sends them to jail.

"When they arrive, we spray disinfectant and make them wash hands. There is also a basin," Lokman said at the main entrance of the custody next to the CMM court building in the old town.

These correspondents saw a thin green mark on the basin, which apparently is a soap for cleaning fabrics. While waiting, a police member showed up with a bottle filled with white liquid and sprayed on the correspondents.

Asked, he said the liquid was made of water and Dettol. He, however, did not know how it was prepared. There was bleaching powder on the passage, which led to the elevator and some on the first floor of the building.

A few minutes later, two police officials were seen taking five accused to the court. All of them were walking way too close. Though the officials were wearing fabric masks, they were holding the rope of the handcuffs with bare hand.

"They walk and talk as if there is no coronavirus in the country," said Alim Ahmed, a local.

Asked, one of the officials said, "We bought the mask ourselves. We weren't given any gloves either."

Jafor Hossain, deputy commissioner (prosecution) of DMP, told The Daily Star on Thursday that they have set up multiple basins in front of the CMM court and prison.

"We have instructed every official to wash hands and

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Artists put brushes aside to help doctors

Make reusable PPE for BSMMU physicians, staff

ZAHANGIR ALOM

For students and teachers of Dhaka University's Faculty of Fine Arts, the beginning of April is usually a busy time, as the campus premises bustle with preparations for the Mangal Shobhajatra rally to usher in the Bangla New Year, marking Pahela Baishakh (on April 14).

However, the global coronavirus pandemic has put all celebration plans in the back burner, and the artists have also decided to join the fight against the virus. Instead of papier-mâché masks or traditional clay pot painting, artists and alumni of Charukola (DU's Faculty of Fine Arts) have been making personal protective equipment (PPE) for doctors, teachers, nurses, staff and sample collectors of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU).

Engr Mainul Abedin, youngest son of Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin, initiated the project, alongside Prof Nisar Hossain, dean of the faculty. For over a week, Prof Nisar held multiple discussions with Prof Dr Shahana Akhter Rahman, pro-vice chancellor of BSMMU, and Khondoker Manzare Shamim, head of its ICU.

Following their pointers on proper design and safety concerns, alongside WHO guidelines, Prof Nisar started the production of reusable PPE with approval from the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

"Moshiul Azam Shajal, a senior vice president of BGMEA and a friend of ours, contributed the materials to make the PPE. We are planning to provide 3,500 units of the equipment," said Prof Nisar.

He said he, along with two alumni of the faculty and some teachers



Prof Nisar Hossain, dean of Dhaka University's faculty of fine arts, makes face shields alongside two younger artists -- Shahabuddin Sheikh and Tanvir Mahmud. These are for the doctors, nurses and staff of BSMMU. Initiated by Prof Nisar and Engineer Mainul Abedin, renowned artists and teachers of faculty of fine arts donated to the fund for making PPE. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

and volunteers who are currently in Dhaka, are working on the project.

Prof Dr Shahana confirmed on Saturday that 1,545 units of PPE were handed over to BSMMU.

"Dhaka University is closed now, so there is a crisis of volunteers, while shops are also closed. We have issued a letter addressing shopkeepers concerned to provide us with necessary materials, and also to law enforcement agencies so that the FFA authority can do the job smoothly. We

are sincerely grateful to all the artists," she added.

Prof Rafiqun Nabi, Mohammad Eunus, Prof Naima Haque, Kazi Ghiyasuddin, Prof Mostafizul Haque, Prof Shishir Bhattacharjee, Prof Sheikh Afzal Hossain, Ahmed Shamsuddoha, Anupam Huda, Dr Azharul Islam Sheikh Chanchal, Prof Syed Abul Barq Alvi, Mohammad Iqbal, Prof Lara Rukh Selim, Bishwajit Goswami were among those who contributed funds for the initiative.

Primary students' TV classes go on air Thursday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Authorities are all set to provide education to primary students through television from Thursday, aiming to minimise the loss of the academic session due to closure of educational institutions.

"We will start broadcasting recorded lectures of renowned teachers for students from pre-primary to Class V through Sangsad Bangladesh Television," Directorate of Primary Education Director General Md Fasiullah told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said classes will take place for two hours from 2pm daily and students will be informed detail routine.

DPE oversees over 1 lakh primary schools, madrasas, and kindergartens, which have over 1.74 crore students.

Teachers said in an almost lockdown situation it is critical to provide help to children, who are turning restless in home confinement. Such class work might bring them some relief, said their parents as well as other caregivers.

On March 16, government closed down all educational institutions March 17 to 31; later the shutdown was extended to April 9.

Top education officials said there is a strong possibility that the government will extend the closure till April 14 -- and perhaps even till the 25th. And in case of the latter, schools and colleges will remain off till May 31 for the Ramadan and Eid-ul-

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"They asked for Tk 1,000"

Allegation against BITID staff of seeking money to test for Covid-19

ARUN BIKASH DEV, Chattogram

An allegation has been raised against some healthcare providers at Bangladesh Institute of Tropical and Infectious Diseases (BITID) -- the only organisation in Chattogram authorised to test for coronavirus -- over demanding money for conducting the test.

On Wednesday, Zeenat [not the real name], a diabetic patient, found her blood sugar levels fluctuating and felt breathing difficulties. When her family took her to a private hospital in the port city, hospital authorities did not want to admit her until they were confirmed that the patient was not infected with the Covid-19 virus.

The hospital authorities advised the patient to contact BITID for a Covid-19 test, and accordingly, the family contacted hotline of the hospital. The receiver said they could come to collect samples but the patient's family would have to pay Tk 1,000 "for their expenses".

"We were worried at that moment, and had no alternative but to agree to their proposition," her son told The Daily Star. "A team came in an ambulance after around an hour, and collected samples from my mother." "I requested him to take Tk 500, but they declined," he said, adding, "I had to pay Tk 1,000 to them."

"As far as I know, the government has kept the whole process free of cost, but the staffers are extorting patients," he said.

Although the sample was collected on Thursday, the family did not hear back about the result till Friday afternoon. When worried family members contacted the hospital, staffers replied that it would take time. "Why are you so restless?" they allegedly asked the family members.

"I told them that my mother is sick and cannot be admitted to a hospital unless she gets the report, but they did not seem to care," he said.

The family got the report on Saturday, after interference of a doctor at the hospital.

Asked, Dr Mamunur Rashid, an associate professor of Clinical and Tropical Medicine at BITID, said he also heard a few such allegations. "I have asked them to lodge complaints with specific time and date, so that we can identify them," he told The Daily Star.

Dr Mamun said the test for Covid-19 is totally free of cost at BITID.

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মহিলা ও শিশু বিষয়ক মন্ত্রণালয়
নারী নির্বাহিত প্রতিরোধকল্পে মাল্টিসেন্ট্রাল প্রোগ্রাম

করোনাতাইরাস পরিস্থিতিতে মানসিক স্বাস্থ্য সেবা

মহিলা ও শিশু বিষয়ক মন্ত্রণালয়ের ন্যাশনাল ট্রমা কাউন্সেলিং সেন্টার এবং রিজিওনাল ট্রমা কাউন্সেলিং সেন্টারের চিকিৎসা মনোবিজ্ঞানীদের সাথে নিম্নোক্ত নাম্বার/ই-মেইল এ যোগাযোগ করুন।

সময়	ফোন নাম্বার ও ই-মেইল	
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Pangolin rescued in Mymensingh



PHOTO: STAR

OUR CORRESPONDENT, M'singh

A pangolin was rescued from Dhobaura upazila of Mymensingh on Saturday night.

Jamal Mia, a farmer of Goloibanga village, noticed the animal first being attacked by a dog. He along with others rescued it right away.

Locals said the pangolin, locally known as "bon rui", might have entered the village from the nearby hilly areas.

On information, Nazrul Islam, union parishad member, and Rafiquzzaman, upazila nirbahi officer, rushed to the spot and rescued the endangered animal.

It was handed over to the officials of Mymensingh Divisional Forest Office yesterday, said the UNO.

'BON RUI'

Although at first glance, a pangolin may look like a reptile, it is actually a mammal. These mammals are covered in large, hardened overlapping scales with ridges. The keratin scales make up a hard shell of sorts, making the animal resemble a rui fish. Because of this resemblance, many locals call pangolins, bon rui.

They are nocturnal creatures, preferring to sleep the day away.

According to experts, these animals do not harm people. They live deep in the forests of Sylhet, the Sundarbans and Chittagong Hill Tracts.

Pangolins have been declared protected under the Wildlife Act of 1974.

However, the mammal is being caught and killed indiscriminately as parts of it are used for making traditional medicine or totka, said experts.

Architect Bashirul Haque passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bashirul Haque, a renowned architect, died at Gonoshasthya Nagar Hospital in Dhaka on Saturday evening. He was 77.

Bashirul was buried at his village home in Brahmanbaria.

He left behind his wife and two sons to mourn his death.

His wife Prof Firdous Azim is the chairperson of the Department of English at Brac University.

Bashirul will be remembered for his number of aesthetic designs including Chhayanaut Bhaban, Asa Bhaban, East West University and BCIC Bhaban.

Man killed over land dispute

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A farmer died at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital on Saturday night hours after he had been injured in an attack over land dispute in Tarakanda upazila, said police.

Azizul Islam Mondol (32) was from Malidanga village. There was a dispute over a piece of land between Azizul and his neighbour Shafiqul Islam.

They had an altercation and at one stage, Shafiqul and his men attacked Azizul, leaving him injured. A case was filed.

They asked

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"The test is done in a government laboratory; the technicians, doctors, health staff, ambulance and its driver all work for the government... So there is no scope for any staff to ask for money from a patient."

When asked why he did not lodge any complaint, Zeenat's son said they were wary of consequences.

"We are already in trouble with my mother's treatment, and now we don't want to go to any further trouble," he said.

Contacted, SM Nazer Hossain, vice president of Consumers' Associate of Bangladesh (CAB), said it is the responsibility of the authorities to find the corrupt staffers.

"Asking patients to lodge a formal complaint is a sort of attitude by authorities to avoid a serious allegation against their staff," he said. "Many patients do not know how to lodge a complaint, and many others do not want to go for it fearing further trouble."

Contacted, BITID Director Prof Dr MA Hasan said he did not receive any such complaint. "This cannot happen... there is no scope," he said, adding that he would verify the allegation.

Asked about patients not getting test report in time, Dr Mamun said the samples collected throughout a day are tested the following day, and so it takes time to get the results.

Primary students

FROM PAGE 3

Fitur vacation.

Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education started TV education through the same channel on March 29. According to the DSHE official, there are about 90 lakh students currently enrolled in sixth to tenth grades in schools across the country.

Many guardians welcomed the government move to broadcast recorded lectures of renowned teachers for students through Sangsad Television.

They, however, were sceptical about the effectiveness of the mode of transmission.

After the first day of televised classroom lectures for secondary school students on March 29, guardians proposed that authorities address loud background music and unclear whiteboard. They also proposed the government should air these lectures through Bangladesh Television and if possible through some other private TV channels.

Asked about the background music and unclear board issues, Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) Director General Prof Syed Md Golam Faruk said they would address the issues.

The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2019 of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics shows that 50 percent households of the country do not have television sets.

Protectors still

FROM PAGE 3

wear masks and gloves before dealing with arrestees and spray disinfectant regularly around court premises," he said. DC Jafor said they have put up awareness posters at different points of the court.

The officials were supposed to follow the instruction properly and a committee has also been formed to oversee that. "We would definitely look into the issue to address the situation," he added.

POOR CONDITIONS AT POLICE STATIONS, BARRACKS

The conditions at police stations and barracks were not that good either.

Talking to this newspaper, an inspector-rank official said they received three to four PPE from their authorities, which is not enough to distribute among all on-duty officials at a police station.

The higher authorities instructed them to wear raincoats for safety but it's quite impossible to perform an eight-hour-long duty wearing raincoats in this hot weather, said the inspector. "Most officials, for this reason, perform duty without wearing those," he added.

The condition of police barracks was no better. Around 30 to 40 policemen live in congested rooms. The distance between beds are about six inches -- a far cry from the three-foot gap suggested by health experts.

Masudur Rahman, deputy commissioner of DMP, however, said they instructed officials to maintain hygiene, wash hands and keep their rooms clean. They have also asked cops not to allow guests, family members and outsiders in the barracks, he added.

On March 31, the home minister in a directive mentioned that Bangladesh Police will ensure distribution of hand gloves, masks, sanitisers and PPE among its officials to protect them from coronavirus.

Meanwhile, Inspector General of Police Mohammad Javed Patwary through a text message on Thursday asked officials to ensure their own safety as well as their families, colleagues and subordinates. The IGP also asked officials to remain more cautious about personal hygiene while dealing with people.

DMP has about 34,000 members, according to officials.

Govt to bring back

FROM PAGE 3

respective countries, reports UNB.

He said the government will take steps case by case, considering the ground reality.

Dr Momen said though the number of countries which came up with the request is few, but it is pressure on the government at this critical moment.

"We are under pressure to some extent. All the countries are under pressure," he told reporters.

Dr Momen hoped that the move will not cause any problems in relations with those countries from where workers are being brought back.

Steps are being taken to further strengthen relations with them, the minister added.

He said the foreign minister of Maldives had a phone conversation with him, where he conveyed the situation about the undocumented Bangladesh nationals in that country.

The Maldives foreign minister highlighted the downfall of tourism business and closure of restaurants there, and assured his Bangladesh counterpart of taking good care of the documented nationals.

Maldives initially urged the undocumented nationals to get registered, he said. "We don't think all will return."

Dr Momen did not want to mention the names of other countries and total number of undocumented nationals in those four to five countries.

At the meeting, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan said expatriate Bangladeshis will be brought back maintaining due scrutiny.

However, a separate decision can be taken for those expatriates who will be found involved in serious crimes, the home minister said.

The returning expatriates will be sent to mandatory quarantine, he also said.

Help repatriation

FROM PAGE 12

Another expelled MCA SB Zaman, who was elected Member of Provincial Assembly (MPA) from Mymensingh constituency, acted in a vindictive manner against Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in the false case brought against him by Yahya regime, and also arranged witnesses in the case and is said to have collaborated with the Yahya regime in various other manners.

FAIR-PRICE SHOPS FOR ESSENTIALS

The government is going to abolish wholesale agencies and middlemen in the trade for essential commodities and some other items. The government will take this action to ensure that people get their necessities at a normal price and also to check profiteering and black-marketing. It is also learnt that the cooperative department is preparing a scheme for supplying essential items like kerosene, edible oil, soap, soda and some other consumer goods through fair-price shops to be set up at the union level on a cooperative basis.

BANGABANDHU SUMMONS ICRC CHIEF

Bangabandhu today summons the chief of International Committee of Red Cross in

Bangladesh and tells him of the grave and pitiable conditions of the Bengalis herded in camps and segregated houses scattered all over Pakistan. He requests the ICRC chief to arrange immediate visits to these camps by ICRC teams to enquire the welfare of the Bengalees and help their repatriation.

SONG OF BANGLADESH

One of the most popular folk singers of America, Joan Baez, has recorded a song called 'song of Bangladesh'. She herself composed the song. Sale proceeds of the record will go to refugees in Bangladesh through UNICEF.

NEW MARSHAL PLAN FOR BANGLADESH

John Stonehouse, Labour MP, will introduce an emergency motion in the House of Commons next week asking the British government to initiate urgent moves with other governments to construct a new Marshal Plan for supporting Bangladesh. In a full-page advertisement carried by Times today, War on Want, a British charitable organisation, asks the British public to send telegrams to Stonehouse supporting his emergency motion.

SOURCES: April 7, 1972 issues of Ittefaq, The Bangladesh Observer, Azad, Morning News, Dainik Bangla and Purbodosh.

Callousness

FROM PAGE 12

teenagers were seen gossiping in the narrow alleyway in East Rajabazar.

Approached, one of them said, "We have been staying at home since the order came into effect. But, actually, we have come here to break the monotony. [We] will go back home soon."

Near Rabindra Sarobar in Dhanmondi-8, another group of youths were milling about cheerfully. One of them said with the most casual nonchalance, "Nothing will happen to me as I follow what I need to follow."

His friend piped in with youthful reassurance, "Corona does not kill the young."

Since the first positive case of Covid-19 reported on March 8, the country has been witnessing a rise in the spread of the infection. As of yesterday, there have been reported 61 cases of Covid-19 in Bangladesh.

The government has stepped up efforts to contain the outbreak, closing educational institutions, shutting down offices and snapping public transportation services. It announced the shutdown and asked people to stay home to lower the risk of exposure.

Although many people are complying with the government orders, some people are not. And for other, especially those living hand to mouth, this order appears to be a harsh reality.

Nasima Akter, a housemaid, is one of them. She was seen standing in a crowd of a dozen of women in Dhanmondi-15 area with the hope of relief from any source.

"If we don't come out, we would die in hunger," she said.

Experts said it's upsetting to see people disobeying the stay-at-home order. By doing so, they are putting not only themselves, but their families and friends at risk as well.

They said staying home is a strain on everyone. It is, however, an effective way to slow the spread of the virus and save lives.

They said after 23 days since the first reported case, the next two weeks would be crucial for a densely populated country, as there is a higher possibility of spreading the virus like it did in several other countries, including Italy, Spain, France, Germany and the US.

The World Health Organisation's former regional adviser Muzaherul Huq said people must stay at home and can only venture out into public spaces when it is absolutely necessary.

"By simply staying at home, people could save more lives than they might ever know," he said, suggesting that people should be motivated to stay indoors.

Law enforcers should also strictly implement social distancing, he added.

Sohel Rana, assistant inspector general of Police Headquarters, said, "Police officials are making people aware through various ways, including social media and the use of loudspeakers."

"We are approaching people humbly, but we will be strict if we find anyone violate [orders] or became violent," he added.

Twelve killed

FROM PAGE 12

Indian army spokesman Colonel Rajesh Kalia said five armed militants were killed early yesterday in the northern Keran area close to the de facto border known as the Line of Control (LoC) that divides the disputed territory with Pakistan.

The clashes also left three soldiers dead and critically injured several more, he said in a brief statement.

The fighting came within 24 hours of another gun battle between suspected rebels and government forces in the southern Kulgam area that left four dead.

Police said all four were militants from the local area. Kashmir has waged a three-decade-long armed rebellion against Indian rule with tens of thousands of lives, mostly civilians, lost in the conflict.

India regularly accuses its arch-rival Pakistan of arming and sending rebels across the heavily militarised border. Islamabad denies the claims.

Disinfect house

FROM PAGE 12

of the Department of Microbiology of Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College, said that the best way to protect the family is to quite simply disinfect the house.

He said that the regularity of cleaning and disinfecting depends on people, particularly the situation and what is happening around them.

Rafiqul said even if no one in the household is ill, one should still clean regularly and disinfect daily as a baseline precautionary measure.

"There is a difference between cleaning and disinfecting," he said. "You should have a regular cleaning routine, which includes removing dirt and dust, and regular household cleaning products are fine for this."

He, however, suggested that families do not have to clean the whole house from top to bottom every day, but rather focus on surfaces that family members come into contact with at a high frequency.

Rafiqul suggested disinfecting doorknobs, light switches, tables, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, sinks and common surfaces with a solution of hot water and any disinfectant effective in killing the virus.

Before you disinfect anything in your house, you should wear gloves. But always wash your hands with soap and warm water after using any cleaning products.

"Having done the disinfecting, one must wash hands with soap and water," he suggested.

The microbiologist advised cleaning the area or item with soap and water or another detergent if it is dirty and then using a household disinfectant.

The kitchen, or any area where food is prepared or consumed, is one of the best places for germs to cluster. So, it is better not to use reusable grocery bags.

He suggested that personal hygiene is the best way to protect oneself and others.

"Even if we don't go outside, we should wash our hands frequently to keep ourselves safe," Rafiqul suggested.

Rafiqul suggested that it is better to discourage guests not to come to the house during this time.

Getting closer

FROM PAGE 12

Initially, GK attempted to import the reagents from the UK, but as no flights are currently being operating between Dhaka and the UK, it is taking some extra time.

Meanwhile, the organisation has imported them from China considering the urgency of the issue.

Until yesterday, a total of nine people died of Covid-19 and 88 tested positive.

Health experts have strongly urged the authorities to widen the scope of Covid-19 test to understand the extent of its spread in the country.

Widespread testing, social distancing and hand washing are the most important tasks to prevent the spread of the virus, according to health experts.

They say if GK can locally produce the test kit, it will be very helpful for the country amid a global shortage of test kits and personal protection equipment.

A team of Gonoshasthya-RNA Biotech has developed the kit called Rapid Dot Blot, which can detect coronavirus infection in 15 minutes.

The team, led by Bijon Kumar Sil, included Nihad Adnan, Raees Jamiruddin and Firoz Ahmed.

Bijon was among the researchers who had developed a kit to diagnose SARS coronavirus in 2003. Rapid Dot Blot is patented under his name.

GK is eying to keep the production cost of a kit within Tk 200 so that a diagnosis can be done at a cost of Tk 300-350.

Identify Covid-19 hotspots

FROM PAGE 12

"This can be done alternatively, for example, by looking at the rates of respiratory diseases and deaths relating to that in certain areas," he said.

The NGOs, who can have grassroots network across the country, can help in this regard. A framework should be prepared for this, Dr Zillur said.

He said social distancing is a major strategy to prevent transmission of the virus, but this needs effective communication and enforcement. However, there seems to be gaps, especially when it comes to social and religious events, he added.

Poor people are coming out of homes in search of livelihood, while there is a lack of hygiene practices in the urban slums. A social safety net programme is crucial for these groups of people to enforce social distancing and promote hygiene practices, the economist said.

He added that the people, especially healthcare professionals, law enforcers and journalists -- who are on the frontlines to address the health emergency -- need mental boosting and financial incentives so they can continue to work. Part of the stimulus package should be allocated for them, he added.

The health sector managers and private health sector need to sit together to decide how the patients beyond coronavirus can access healthcare because there are risks of such patients may not being able to access healthcare because of the focus on coronavirus, Zillur said.

The government has a guideline for addressing Covid-19, but there should be national taskforce for coordination of all activities -- public, private and non-profit bodies, he added.

Civil society leaders said poor people involved in the informal sectors are facing food insecurity, and their number would be about 40 lakh. The government should have special consideration for them, he

added.

Zillur specifically mentioned the small farmers and micro, small and medium enterprises, who are vulnerable to the economic shocks caused by the pandemic and need the government's special attention under the stimulus package.

"A large number of people working in saloons, restaurants and small businesses have no jobs. The challenge is how to help them restart their businesses after the pandemic," he said.

He proposed the formation of a high-level expert panel comprised of government and professionals for designing a short, medium and long-term plan.

Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of the Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh, suggested that the government make an announcement of giving incentives to the small and medium industries and make sure that they are not evicted from the factories or shops in the case of failing to pay rent now.


ActionAid Bangladesh Country Director Farah Kabir suggested that the government ensures a smooth supply chain of the produces of farmers. Otherwise, the prices of the commodities will fall and the farmers will be affected badly.

She also said gender-based violence may increase amid the shutdown, and that the authorities need to think how they can help address it.

BRAC Executive Director Asif Saleh said the next few weeks are very important for Bangladesh as the cases of coronavirus are increasing.

"This is a national disaster. We all must work together in a coordinated way," he said.

Centre for Policy Dialogue Executive Director Dr Fahmida Khatun and former health secretary AMM Nasiruddin also spoke.



মুজিববর্ষ অম্মদিকর
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বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ
এটি টেলিগ্রাম ইউনিট
কর্তৃক নং-৩৫, সেহেবাহাওয়ানী এটিউনিট, ব্লক-৫, বারিধারা, ঢাকা-১২১২
www.atu.police.gov.bd

সংশোধিত উনুক্ত দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

স্মারক নং-৪৪.০১.০০০০.৯৮৫.০৬.০৪৫.১৯-১২৯ তারিখ ০৫/০৪/২০২০

এটি টেলিগ্রাম ইউনিট, ঢাকা কার্যালয়ের স্মারক নং-৪৪.০১.০০০০.৯৮৫.০৬.০৪৫.১৯-১০০ তারিখ ১৯/০৩/২০২০

মুদ্রে চলতি ২০১৯-২০ অব্দ সালে এটি টেলিগ্রাম ইউনিট, ঢাকার "গোপালক স্বতঃ"-এ বরাদ্দকৃত অব্দ দ্বারা পুলিশ পরিদর্শক ও তদুর্ক কর্মকর্তাদের গোপালক লোই ও রিবন ক্রয়ের নিমিত্ত আধিকৃত উনুক্ত দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তির বিজ্ঞপ্তি তারিখ ও কার্যক্রমসমূহ নিম্নোক্ত ছক মোতাবেক সংশোধন/পরিবর্তন করা হলে।

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বিজ্ঞপ্তি ছকে বর্ণিত তিসিটি বিষয় ব্যতীত পূর্বে আধিকৃত দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি এবং সিডিউলের অন্যান্য শর্তাবলী অপরিবর্তিত থাকবে।

মোঃ হাবিবুর রহমান
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পুলিশ সুপার (প্রশাসন)
পকে-আডিশনাল আইজি, এটি টেলিগ্রাম ইউনিট
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ফোনঃ ০২-৪৮৮১০৭৪৩, ফ্যাক্স ৪৮৮১০৭৪৫
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জিডি-৭২২

China sees rise in new cases

EUETERS, Beijing

Mainland China reported 30 new coronavirus cases yesterday, up from 19 a day earlier as the number of cases involving travellers from abroad as well as local transmissions increased, highlighting the difficulty in stamping out the outbreak.

The National Health Commission said in a statement that 25 of the latest cases involved people who had entered from abroad, compared with 18 such cases a day earlier. Five new locally transmitted infections were also reported on Saturday, all in the southern coastal province of Guangdong, up from a day earlier.

The mainland has now reported a total of 81,669 cases, while the death toll has risen by three to 3,329.

Though daily infections have fallen dramatically from the height of the epidemic in February, when hundreds of new cases were reported daily, Beijing remains unable to completely halt new infections despite imposing some of the most drastic measures to curb the virus' spread.

The so-called imported cases and asymptomatic patients, who have the virus and can give it to others but show no symptoms, have become among China's chief concerns in recent weeks. The country has closed off its borders to almost all foreigners as the virus spread globally, though most of the imported cases involve Chinese nationals returning from overseas.

The central government seeks to avoid second wave before travel bans lifted and also has pushed local authorities to identify and isolate the asymptomatic patients.



Residents light candles and turn on their mobile phone lights in their balcony to observe a nine-minute vigil called by India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a show of unity and solidarity in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic in New Delhi yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

LATEST UPDATES

VIRUS CONTAGION SLOWS FOR FOURTH DAY: IRAN

Iran's new cases of coronavirus have dropped for the fourth consecutive day, official figures released Saturday showed, as a two-week holiday in the Islamic republic came to an end. Iran registered 2,560 new infections of COVID-19 in the previous 24 hours, health ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour told a televised news conference. It is the fourth consecutive drop in new cases since Tehran declared 3,111 on March 31.

MODI DISCUSSES SITUATIONS WITH SONIA, PRANAB

Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday spoke to several leaders, including his predecessor Manmohan Singh, Congress chief Sonia Gandhi and former president Pranab Mukherjee, on the situation arising out of the novel coronavirus pandemic. Sources said Modi also called up various leaders, including Mulayam Singh Yadav and Akhilesh Yadav of the Samajwadi Party, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik.

MAN SHOT DEAD IN PHILIPPINES

A 63-year-old man was shot dead in the Philippines after threatening village officials and police with a scythe at a coronavirus checkpoint, police said on Saturday. The man is believed to have been drunk when he threatened village officials and police manning the checkpoint in the town of Nasipit in the southern province of Agusan del Norte on Thursday, a police report said.

GREECE QUARANTINES SECOND MIGRANT CAMP

Officials in Greece yesterday placed a second migrant camp near Athens under lockdown after an Afghan resident tested positive for the coronavirus, the migration ministry said. Officials said the camp in Malakasa, some 38 kilometres (24 miles) northeast of Athens, had been placed under "full sanitary isolation" for 14 days, with no one allowed to enter or leave.

PAKISTAN HUNTS WORSHIPPERS

Pakistani authorities are searching for tens of thousands of worshippers who attended an Islamic gathering in Lahore last month amid fears they could be spreading Covid-19 across the country. At least 154 attendees have tested positive following the Tablighi Jamaat event, which attracted 100,000 people.

JAPAN 'ON THE BRINK'

Japan will ban entry to foreigners from 73 countries and ask everyone arriving from abroad to quarantine themselves for two weeks as it struggles to contain the coronavirus, with a senior minister warning the country had been pushed "to the brink". Medical experts advising Prime Minister Shinzo Abe told a news conference that the rapid spread of contagion was severely straining hospitals in Tokyo.

SOURCE: AFP, TNN, AL JAZEERA

Italy, Spain see drop in deaths

Officials say lockdown measures starting to show results

AGENCIES

Italy and Spain reported their lowest daily rise in Covid-19 deaths and said the number of patients in intensive care had fallen for the first time.

Italian officials urged the country not to flout strict lockdown measures they said were starting to show results, although new cases rose by 4,805 on Saturday which was slightly higher than recent daily increases.

The country's Civil Protection department reported 681 deaths on Saturday, bringing the total to 15,632 since the outbreak of the new coronavirus epidemic in northern Italy on February 21. It was the lowest daily rise in deaths since March 23.

"This is an important piece of news because it allows our hospitals to breathe," Civil Protection head Angelo Borelli told a regular daily briefing where he has announced the grim daily tally of the world's most deadly outbreak of the disease.

For days, Italian officials have said that broadly stable rises in the number

of cases suggested that the outbreak had reached a plateau and that the numbers would begin to go down - if strict lockdown measures were respected.

Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte decided to impose an economically crippling lockdown in a bid to save the health care system from collapse.

He called in thousands of retired

Italian PM decides to impose economically crippling lockdown

Calls on thousands of retired doctors to sign up for virus battle

doctors and spent hundreds of millions of euros to shore up Italy's emergency wards.

Spain saw its third consecutive daily decline in the number of people dying from the coronavirus pandemic as the country recorded another 674 fatalities yesterday.

The health ministry said total deaths

were now 12,418, the highest in the world after Italy, since the pandemic emerged in China in December.

The 674 fatalities, which were sharply down on the record 950 recorded on April 2, represented an increase of 5.7 percent over the last 24 hours, compared to a 30 percent leap in one recent day.

The World Health Organization's director for Europe, Hans Kluge, tweeted about Spain: "Careful optimism as result of bold measures, innovative approaches & courageous decisions."

The number of infections in the country rose 4.8 percent to 130,759, indicating a slowdown in the spread from 8.2 percent on April 1 and 14 percent 10 days ago.

The number of people declared to have recovered has increased by 11 percent, rising above 38,080.

The authorities say they believe they have stabilised the spread of the virus but have decided to extend until midnight April 25 a strict lockdown imposed on Spain's 46.6 million people since March 14.

India gives nod for rapid antibody tests

Curbs diagnostic testing kit exports

AGENCIES

Expanding the testing strategy in line with its containment plans in high-risk areas and Covid-19 hotspots, Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) issued an advisory on Saturday to start rapid antibody-based blood test for coronavirus.

The strategy for using the test includes clusters (containment zone) and large migration gatherings or evacuees' centres.

"As a matter of abundant precaution, all symptomatic ILI (influenza-like illness) are to be monitored in health facilities. Any surge in cases to be monitored and brought to the notice of surveillance officer/CMO for additional investigation," the advisory said.

It added all ILI persons should be home-quarantined for 14 days. At facility level, all symptomatic people with influenza-like illness having cough, cold, low-grade fever and sore throat will be tested with rapid antibody tests, reports TNN.

If a patient tests positive after a rapid antibody test, decision will be taken based on clinical assessment and treatment in hospital will follow. As per protocol, contact tracing will also be done.

India is also restricting the export of most diagnostic testing kits, as cases in the South Asian nation topped 3,350 yesterday despite a three-week nationwide lockdown to slow the spread of the respiratory disease, reports Reuters.

Malaysia intercepts boat ferrying 202 Rohingyas

Malaysian authorities said yesterday they had intercepted a boat ferrying a group of 202 people believed to be ethnic Rohingya. Malaysia, which does not recognise refugee status, is a favoured destination for ethnic Rohingya fleeing a military-led crackdown in Myanmar and squalid conditions at refugee camps in Bangladesh. The boat was found adrift around one nautical mile from a luxury beachside resort on the holiday island of Langkawi, off the west coast of the Malaysian peninsula, the Malaysian maritime enforcement agency said in a statement. The group included 152 men, 45 women and 5 children. All 202 have been detained at the coastguard's Kedah state headquarters. The group will be handed over to immigration authorities for attempting to enter the country illegally, the coastguard said. The agency said it would also investigate complaints from the migrants about three alleged members of a migrant smuggling syndicate who escaped from the boat while out at sea.

Third man arrested in French 'terror' stabbing

French police have arrested a third suspect, another Sudanese national, in an expanding



terror probe after a knife attack in the country's southeast left two people dead, investigators said yesterday. The attack in broad daylight Saturday in the riverside town of Romans-sur-Isere, took place with the country on lockdown to stem the spread of the deadly coronavirus. Prosecutors have launched an investigation into "murder linked to a terrorist enterprise" and "association with terrorist wrongdoers" after the rampage through a string of shops in the town with a population of 35,000. The alleged assailant, identified as Abdallah Ahmed-Osman -- a Sudanese refugee in his 30s who lives in the town -- was arrested without a fight.

China rights lawyer freed after five years in jail

A leading Chinese human rights lawyer has been released from prison after almost five years behind bars, his wife said yesterday. Wang Quanzhang, 44, was first detained in 2015 in a sweeping crackdown on more than 200 lawyers and government critics in China as President Xi Jinping tightened his grip on power. But Wang has yet to return home to his family in Beijing and was instead escorted to a property he owns in eastern Shandong province for 14 days in quarantine as a precaution against the coronavirus, according to wife Li Wenzu. Li told AFP from Beijing, where she lives with the couple's young son, she feared Wang would be placed under house arrest despite his release from prison, and would be subject to surveillance.

SOURCE: AFP



A patient arrives in Wyckoff Hospital in the Bushwick section of Brooklyn in New York yesterday. The coronavirus death toll in New York state spiked to 4,159, the governor said, up from 3,565 a day prior.

PHOTO: AFP

S'pore reports record cases

Quarantines 20,000 migrant workers in virus fight

REUTERS, Singapore

Singapore reported 120 new coronavirus cases yesterday, by far its highest daily rise, and quarantined nearly 20,000 migrant workers in their dormitories.

Of yesterday's new cases, 116 were locally transmitted and many were linked to two dormitories that house migrant workers, who will now have to stay in their rooms for 14 days.

The number of new cases is a 60% increase over the 75 reported on Saturday, which was the previous biggest daily rise. Singapore has reported a total of 1,309 infections and six deaths from the novel coronavirus.

Tens of thousands of blue-collar foreign workers live within close quarters in various dormitories in the tiny Southeast Asian nation, an island city-state. They form a significant part of the labour force, working in sectors from construction to cleaning.

There are about 280,000 foreign construction workers in the city-state from countries including Bangladesh and China, with many housed in shared rooms in large dormitory complexes.

"Efforts are also underway in the larger dormitories to reduce the density of their resident workers, by transferring some among them to alternative accommodation during this period," said a joint statement from two government

ministries.

The individuals will continue to be paid by their employers while they are quarantined, officials added.

The spike in cases comes two days before the country will begin closing schools and most workplaces for a month as part of tighter restrictions to combat the Covid-19 disease.

Singapore was one of the worst-hit countries when the virus first spread from China in January, but a strict surveillance and quarantine regime helped stem the tide. Recent spikes in locally transmitted cases have, however, raised fresh concerns.

The government is also converting a large exhibition venue to east of the island into a medical facility to accommodate patients who have mostly recovered from Covid-19 but may still be infectious.

It will be the second such facility after a hotel was converted last month to isolate up to 500 such people.

The city-state has won international praise for its two-month long battle against a virus that has infected over a million people globally, avoiding lockdown measures increasingly common around the world.

Prime Minister Lee urged everyone to stay at home as much as possible and to avoid socialising with others beyond their own household.



France to test plasma of survivors to treat sick

AFP, Paris

France is to begin clinical trials involving transfusions of blood plasma from coronavirus survivors into patients who have severe symptoms in a bid to treat the illness, the institutions involved said Saturday.

Drugmakers are racing to develop a vaccine and treatment for the pandemic, which has killed over 60,000 people since the coronavirus first emerged in China in December.

Plasma, the fluid in blood teeming with antibodies post-illness, has already proven effective in small studies to treat infectious diseases including Ebola and SARS.

The French trials are to start on Tuesday, according to a joint statement from the Paris hospital authority AP-HP, the national medical research institute INSERM, and the national blood service EFS.

"This clinical trial involves the transfusion of plasma from patients who have recovered from COVID-19, containing antibodies against the virus, and who could transfer this immunity to a patient suffering from COVID-19," it said.

"The plasma of the people who have recovered contains these antibodies that their organisms have developed. These antibodies could help patients in an acute stage of the disease to fight the virus."

The trials will involve 60 patients in Paris hospitals, half of whom will receive the plasma from the persons who have recovered.

It said the first results could be known two to three weeks after the trials.

The US Food and Drug Administration has already authorised physicians to experiment with the strategy to fight the coronavirus. Tests are also being done in China.

Bangladesh Bank Financial Sector Support Project (FSSP); IDA Credit No. 5664 3rd Corrigendum Notice		
Date: 05 April 2020		
This is in reference to the Invitation for Bid (IFB) Number: BB(G)IT-16 Dated 05.02.2020 and Subsequent Corrigendum-2 Notice Dated 25.03.2020		
For Supply, Installation, Testing, Commissioning, Implementation and related services of Management Software for Three (03) Data Centers Single-Stage Bidding IFB Number: BB(G)IT-16, Credit Number: 56640		
This is general information to all concerned that the following amendments have been made in the Bid Data Sheet (BDS) of BB(G)IT-16 package under Financial Sector Support Project (FSSP):		
Particulars	As per Second Corrigendum Notice on 25.03.2020	As per latest Corrigendum
ITB 21.1: Bid Submission Date and Time	13 April 2020 03.00pm BST	13 May 2020 11.00am BST
ITB 24.1: Bid Opening Date and Time	13 April 2020 03.10pm BST	13 May 2020 11.10am BST
ITB 18.1: Bid Validity Period	11 August 2020	09 September 2020
ITB 18.1: Bid Security expiration	22 September 2020	07 October 2020
Manoj Kumar Biswas Executive Director, BB & Project Director, FSSP 3rd Floor, Main Building, Bangladesh Bank, Head Office, Motijheel, Dhaka Telephone: +880-2-9530705, Email: manoj.biswas@bb.org.bd		
GD-723		

STOCKS		COMMODITIES		ASIAN MARKETS		CURRENCIES					
DSEX	CSCX	Gold	Oil	MUMBAI	TOKYO	SINGAPORE	SHANGHAI	USD	EUR	GBP	CNY
Closed	Closed	\$1,634.20 (per ounce)	\$34.11 (per barrel)	2.39%	0.01%	2.60%	0.60%	83.95	89.67	98.12	11.69
				27,590.95	17,820.19	2,389.29	2,763.99	84.95	93.47	101.92	12.29



আপনার নিরাপত্তাই আমাদের অগ্রাধিকার

ব্যাংকিং হোক ঘরে বসেই

- দ্রুত ট্রান্সফার
- মোবাইল উপ-ব্যাংক
- ক্রেডিট কার্ডের বিল শ্রদান
- ইন্সট্যান্ট বিল শ্রদান
- ব্যাংক চেকটমেন্ট

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TAMING CORONAVIRUS RAMPAGE

Bold, timely, focused

Business community and economists say about the Tk 72,750cr stimulus package

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh's business community and economists yesterday showered praise on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina after she unveiled a Tk 72,750 crore package in a surprise move to tackle the fallout of the deadly coronavirus, calling the fund bold, time-befitting and focused.

The Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), the apex trade body of the country, welcomed the package and termed it very much targeted and focused.

"We think the package will be utilised in a targeted and focused way for the micro, small, medium and large enterprises in the agricultural, manufacturing and services sectors," FBCCI President Sheikh Fazle Fahim said in a statement.

"This package will safeguard minimal unemployment and help maintain normal economic activities. This fund will also help the private sector and export-oriented sectors."

In a joint statement, the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dhaka (MCCI) and the Bangladesh Employers Federation (BEF) deeply appreciated the stimulus package to save the businesses and livelihoods impacted by Covid-19.

"The MCCI and the BEF and their members are extremely grateful to the Hon'ble Prime Minister for making this very timely and bold response to stimulate the economy and ensure the possible devastating impact of Covid-19 on the economy are minimised."

"We welcome the initiatives by the government as we feel it gives an inclusive support," Shams Mahmud, president of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

A lot of proposals, especially on the micro, small and medium enterprises forwarded by the DCCI to the government have been reflected in the response, he said.

When Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina announced a Tk 5,000 crore stimulus package on March 25 to extend wage support to workers and employees in the export-oriented industries, the allocation was equivalent to 0.2 per cent of fiscal 2018-19's GDP, one of the lowest among South Asian and Asian peers in terms of gross domestic product (GDP).

Yesterday's package has sharply pushed the allocation aimed at controlling the spread of coronavirus towards 2.5 per cent of GDP.

"The stimulus package came as a surprise and pleasant for the businessmen of all sectors as it has exceeded expectations," said Abdul Matlub Ahmad, a former president of the FBCCI.

Most businessmen had expected only waiver of interest on loan or some other benefits, but Tk 72,750 crore stimulus package is a really good news for businessmen, he said.

"I believe this package will help recover all sectors of the economy and strengthen the economy further," said Ahmad, also the chairman of Nitol Niloy Group.

Now all businesses are shut but the safety of life is a priority. "We can do business and other activities if we are alive."

The stimulus package is a wise step and a very timely one, said Mohammad Ali

Khokon, president of the Bangladesh Textile Mills Association.

The Tk 30,000 crore credit facility for the large industries would help the large, medium and small industries of the BTMA and other capital-intensive industries ride out the existing capital shortage.

"The stimulus package is time-befitting and is an exemplary step," said Alamgir Shamsul

government to ensure more liquidity in the hands of the people to facilitate increasing economic activity and boost domestic demand.

"This is an absolutely necessity in times of a possible recessionary crisis," said the joint statement.

The creation of the Tk 30,000 crore fund for large industries and Tk 20,000 crore fund

swift action programmes to implement the support," said the MCCI and the BEF.

"Time is a vital factor here. It has been rightly indicated by the Hon'ble Prime Minister that the loan processing will be administered based on bank-client relationship. However, we strongly suggest that the Bangladesh Bank expeditiously prescribes efficient modalities for banks to reduce the time for evaluation of applications and disbursements."

Swift disbursement of working capital and salary support will be required to reignite the economy and keep it moving at the pace required.

Further, targeted task forces should be put in place to monitor that the support is reaching the persons for whom they are designed.

"These are extraordinary times and require extraordinary measures. Bangladesh must not fall behind. The time is for bold and decisive leadership and we are seeing it from our government, and we believe such strong leadership will continue," the MCCI and the BEF said.

The package will be instrumental in supporting the businesses across the spectrum under current circumstances and help the economy rebound as situation improves in the future, said Rupali Haque Chowdhury, president of the Foreign Investors' Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Economists were also welcoming the stimulus package.

"This is a time-befitting initiative beyond doubt," said Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of the Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh.

The financial package will put a positive impact on the financial sector and give a boost to the confidence of the economy as well, said Salehuddin Ahmed, a former governor of the central bank.

According to Mansur, the fund will have to be given out to the businesses, which are being hit hard by the ongoing economic fallout from Covid-19. The SMEs are in a vulnerable situation and many of them will be unable to pay rent of their factories and shops.

The government should ask immediately the owners of spaces not to evict the affected businesses, he said. In addition, immediate financial support should be given to the SMEs and both the government and the central bank should take care of this.

The large financial package will be materialised by banks, but they will not do it due to their ongoing liquidity crunch.

"The government should ensure that no habitual defaulter manages any fund from the financial package," said the former economist of the International Monetary Fund.

The BB earlier said it would purchase Treasury bills and bonds from lenders as part of its quantitative easing, but it is yet to be started.

A large volume of cash will have to be injected into the market immediately by using the quantitative easing tool in order to implement the package, Mansur said.

"The prime minister should have addressed

in his speech on how foods and essential commodities would be catered to the people who are now unemployed due to the ongoing crisis," he said.

Around 1.2 crore people are now jobless and their family members are passing an undesirable situation.

The government should form a committee in every village comprising representatives of local government, non-governmental organisations and reputed persons to deliver government supports to the underprivileged.

"If the government fails to do so, it will have to face a big political crisis."

A good number of migrant workers will be needed within 8-10 days to harvest the ripe borrow paddy in haor region. Workers from the northern districts usually move to the region to cut the paddy, but they will face difficulty this time.

The government should take prompt measure to help the farmers of the area, or else the country will have to face shortage of rice, he said.

According to Salehuddin Ahmed, the government may face some challenges to implement the package quickly. A two-year rolling plan should be taken, sidestepping the ongoing five-year plan for the time being given the gravity of the financial crisis.

"The package will have to be implemented in a rapid manner avoiding bureaucratic tangle such that the affected sectors get the support promptly."

The former central bank governor said banks frequently put pressure on SMEs to provide adequate collateral and financial statement before approving loans, but many entrepreneurs are unable to do so.

Now, banks should be forced to lend adequate loans to SMEs based on their cash-flow.

The government should waive a certain portion of interest for the manufacturing segment of the SME sector, he said.

The prime minister has not addressed the ongoing crisis of the agriculture sector, Ahmed said. The government should take immediate package for the sector so that the country can avoid probable food shortage in the days ahead.

A fresh financial package should be declared for the workers of the informal sector as they have a great role in keeping the wheel of the supply-side rolling, he said, adding that the government should take a set of measures for the migrant workers as many of them may be forced to return home.

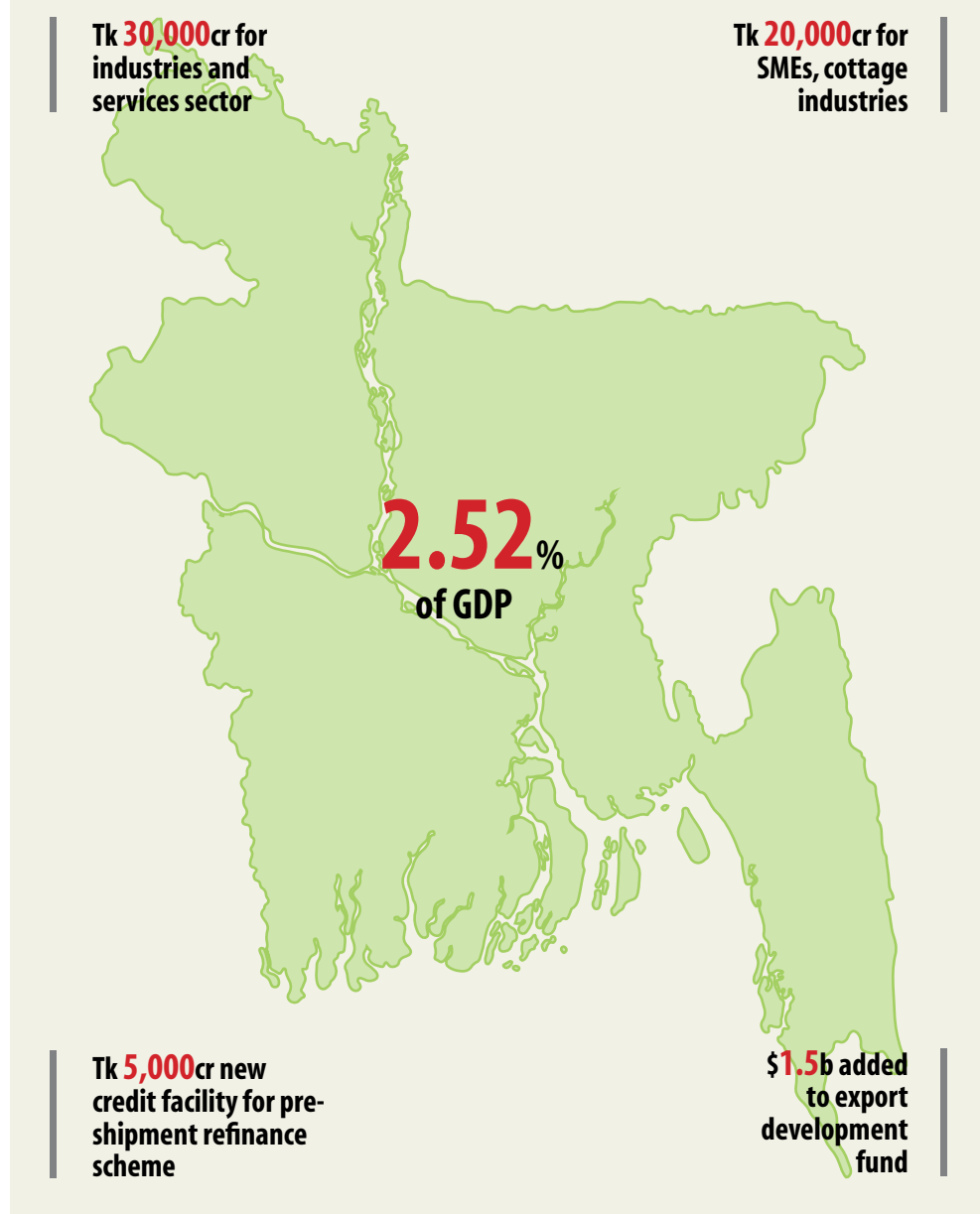
The DCCI hopes companies and businesses with good track record of paying taxes and contributing to the growth story of Bangladesh will be given priority for the fund.

"This also is a wakeup call for businesses outside the banking channels to come under the formal banking channel."

The chamber requested mobile financial services to reduce service charges for six months as they have been selected as a mode of fund disbursement.

The DCCI also welcomed a central bank move aimed at supporting the agriculture sector.

WHICH SECTORS GOT WHAT



Alamin, president of the Real Estate and Housing Association of Bangladesh.

He urged the government to allocate funds for the real estate sector.

The prime minister has set out the programme for the most disadvantaged people of the society who need immediate support and the MCCI and the BEF were highly appreciative of the priority given to the disadvantaged citizens.

The prime minister indicated expansionary monetary policy to be adopted by her

for small and medium industries with 4.5 per cent and 4 per cent interest rates respectively are extremely commendable steps, they said.

Most of the major proposals and suggestions made by the members of the MCCI and the BEF earlier have been addressed.

While the government has done the initial part of prescribing the stimulus, the major task lies ahead in promptly and efficiently implementing the policies.

"We urge the policymakers to create a transparent mechanism free of red-tape with

Stimulus comes at the right time

AHM MUSTAFA KAMAL, Finance minister

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has realised the importance of the stimulus package for the economy at the right time, like she did in previous cases of crises.

The prime minister has not made any delay, given her past experiences in dealing with crises.

Bangladesh believes in a market-based economy, so no country is separated from another, rather they all are integrated. If something happens in one country, it affects all others.

All of the country's people will benefit from the measures the prime minister has undertaken as people from all walks of life have been brought under the stimulus package. Even cottage, small and medium industries will benefit.

None will be left behind. Everybody has been included.

I believe now the people of the country will not lose hope. They will start to believe that the country will regain normalcy.

This package will help the country's industries and the private sector.

Inflation is standing at 5.50 per cent and is within the comfort zone.

The government will have to be in the driving seat in mobilising funds and have to conduct monetary and fiscal policies flexibly. I believe the central bank will perform the task properly.

If the existing pandemic does not linger, Bangladesh would be able to clock 8 per cent GDP growth in the current fiscal year.



Package to improve economic situation faster

ABDUR ROUF TALUKDER, Finance secretary

The first of four packages unveiled by the prime minister involves Tk 30,000 crore. It will be provided to affected industries and service sector organisations as working capital through banks as low-interest loans.

This portion of the fund will revolve. It is known that working capital is given for a short period. Borrowers pay back the loans from four to six months. If banks can use the fund efficiently and borrowers repay the loans on time, then the fund could be used in disbursing loans up to Tk 60,000 crore a year.

In the same vein, the four credit facilities announced by the prime minister could create loan facilities of more than Tk 135,000 crore if used properly.

As the credit risks would be borne by the commercial banks, moral hazard would not be created and the quality of loans would improve. This will help improve the economic situation faster.

The four packages have covered the whole segment of the economy. The packages for the larger industries and the services sector and the cottage, small and medium enterprises are different so that there is no overlap.

The second package would help the agro-processing industries, fisheries, poultry, dairy farms. The micro and SME industries has been given special priority.

The finance division will work with Bangladesh Bank when the central bank works on formulating guidelines for the packages. We will also consult the allied associations before formulating the guidelines in order to implement the packages smoothly.



Mobilising liquidity top priority

FAZLE KABIR, Bangladesh Bank governor

From the very beginning, the central bank has given top priority to mobilising adequate liquidity for the financial sector if the pandemic hits Bangladesh's economy and the crisis prolongs. In order to ensure a smooth supply of this liquidity to the various sectors and sub-sectors of the economy, Bangladesh Bank has expanded the size of some refinancing schemes.

The Export Development Fund (EDF) has been increased to \$5 billion from \$3.5 billion. Interest rate on the fund was slashed to 2 per cent from more than 2.7 per cent.

From April 1, the cash-reserve ratio (CRR) at scheduled banks was brought down on weekly average basis to 5 per cent from 5.5 per cent previously. As a result, banks would get an additional Tk 6,500 crore to lend.

In order to ensure adequate liquidity in the banking sector, the central bank's Repo's repurchase rate was revised downward by 25 basis points to 5.75 per cent from 6 per cent annually. Now, banks will have to spend less in pooling liquidity resources.

Considering the demand of the people during the general holiday, banks have been kept open on a limited scale so that banking services such as cash deposit and withdrawal, pay order and depositing treasury 'chalan' can be carried out. Measures have been put in place for depositing and clearing chalsans related to open market sales. In order to ensure the quick encashment of cheques, Bangladesh Automated Clearing House has been kept open.

If outstanding bills on credit cards remain unpaid from March 15, 2020 to May 31, 2020 because of the social distancing, banks have been asked not to charge late payment fees.

The BB has issued guidelines to pay wages and salaries to the workers of the export-oriented sectors for April to June from the Tk 5,000 crore stimulus package unveiled by the prime minister on March 25.

Relevant industries hope that their workers will get their salaries for April on the last day of the month.

Some provisions related to foreign currency transactions have been relaxed in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak.



TAMING CORONAVIRUS RAMPAGE

It's a good package, but its delivery holds the key



ZAHID HUSSAIN

This is a good package committing 2.5 percent of GDP to keep businesses in industry and services afloat with a particular focus on protecting employment and labour income. As usual, the devil is always in the details. Businesses will get working capital loans from banks at subsidised interest rates. The subsidy is higher for MSMEs and rightly so. Banks will provide the loans from their own funds, thus bearing the risk of default except for the pre-shipment export refinance scheme. It is upon the banks to make sure that the known willful defaulters do not prey on these funds and upon the Bangladesh Bank to make sure that banks have the liquidity to make these loans.

The ball is now in BB's court. It has to quickly work out the guidelines on how these loans should be provided. Since payroll support is central, BB should think about using these loans to support a payroll larger than the Tk 55,000 crore so far committed—Tk 30,000 crore for firms in industry and services, Tk 20,000 crore for MSMEs and Tk 5,000 crore for directly export oriented industries. One option is to provide the concessional loans on a "matching fund" basis. Suppose a firm needs Tk 10 crore to maintain its pre-Covid-19 payroll. The bank could provide such a firm, say, Tk 5 crore from this facility provided the firm pays the

remaining Tk 5 crore from its own savings. The matching ratio from the concessional loan window can be higher for MSMEs, say 90 percent, than for large enterprises, say 50 to 60 percent.

Businesses need to be much more responsible in order to deserve help from the public purse. It is not responsible business behaviour to make hundreds of migrant workers walk back from their

However, the budgetary allocations have not been specified. The needs in this sector are vast and most immediate. The delivery challenges are also much more complex.

We must keep in mind that supporting the extremely poor is actually an essential part of the pandemic mitigation efforts. Social distancing and lockdowns are nearly impossible in homes and neighborhoods that are often crowded and communal by

personnel are likely to be overwhelmed, payroll support and cash transfers will struggle to reach those working in the informal sectors and businesses will struggle to cope with cash flow disruptions. Where work has dried up due to pandemic mitigation measures, government and various non-governmental organisations must come out to help in supplementing lost livelihoods.

Thinking out of the box is at a premium now. A crowd-funding platform such as 'Milap' in India has opened a window for daily wage earners affected by Covid-19. Initiatives such as this from trusted individuals and institutions will unleash small contributions from a large number which could complement the assistance provided through the revamped and retrofitted public social protection system. Direct cash transfers and food security measures in urban and rural areas are needed right away to provide relief to millions of poor people hit by a nationwide coronavirus pandemic mitigation effort.

The crisis response raises some difficult policy questions. It will add to debt and money supply. It will call into question certain public economic policies and programmes, such as the mega projects and the single digit interest rate as rightly mentioned by the prime minister, and how they are managed. Now is not the time to deal with these issues. Now is the time to demonstrate that we are capable of taking risks and bold action in favour of protecting lives of all and livelihoods of those who are most at risk. Let's make sure that our actions in support of the poorest uphold our compassion and break out of orthodox economic worries.

The author is an economist



People stay in close proximity with each other to maintain a queue while waiting for daily essentials at reduced rates offered through the government's "Open Market Sale" truck near Mugda General Hospital in the capital yesterday. SK ENAMUL HAQ

villages far away from Dhaka only to find out that the owners have decided to extend the factory closure dates.

The honorable prime minister has promised various types of support for the poor and the vulnerable. They include the daily labourers, informal sector workers, elderly and distressed females. The support will come in the form of cash transfers, free food, subsidised OMS rice and free housing for the homeless.

design. We may not be able to minimise these challenges, but we can reduce the human and economic toll by ensuring that lack of timely and adequate finance does not undermine the mitigation measures by forcing these population to be haphazardly out on the streets seeking livelihood support because they have no other option.

Dealing with the impact of Covid-19 pandemic is an unprecedented challenge. Hospitals, tertiary care facilities and

ISPs demand Tk 610cr in aid

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Internet Service Providers Association of Bangladesh (ISPAB) has demanded Tk 610 crore from the government to ensure the industry's survival from the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

In a letter to Telecom Minister Mustafa Jabbar issued on Saturday, the ISPAB urged the government to help pay the staff wages and office rent of member companies for the next six months, according to ISPAB President Aminul Hakim.

Around Tk 800 crore will be required to pay employees over the next six months but the ISPAB will allocate only Tk 400 crore from their total demand for that purpose.

The remaining Tk 210 crore will be set aside for office rent, Hakim told The Daily Star yesterday.

"At least one third of our business has gone away as corporate houses have disconnected their connections on a massive scale," Hakim said.

Besides, the service providers have been unable to collect bills from private users due to the current lockdown.

"My company has collected hardly 20 per cent of its dues because most people say they will pay later. If we deny their request, they opt to discontinue their connections," he added.

The ISPAB prepared their demands after collecting cost estimations from 72 nationwide, 100 zonal and 572 local ISPs.

Currently, there are 2,500 ISPs in operation, employing about two lakh individuals throughout the country.

The ISPAB also demanded the withdrawal of VAT on internet services and the suspension of revenue sharing with Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC).

People in Bangladesh annually spend about Tk 10,000 crore behind internet services.

There are nearly one crore active broadband connections in the country at the moment. Two thirds of this business comes from corporate connections while the data connections of banks and other financial institutions make up the rest.

Since these corporate houses and financial institutions are now closed or operating on a limited scale due to the nationwide general holiday, the ISP industry is suffering, Hakim said.



Concentrate more on keeping food prices low

CPD urges NBR in its budget proposals

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Keeping food prices low should be seen as a strategic objective of the National Board of Revenue (NBR) during the preparation of the next national budget, the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) suggested in its budget proposal.

Food security of low-income people during the period of uncertainties of the coronavirus outbreak should be seen with utmost importance, the think-tank said.

Reduction of import related tariffs on essential food items should be considered on a dynamic of basis based on the evolving market conditions in terms of price, supply situation and projections about production, it said.

Every effort should be taken to create fiscal space by taking appropriate measures to deal with tax evasion, tax avoidance and illicit financial outflows, as the government is under immense pressure to pursue an expansionary fiscal-budgetary stance, according to CPD.

Maximum effort should be deployed to raise efficiency of the tax administration and efficacy of tools.

The NBR will need to raise its institutional capacity and enforcement ability through reforms and concrete actions on the ground.

For the upcoming budget, a viable completion timeline should be chalked out for reforms which are

already under consideration, the CPD said.

Broader use of technology may bring forth some uptick in revenue mobilisation efficiency. The CPD urged the NBR to introduce an e-TDS system to this end.

This system will enable the NBR to

in order to ensure effective implementation and augment revenue.

The NBR should eliminate all hurdles with regard to registration and getting BINs, updating information, installation of devices and submission of returns.

comprehensive online payment system for VAT, income tax and customs together with an interface with iBAS++.

The revenue board must be restrained from all ad-hoc provisions of tax incentives. It needs to be selective in the next fiscal year as more

Financing of Terrorism, which are scheduled to be implemented by June 2021.

The NBR should emphasise the need for a comprehensive database on expatriates working in Bangladesh. Their income and outward remittance must be included in the database to address the issue of wide-ranging tax evasion, the CPD said.

To this end, the NBR, special branch of police, National Security Intelligence, Bangladesh Investment Development Authority, Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority and NGO Affairs Bureau must devise a collaborative mechanism to cope with the problem, it said.

The NBR may consider waiver of VAT at the domestic stage for the March-June period this year for the agro-based industries, which were affected the most due to the spread of the coronavirus.

It may also introduce facilities allowing deferred payment of quarterly advance income taxes until June this year and payment of corporate taxes for fiscal year 2019-20 by instalments until March, 2021.

These waivers could be continued in fiscal year 2020's budget, the CPD said.

"Besides, companies which are in loss-making position during fiscal year 2019-20 may be allowed to 'carry back losses' against the taxable profits for the two previous years: fiscal year 2017-18 and fiscal year

2018-19."

Farmers producing perishable goods were affected by a drop in sales, low market price and disruptions in the movement of goods to wholesale markets, the CPD said.

There is limited scope to address the challenges faced by these farmers through fiscal measures, it said. "Best way to go will be to provide them with low-interest credit facility before the next planting season."

The NBR may consider following a 'go slow' policy with regard to incentivising labour-displacing mechanisation, the CPD suggested.

Further reduction of duties at import stage for agricultural machineries should be stalled perhaps until fiscal year 2021-22.

Similarly, disbursement of credit at subsidised rate to farmers for agricultural mechanisation should be slowed down in the next one year, the think-tank recommended.

Manufacturing enterprises are being affected differently and in different degrees depending on type of the activities, size and locations. Most are being adversely affected because of disruptions in the supply chains and demand depression.

The CPD believes the coverage of the Tk 5,000 crore package for export-oriented industries should be broad-based and it should include enterprises exporting below 80 per cent of their production.

KEY PROPOSALS

- ▶ Take steps to ensure food security of low-income people
- ▶ Cuts in import tariffs on essential food items should get more focus
- ▶ Create fiscal space by taking appropriate measures to deal with tax evasion, tax avoidance and illicit financial outflows
- ▶ Raise efficiency of the tax administration
- ▶ A viable completion timeline should be chalked out for reforms
- ▶ Agro-based industries should get VAT waiver at domestic stage for March-June period
- ▶ Raise tax exempted yearly turnover limit for SMEs from Tk 50 lakh to Tk 1 crore
- ▶ Introduce a reduced rate of corporate taxes for pharmaceutical companies, hospitals, clinics and other health facilities

issue tax certificates against an e-TIN linked to the "tax-deducted-at-source (TDS)" collection system. "This will make evasion of the TDS difficult."

The centre suggested that the existing black money whitening facility through voluntary disclosure of undisclosed income be not continued from next fiscal year.

The planned procurement and installation of devices like electronic fiscal devices must be accelerated

The NBR could identify and pursue individuals and business entities who are registered in the system but do not submit tax returns and who are registered and submit returns but do not effectively pay taxes.

A mechanism could be set up to contact the relevant entities via phone calls, SMSs or emails to follow up on their return submissions or tax payments.

The NBR should launch a

demand for incentives will be lined up in the wake of COVID-19.

Proper cost-benefit analysis must be conducted in case of new provisions. At the same time, some of the existing provisions should be reviewed and discontinued if deemed as of low priority.

The next budget should particularly focus on few of the activities under the National Strategy for Prevention of Money Laundering and Combating

Bangladesh's chance to prove it has gone digital

Robi CEO says

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

People who even a few months ago had little interest in digital services are now increasingly availing those for movements being limited to their homes, said Mahtab Uddin Ahmed, managing director and chief executive officer of Robi.

Coming on Facebook live on Saturday evening to exchange views with customers, he said this was Bangladesh's chance to prove to the world that it had gone digital and it should not let this opportunity go by.

He said definitely Covid-19 has badly affected the country's overall economy as well as that of the world but the pandemic had also brought some positive impacts.

"Online activity has increased as people are trying to avail the services from online platforms which is a positive side of the coronavirus situation amid all the negative impacts of the epidemic," said Ahmed, also the president of the Association of Mobile Telecom



Mahtab Uddin Ahmed

Operators of Bangladesh (AMTOB).

Facebook streaming and use of YouTube has also increased tremendously in the country and people are also working from their homes, which also helped bring a surge to data usage growth, said Ahmed.

"But most importantly people who were not interested in using digital

services in other times are also now trying to access online banking, pay their bills through online platforms and also use the mobile financial services to run their regular activities smoothly."

People are conducting meetings online and students attending online classes while entertainment is also onboard through the internet, he said.

Ahmed said e-commerce should have taken this opportunity to have grown in the country but maybe their supply chain has broken down and that was why they cannot take this opportunity.

He said the increase in online activity has prompted them to drastically reduce data prices and redesign their packages keeping in mind that people are stuck at home and dependent on mobile data for entertainment and students' educational activities.

"Alongside Robi, other operators too have reduced data prices but this in turn also causes revenue losses for the mobile carriers," Ahmed added.



BASHUNDHARA GROUP

Bashundhara Group Managing Director Sayem Sobhan Anvir and Vice Chairman Safwan Sobhan Tasvir hand over medical and food supplies to Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Aurangzeb Chowdhury at the Naval Headquarters in Dhaka on Sunday. The supplies include 50,000 masks, 500 personal protective equipment and 700 packets of food.

Workers came in droves due to confusing signals

Keep factories closed but pay the workers

THE reports and visuals of thousands of garment workers coming back to Dhaka from their villages all over the country, cramming into ferries, pickups, trucks or walking on foot, are extremely concerning as such an influx and crowding of people are the perfect recipe for a rapid spread of the coronavirus. It completely defeats the purpose of the government's shutdown and directives of social distancing. The reason why these workers came back is simple: they wanted to keep their jobs and they wanted to collect their salaries. Many were called back by their employers. We simply do not understand how, if there is a shutdown, some units in the garment sector should remain open so that workers are compelled to come to work.

Obviously, there has been some ambivalence regarding the shutdown in the case of the garment factories. The BGMEA has requested all factories to remain closed until April 11. But the fact remains that all these people have come into the city in droves significantly increasing the risk of contracting the infection themselves and spreading it to others. Now that many of them will probably go back home, there could be another phase of spreading of the virus. So why did this happen?

It happened because the BGMEA did not give a clear direction before that all factories must be closed down. The workers were not given the assurance that they would still have their jobs and that they would be paid their wages during their absence. Such assurance was crucial to ensure the shutdown would be maintained. In fact, there were rumours that factories would be laying off workers causing further panic. According to a report in this paper, the government's Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishment (DIFE) repeatedly said that the factory authorities could keep their units open, but they needed to ensure adequate safety measures for their workers. How can safety be ensured when practically it is very difficult to have social distancing and safety gear for all workers inside the garment factories? A vice president of Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association has said factories working to meet work orders could run their units and those without work orders can reopen on April 10.

Covid-19 lockdown affects daily wage-earners the most

Food and financial assistance must reach all marginalised groups

WE, and indeed the rest of the world, are going through unprecedented times pulverised by the onslaught of Covid-19. The only way open to our government to thwart the spread of the virus is to clamp a country-wide shutdown. Admittedly, such a measure has many attendant and unintended consequences. With the economy virtually at a standstill, the worst sufferers are the daily wage-earners and those involved in the informal economy. And there is a large number of them, who are without work and without food, and most of them are slum-dwellers living in various pockets in the capital city. Such a situation that we face today in the capital has never been experienced before—the capital at a virtual standstill.

It was very heartening to hear the PM assure the nation that these people would not be left unattended, and we have also noticed efforts by the administration to distribute food stuff to these people. But that has been sporadic at best and the aid has not reached a great majority in this category of people. Efforts by individuals, various social and cultural organisations and business houses are commendable but not adequate. And for many of the needy—especially women, the elderly and the infirm—it is difficult to contest with the others for his or her share of the dole. A report in this paper yesterday depicts the sad plight of these daily wage-earners living in Dhaka city. And the picture is not much different in other parts of the country.

We believe that the situation is very akin to what we have faced during any natural disaster, and would have to be tackled as such in respect of relief distribution. Private and government efforts should be coordinated through a comprehensive and sustainable plan. A list of the needy people including the floating population should be drawn, starting at the ward level in the capital, and the distribution should be managed by the ward commissioners and "members" under the supervision of the military. This should also be replicated in other parts of the country. Now is the time for the people's representatives to prove their mettle and their worth.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Don't ignore safety measures

It was shocking to see workers of garment factories returning to Dhaka from various places in the country to resume work, despite an ongoing "lockdown". Many were seen walking for miles, in close proximity, while many more travelled in crammed pickup vans and trucks. I understand that they returned due to the fear of losing their jobs. Many felt forced to return because of the factory owners who left them in the dark. But the concerned authorities are dealing with the matter and as far as I know, the government has stepped forward to aid the struggling industries and their employees. Why then put these workers—and the general public by extension—in danger of exposure to the coronavirus? If the virus infects them in their workstations, it is bound to spread to other places. Who will take responsibility for that?

Nishita Sanaul, by email

The Spectre of Coronavirus: Lessons to Be Learned

SADEQUIL ISLAM

TO borrow a famous phrase from history, a spectre is haunting the world—the spectre of Covid-19. Albert Camus, in his novel *The Plague*, considered plagues a simile of wars and thought plagues and wars always found people surprised and unprepared. Indeed, the world today is the plague-infected city of Oran (the setting of *The Plague*) writ large.

The coronavirus has generated twin crises: a public health crisis and an economic crisis reminiscent of the Great Depression. The economies of major countries including the United States are facing negative demand as well as supply shocks. Because of social isolation and travel restrictions, many industries in the service sector, such as travel and tourism, sports, entertainment, retail outlets, hotels and restaurants, are facing rapid declines in demand. The supply shocks are induced by disruptions of supply chains in an interdependent world economy and, in some places, by closure of factories.

Forecasts of many organisations predict a severe impact of the virus in the short run and in 2020. The OECD predicted that under the best scenario, the growth rates in 2020 will decline to 4.9 percent in China and only 1.9 percent in the USA. In a more recent forecast, Goldman Sachs predicts a gloomier picture: In the second quarter of this year, the US economic growth will decline, at an annualised rate, by a whopping 24 percent, a figure comparable to that during the Great Depression in the 1930s.

The human toll of the virus can be gauged by exploring the effects on labour markets. According to a recent report of the ILO, the number of workers in the world who could lose their jobs ranges from 5.3 million (under the best scenario) to 24.7 million (under the worst scenario). According to a projection of Goldman Sachs, the number of unemployment insurance claims in the United States may jump to 2.25 million because of the coronavirus. In Canada, the number of unemployment insurance claims recently surged to half a million compared with just 27,000 last year. It is also evident that the coronavirus is widening the divide between low-income and high-income groups. Many low-income and "gig workers" in the service sector, for example, workers in restaurants, delivery workers, "contingent" workers such as Uber drivers, can't afford to work online from their homes.

Advanced countries have been forced to respond with massive expansionary monetary policy and fiscal policy. Central banks in the United States, Canada and elsewhere, have reduced their policy interest rates to near zero levels. Fiscal policies have included billions of dollars of government expenditures to provide financial support to low-income people, laid-off workers, and business companies crippled by the coronavirus. However, policy makers already realise that it is not easy to stimulate a quarantine economy. Indeed, the coronavirus presents a *quadrilemma* for the virus-ravaged countries: 1) Should the government

focus more on reducing the mortality rate by increasing the resources at hospitals by increasing the number of hospital beds and production of medical equipment such as ventilators and other materials such as masks, gloves, and protective gowns for frontline healthcare employees? 2) Should the government focus more on reducing the transmission rate, known as R_0 (the number of persons affected by an infected person), by testing and enforcing social isolation and social distancing? 3) Should the government lock down cities and communities to protect public health, risking severe economic recessions?; and 4) Should the government bail out workers and low-income people rather than business companies? The responses and resolutions of the *quadrilemma* have varied across countries depending on the economic and political systems and the capacity and motivation of ruling governments.

because of improvements in hygiene and sanitary conditions. Many in the West with excessive optimism had declared, in the 1960s and later, the end of the era of infectious diseases and plagues. Still, in many developing countries, infectious diseases continue to cause serious problems. Deadly and invisible pathogens like coronavirus have no national citizenship and carry no passports. The emergence of SARS, Ebola, Zika virus, the Swine Flu, the bird flu, the West Nile virus, Dengue, and now the coronavirus demonstrates that no country is immune to the sudden outbreak of infectious diseases.

Many epidemiologists in the West have, for years, warned about the emergence of pandemics like the coronavirus. Mass migration from rural to urban areas, poor public health infrastructure, high mobility of people, deforestation have created imbalances in the eco-system involving human beings, plants, and animals, creating fertile grounds for *zoonotic*

priorities. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), world military expenditure in 2018 was more than USD 1.8 trillion. A 10 percent reduction of this amount will generate about USD 180 billion which could be diverted to worldwide health programmes and research related to infectious diseases so that medicines are available at affordable prices. Furthermore, all countries should realise that a relentless pursuit of material progress based on short-term profits and private interests at the expense of the environment, health and human development would be self-defeating in the long run.

Finally, Bangladesh thus far hasn't become a hotspot of the coronavirus. However, as a densely populated country with high shares of slum-dwellers in major urban centres, Bangladesh is vulnerable to infectious diseases. Bangladesh can learn from the success of countries such as Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan in managing the crisis through testing, raising awareness of the health crisis, tracing infected people, social isolation, and treatments in early phases. Bangladesh needs to improve its public health system and invest more in preparedness and responses to pandemics. Bangladesh may not be able to produce medicines and ventilators overnight for coronavirus, but certainly it can produce masks, gloves, and protective gowns for frontline health professionals. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), government expenditure on public health as a percentage of GDP in Bangladesh has declined somewhat in recent years and was only 0.4 percent in 2017. Furthermore, out-of-pocket payments as a percentage of total health expenditure in Bangladesh has increased in recent years and was 74 percent, which is higher compared to many other developing countries. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3.8 of the United Nations calls for universal health coverage by 2030.

According to a report (WHO, 2017), the Universal Health Coverage Index was only 46 in Bangladesh, significantly lower than in countries such as India, Sri Lanka, Cuba, Vietnam, and Sri Lanka. The burden of pandemics on poor people will be lower if a country can provide universal health insurance.

The coronavirus may be over in a year if not in a few months. Yet the world shouldn't be complacent. A new epidemic may threaten the humanity again. As Dr Rieux, the narrator in the novel *The Plague*, cautions the jubilant crowds in the city of Oran at the end of the plague: "the plague bacillus never dies or disappears for good; that it can lie dormant for years... that it bides its time... that the day would come when... it roused up its rats again and sent them to die in a happy city." Of course, Albert Camus had a broader meaning of an epidemic which can be not only physical diseases, but also political and moral diseases.

Dr Sadequil Islam is Professor and Chair at the Department of Economics, Laurentian University, Canada.



General view of a temporary hospital for Covid-19 patients in Madrid, Spain, on April 3, 2020. As the virus rages through the world, it is evident that countries including Bangladesh need to improve their public health systems and invest more in preparedness and responses to pandemics.

PHOTO: AFP

What are the lessons that need to be learned by countries from the coronavirus pandemic? First, health is a "global public good", not a "private good." Good health provides social benefits to the local community, the nation, and the world that exceeds the private benefit to an individual. On the other hand, ill health generates social costs to the community, the nation, and the world. The example of the coronavirus clearly indicates how sickness caused by a virus, whether from bats, wild animals, "wet markets", or unknown sources, in one part of the world can upend the physical health and daily lives of people and economic health of the entire world. Accordingly, solutions of the public health crisis caused by pandemics require the collaborative efforts of local communities, national governments, and international agencies.

Second, as levels of incomes have increased in the world over the years, the prevalence of infectious diseases relative to non-infectious diseases has declined

transmissions of viruses from animals to human beings. According to the Centre for Disease Control, Atlanta, 60 percent of known infectious diseases and 75 percent of new or emerging infectious diseases occur through zoonotic transmissions. Accordingly, countries, whether developed or not, can't afford to be blind to the potential outbreak of infectious diseases.

Third, health being a public good can't be left to market forces. The quality of the public health system and preparedness for and management of a pandemic like the coronavirus require an active government that is trustworthy, anticipatory and proactive rather than reactive. It is a false argument that western countries are slow to impose social restrictions and lockdowns because these are democratic and open societies. A truly democratic country must be able to mobilise national resources to manage a pandemic quickly and effectively on a war footing, if necessary.

Fourth, in the post-coronavirus world, countries will have to reconfigure their

Breaking the chain of Covid-19

MOHAMMAD TARIQUR RAHMAN

COVID-19's conquest to spread, infect, and then to claim human lives around the world has sparked many discussions on its current and future trajectory and impacts. We have all been flooded with information. So far, however, the death toll is far less than what turned out in the recent history of causalities such as the wars in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Iraq, and Syria, as well as the famines in Yemen and Africa. Yet the global pandemic continues to inflict panic and has paralysed much of the world.

Meanwhile, there has been enough castigation of the failure of the policymakers to curb the spread of the virus. Hiding the truth at the onset of the outbreak in Wuhan, ignoring the potential threat, and the unilateral decisions and action plans taken by each country without any visible coordination among global or even regional leaders—none has escaped criticism by the mainstream media.

The reality is that we don't yet have any drug or vaccine to cure the infection or prevent further spread of the virus. The only option that many countries are counting on is to remain locked down from within. More than 100 countries have restricted regular operations to cease any non-essential movement of the people. We have no definite answer for the countries that will remain under partial or complete lockdown and for how long the lockdown would last. Perhaps, that is until we are confident that we have successfully broken the chain of the deadly contagion.

We are sanguine about breaking this chain. However, will breaking the chain bring an end to the unprecedented challenge that the living have to muddle through?

Personally, I am frightened by the statement of US President Donald Trump about the possible greater loss of lives due to the economic crisis rather than the viral infection. I sense a similar forecast coming from many other global leaders, albeit in a different tone.

The focus now is on the economic and

social consequences of the pandemic. Industries such as transportation, tourism, entertainment, hotels, and restaurants have already received the brunt of the corona heat. Perplexed employers and owners of SMEs are on the edge of the perilous cliff of their corporate venture. Shopping malls have ceased to operate, as rarely anyone today is fancying or willing to purchase daily commodities, garments, cosmetics, electronics, or stationeries. At the bottom of the pyramid, a grotesque number of low- and middle-income individuals are on the verge of losing their livelihood.

This "slowdown" or "standstill" will

Even if any government is able to provide such a package, how long will it work and how many will survive in the end?

In the education sector, from primary to tertiary level, classes and academic activities have come to a standstill. Teachers are struggling to adopt online teaching and assessment. Not all local or international students at home and abroad might have access to the internet in order to adapt to the transition. Numerous numbers of conferences and seminars have been cancelled while the research in laboratories is put on hold. Hundreds and thousands of research assistants and



We don't yet have any drug or vaccine to cure the infected or prevent further spread of the coronavirus.

PHOTO: AFP

leave governments with a monumental deficit in tax-based revenues. In political or economic terminology, all these are signs of an inevitable recession. "That recession could be at least as bad as during the global financial crisis or worse," the Sputnik news agency quoted IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva as saying. In the middle of such a recession, despite the mammoth deficit, each government is expected to provide a matching economic stimulus package as "ventilators" for a gigantic number of SMEs who are racing for corporate ICU.

research projects have come to a halt. How soon will these academic activities—the key to moving forward—resume their regular venture?

No one has a definite answer to any of those questions. If anyone could come up with an answer, that would be no more than a calculated guess at this stage. It is because what we are going through and what is about to come have no historical precedent, and there are also worries about the digital-savvy generation that need to be tackled.

We opted to foster a generation with

advanced knowledge and technology who are basically unaware of the skills and tools needed for basic livelihood. If the hundreds and thousands of businesses that are directly or indirectly dealing with tech-based products are closed, the tech-savvy generation will not only be jobless but also be clueless about any alternative avenues for their livelihood.

We are about to see the onset of a chain of reactions that will start with the loss of jobs, the scarcity of livelihood, malnourishment or even starvation. Will it then increase the political instability, corruption, and crime rate?

Stability, growth, peace, and harmony in any nation will be a far-fetched dream if Trump's prediction comes true. In fact, that prediction is not only applicable to the USA but also to the rest of the world. As IMF and World Bank in a joint statement acknowledged the potential impact—"the coronavirus outbreak is likely to have severe economic and social consequences for IDA [International Development Association] countries, home to a quarter of the world's population and two-thirds of the world's population living in extreme poverty." Pakistan, for example, has requested more than a billion dollars of aid from IMF to support corona-threatened industries. Yes, the Covid-19 pandemic will surely have global consequences. Let's hope that Trump's prediction on the possible numbers of death due to starvation and suicide will be wrong, like many of his other predictions.

The important question is: how to prevent the repercussions of the Covid-19 pandemic on the political, economic and social realms on a global scale? Surely, world leaders are thinking about the challenges ahead. Will the global leadership offer a prudent and just solution to the crisis? This is yet to be seen. No doubt that the current world is desperately looking for leadership that will guide mankind to peace and stability on a global scale.

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IN MEMORIAM

Adieu, Architect Bashirul Haq

ADNAN ZILLUR MORSHED

A Bangladeshi pioneer departed this world on Saturday, April 4, 2020. Architect Bashirul Haq was a poet who crafted his poems with the language of brick, green, light, air, and tactility. Some of his brick buildings are like inhabitable poetry, where one experiences space as one would read, say, Jibananda. Architect Louis Kahn once famously asked, "What do you want, brick? And brick says to you, I like an arch." If this was Kahn's celebration of the brick's quintessential material property (that brick can only be an arch but not a lintel), Bashirul Haq expanded that property into the realm of poetics, meditating with bricks and bringing them home, where they naturally belonged: the Bengal delta. In his architectural work, rural and urban were reimagined as an expression of organic cosmopolitanism.

Bashirul Haq's design epitomised an entwined brand of indigenous and modernist impulses in Bangladeshi architecture since the independence. For the new nation of Bangladesh, the decade of the 1970s was a complex tapestry of optimism and pessimism. The euphoria of liberation soon dissipated within the maze of political unrest, assassinations, and military dictatorships. Reminiscent of many other post-independence countries in social turmoil, a contested search for a national identity ensued. Furthermore, the Cold War-era politics—particularly, the shifting fault lines along the relationships among the United States, the Soviet Union, China, and India—complicated the internal affairs of Bangladesh.

Amidst the social tension of the 1970s, a new generation of ambitious architects burst forth onto the architectural scene of Bangladesh. The outcomes of a few national architectural competitions revealed new visions of modernity, building technology, and architectural space. Institutional and commercial buildings were no longer bland boxes, comprising corridors and rooms. In 1977, Bashirul Haq won the national design

competition for the Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) headquarters in downtown Dhaka's Dilkusha Commercial Area. His entry showcased a new type of design energy that synthesised modernist aesthetics with a reasoned consideration for the local climate, a low budget, and a dense urban context.

Many of his subsequent brick buildings are considered architectural icons of the country, suggesting a sublime modern abstraction of Bengal's geographic ambience. Haq's work is of utmost importance to explain how the notion of "critical regionalism" informed architectural modernism in Bangladesh since the early 1980s.

Born in 1942 in a village named Bhatshala, Brahmanbaria, a district in east-central Bangladesh and about 100 km from the capital Dhaka, Bashirul Haq developed a particular fondness for Bengal's rural landscape. He received his Bachelor's degree in architecture from the National College of Arts in Lahore, West Pakistan, in 1964. Lahore introduced him to the monumental architecture and gardens of the Mughals. Before he left for the United States in 1971 to pursue higher education in architecture, Haq worked in the office of Muzharul Islam, the first Bengali professional architect in East Pakistan. He was also affiliated with T. Abdul Hakim Thariani, designer of the country's national mosque, Baitul Mukarram, in downtown Dhaka.

Haq's journey to the United States played a formative role in his career development. He received his Master's degree in architecture from the University of New Mexico in 1975. The south-western American state of New Mexico sensitised him to the transformative influence of landscape on aesthetic development. In this state, the famed American artist Georgia O'Keeffe was deeply inspired by the phenomenology of layered limestone cliffs, rugged mountains, rock formations, and the meditative dance of light across them. Haq, too, experienced firsthand



Bashirul Haq (June 24, 1942 – April 4, 2020).

in Albuquerque, Santa Fe, and beyond the introspective power of a place and how its paradigmatic adobe architecture could embody the spirit of a unique terrain.

Bashirul Haq was fortunate to find a mentor in Fazlur Rahman Khan (popularly known as F.R. Khan), a fellow countryman, partner of the famed Chicago-based architectural/engineering firm Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM), and structural designer of Chicago's Sears Tower (now Willis Tower), the tallest building in the world from 1973 to 1997. The SOM stalwart took Haq under his wing and encouraged him to join his Chicago firm as an architect. However, as fate would have it, Bashirul Haq, already in his mid-30s, chose to return home, to Bangladesh. He was ready to embark on an architectural journey in the land he knew best.

There is a lot to learn from him. But how we learn from him is crucial. His work can be a great pivot to foster the production of "local" knowledge about the Bengal delta and its habitats. The lingering West-oriented

tendencies of architectural curriculum in Bangladesh could be best mitigated when native knowledge is produced within a global-historical milieu of the built environment. There is a serious scarcity of architectural literature in Bangladesh. The predominantly design studio-oriented undergraduate architectural curriculum in the country neither encourages nor trains architects to think analytically about the design culture. Furthermore, a general lack of research initiatives in the academia only exacerbates the problem.

The lacuna of local knowledge production creates multifaceted problems. One of them is academia's continued reliance on imported West-centric books—often based on a false distinction between East and West—buttressing an uncritical belief in the perceived superiority of the West. Another related problem is that the absence of discursive conversation on local architects and their innovative work perpetuates a peculiar cultural self-pity that warrants western recognition as a validation of local designs.

Yet, to frame Bashirul Haq's work with the trite argument that he searched for local inspiration in his design and then sought to synthesise indigenous spatial qualities with modernity is to do disservice to his oeuvre that is complex, nuanced, and multi-layered. It would be unfair to see his architecture ricocheting between the false binary of local and modern. His work is much more. His sensitive and restrained use of brick as a building material tells richly complex architectural stories that elude simple classifications.

Bashirul Haq creates a cosmopolitan architecture, one in which the very premise of the local/modernity dichotomy is robustly resisted. Rather, he seeks to conflate an architectural archetype with a perceptive understanding of temporality and the spatial sensibilities of Bengal, but ultimately transcending the exigencies of the local. Experiencing his architecture, particularly

his red-brick buildings, reminds one that searching for local inspiration does not have to be an inflexible moral burden, in the same way one feels that Alvar Aalto's Säynätsalo Town Hall (1949) seems to remain embedded in some kind of Finnish *genius loci*, while ultimately suspending the very need to be Finnish as an expression of aesthetic authenticity. In many ways, the exquisitely delicate use of brick in Haq's work, for example the architect's own residence on Indira Road in Dhaka, performs Bengali folk dance and western ballet at the same time.

To understand how Bashirul Haq resisted the temptation of compartmentalised historiographies of local and global (or East and West), one needs to appreciate the ways he values his cross-cultural architectural education. Like architect Muzharul Islam, Haq grasped the power of diverse geographies and how their cultures could blend together to produce all kinds of aesthetic chemical reactions.

Today Bangladesh thrives on design innovation and entrepreneurship, aesthetic experiments in materiality, and bottom-up community-driven buildings. The traveling exhibition *Bengal Stream: The Vibrant Architecture Scene of Bangladesh* (2017-2018), first held in Basel and then other European cities, my own cover article on Muzharul Islam in the *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* (December 2017) and my travel companion *DAC/Dhaka in 25 Buildings* (2017), and three Aga Khan Awards for Architecture in the last few years showcase a growing global interest in the architectural developments of Bangladesh. Innovative research and analytical writing on the work of Bashirul Haq will broaden and validate this interest.

Adieu architect! You will be missed.

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Changing teaching modality during the Covid-19 pandemic

QUAMRUL HAIDER

In a book on influenza published last year, Robert G. Webster, a virologist at Otago University in New Zealand, had a terrifyingly prescient chapter about pandemics. He warned that "Nature will eventually again challenge mankind with an equivalent of the 1918 influenza virus." He was referring to the 1918 Spanish Flu pandemic that infected about 500 million people around the world, killing nearly three percent (50 million) of the world's population at the time.

Indeed, at the end of December 2019, Chinese authorities alerted the World Health Organization to pneumonia cases, which was later dubbed as Coronavirus (Covid-19), in Wuhan City in Hubei province. Since then, the virus has led to a global public health crisis, a pandemic infecting over a million people worldwide and claiming in excess of 60,000 lives.

In the United States, the response to Covid-19 is heavily overlaid with political calculations by Donald Trump. As noted by the House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, the president "fiddles [while] people are dying." Consequently, because of his ignorance, initial denial and lack of proactive action, the virus has swept through the country like a wildfire. As of now, there are over 300,000 cases with more than 8,400 deaths. These numbers change by the hour.

According to latest models, we are staring at 100,000-250,000 deaths, with New York City being the epicentre, where there have been at least 113,704 confirmed cases and 3,565 deaths since the first case was reported during the first week of March 2020. Scientists and epidemiologists believe that this may be only the beginning of what is yet to come before the virus disappears into the thin air.

For American colleges and universities,



The ineffable, intellectual vibe that a great classroom discussion generates cannot be found in virtual online teaching.

PHOTO: REUTERS/MICHAELA REHLE

Covid-19 upended many of the hallmarks of the campus experience, as the virus coincided with the start of the spring semester. Universities are especially vulnerable to the spread of the disease because of the close proximity of those who live and work on campus.

In a matter of weeks, classroom lecture as we know it was completely disrupted. In an effort to slow down transmission of the highly contagious Covid-19, Fordham University, where I have been teaching since 1988, ordered all but its most essential employees to stay at home. On March 9, 2020, the university suspended face-to-

face instruction on its four New York area campuses for the remainder of the semester. Henceforth, the faculty were instructed to teach their classes online. Other universities in the tri-state area—NYU, CUNY, Columbia, Yale and Princeton, among others—took similar action.

It has been a jarring, surreal and draining experience for most of the faculty members to adapt to a completely new way of working, with everyone forced to interact with students on screens. However, the Information Technology (IT) division of Fordham made life bearable for us by creating a Course Continuity Site as an immediate resource

to prepare us to teach online. Therein, we can find teaching strategies, get quick overview of internet technologies, such as Zoom, Blackboard Learn and Blackboard Collaborate. We can also find various synchronous and asynchronous tools to fit our teaching style. Those of us who needed a laptop or webcam were given one by the university's Media Services. Moreover, if a student did not have access to a sufficiently equipped computer, IT Customer Care gave him/her a laptop at no charge.

As we proceed in this new learning modality, we have to be ever-mindful of how our students' access to technology can introduce new challenges to promoting diversity, equity and inclusion. We have to be aware that some of our students may be living in a completely different time zone, making it difficult for them to participate fully at the pre-assigned class time. Others may require special accommodations as outlined by the Office of Disability Services.

In light of the shift from face-to-face to online instruction, Fordham Libraries and its services are still available to us and our students. They are offering many of the reference and instructional services we relied on in the past via online meeting platforms—Blackboard Collaborate, WebEx and Google Meet.

Our bookstore, operated by Barnes and Noble, joined Vital Source Bookshelf and leading publishers to make e-textbooks available free to students impacted by campus closures. Vital Source Bookshelf is an easy-to-use, intuitive app built to help enhance one's reading, studying and learning experience. Besides, it offers handy tools to help one learn more efficiently.

The American Institute of Physics has compiled a list of resources for physics educators to support their move to online teaching for the rest of the semester. These

resources highlight the use of cell phones for lab experiments, as well as other activities that can be adapted for use by students at home.

As we are forced to work from home, some tenure-track professors are worried about how the disruption will affect their tenure bids. In response, many universities have announced a one-year tenure-clock extension for junior faculty members.

I have to say that what I miss most right now is being able to see my colleagues and students walking across the campus, hanging out with them in Freeman Hall which houses the physics department, getting coffee at Starbucks, and so on. I also miss standing in front of a chalkboard lecturing, as well as mingling, talking and brainstorming physics problems with my students.

What happens next? One clue might lie in the early nineteenth-century Britain when the intrusion of mechanised technology into the textile production process ignited the Luddite rebellion, named after Ned Ludd, a mythical weaver who lived in Sherwood Forest. The textile workers who were so paranoid that machinery would replace their jobs took to the task of physically destroying machines they used.

Having said that, is Coronavirus making us face our own obsolescence just like the Luddites? I hope not. Nevertheless, under the present circumstances, I am not sure when campus life will return to normal. Let us forget, education happens in the lecture hall and an ineffable, intellectual vibe that a great class discussion generates cannot be found in virtual online teaching. In the meantime, let us allow ourselves to be imperfect together in the service of our students and their deepest needs for learning, and meaning of humanity and compassion.

Quamrul Haider is a professor of physics at Fordham University, New York.

ON THIS DAY IN HISTORY



OLYMPICS REVIVED

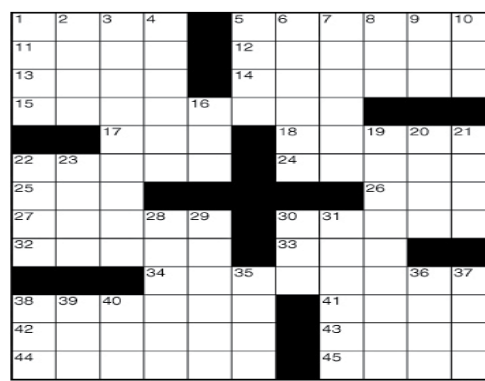
April 6, 1896

Pierre, baron de Coubertin, a founder of the International Olympic Committee and its president from 1896 to 1925, realised his goal of reviving the Olympics when the first modern Games opened in Athens this day in 1896.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Adore
 - 5 Village residents
 - 11 Valhalla VIP
 - 12 Sulky
 - 13 Splinter group
 - 14 Cure
 - 15 Rough guess
 - 17 Lode material
 - 18 Windshield clearer
 - 22 Insertion sign
 - 24 Kept in reserve
 - 25 Clay, later
 - 26 Greek X
 - 27 Flies like an eagle
 - 30 Relay stick
 - 32 Doctrine
 - 33 Swearing-in
- DOWN**
- 1 Finish last
 - 2 Lyric poems
 - 3 Prudish
 - 4 Whole
 - 5 Old Italian coin
 - 6 Boxing combo
 - 7 Entered
 - 8 Gorilla or gibbon
 - 9 Went ahead
 - 10 Porker place
 - 16 Got together
 - 19 Illustrated
 - 20 Cave sound
 - 21 Horse halter
 - 22 Group of actors
 - 23 Balm ingredient
 - 28 Saskatchewan's capital
 - 29 Hot
 - 30 Drill part
 - 31 Conforms
 - 35 Final, for one
 - 36 Radius partner
 - 37 High home
 - 38 Diet no-no
 - 39 Had supper
 - 40 Swindle

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YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS



BEEBLE BAILEY

BY MORT WALKER



BABY BLUES

BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT



The Women's Movement in Bangladesh Throughout the Years

SAADIA A. TASNEEM, AAHIR MRITTIKA, UMAMA ZILLUR, ZAHRA ZILLUR

Over three decades ago, in 1988, March 8 was first observed in Bangladesh as International Women's Day. The women's movement has always been deeply rooted in this society. As we move from one era to another, we can trace overarching themes of eliminating violence against women, fighting for reproductive rights, striving for political and economic empowerment, resisting religious subordination and ensuring public roles. The movement has been involved in fighting for legal rights, challenging existing discourse, increasing representation, pushing for policy changes and, most importantly, challenging mind-sets in a repressive patriarchal society. This is a glimpse into the journey across a century – one of great adversaries and greater women.

BRITISH PERIOD

This period saw public discourse around women's rights and roles in the Bengali-Muslim society largely shaped by male perspective, including some urban educated middle-class and upper-class women. A small class of exceptions – women such as Begum Rokeya – went against the norm and became thought leaders in the women's movement. Today, Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain (1880-1932) is recognised as a pioneering activist for women's education and economic independence.



Naripokkho Banner with the slogan 'My Body, My Decision' from their 1994 International Women's Day March.

SOURCE: NARIPOKKHO OFFICE, 2013, DHAKA

However, what is often side-lined is her constructive and critical literary work that challenged entire systems upholding patriarchy, including religion. "Sultana's Dream," one of the earliest depictions of feminist utopia, uses the concept of gender role reversal to highlight the perceived notion of male superiority. "Secluded Women" is a critique of the extreme forms of *pardah* imposed on women, acting as obstacles towards their emancipation. For the first time in the region's history, feminist discourse was shaped and informed by women themselves.

During the same time period, revolutionaries like Pritilata Waddadar (1911-1932) and Kalpana Datta (1913-1995) took up arms in the nationalist struggle against British occupation. Pritilata did not only lead the successful raid of the European Club in Chattoogram at just 21, but her participation in the anti-colonial struggle, along with that of several other fearless female revolutionaries, opened up political and public spheres to women.

PAKISTAN PERIOD (1947-1970)

In 1970, Sufia Kamal founded Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, the country's oldest women's rights organisation to date. Ever since, the organisation has been a dominant force in shaping the roles of Bangladeshi women in politics and society.

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad is the prime example of how efforts in mobilising women led to changes in legal and political systems. Building off the momentum of the social uprising against dowry in the late 70s, they raised the Anti-Dowry Bill – with 30,000 signatures – in Parliament and finally got it passed in 1980. While the practice of dowry still persists in many places and much has to be done in the way of implementation, this was a historic win for the women's movement as they were successful in garnering support from across the political spectrum to outlaw an outdated practice.



Police resisting the demand for Uniform Family Code.

SOURCE: BMP, 1993: 122, SHMARANIKA, BANGLADESH MAHILA PARISHAD 1970-92, DHAKA.

Another one of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad's major undertakings was the demand for a Uniform Family Code across all religious communities instead of personal law which depends on women's religious backgrounds. After numerous consultations at the national and local levels in the late 80s and 90s, a draft was developed. However, due to the reluctance of some religious minority groups and the state's apprehension due to perceived backlash from groups with religious affiliations, the Code was never passed.

For Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, advocacy for women's increased political participation has always been a primary agenda. By using media such as seminars and conventions alongside street activism and protests, they have continued to demand more reserved seats for women in Parliament, as well as direct election for those seats. As they stand firm in their belief that female involvement in decision-making and legislation is essential for women's empowerment, this remains a major area of their work, even today. Direct election at local levels, however, has significantly improved women's political rights and participation.

POST-LIBERATION (1971-1990)

Women also took up space in the policy circle, pushing for changes that addressed women's needs. The First Five-Year Plan of Bangladesh only identified the need for women's development in terms of motherhood and rehabilitation of war victims. To overcome the gap, Rounaq Jahan founded Women for Women in 1973. Known as one of the first feminist organisations focusing on research and advocacy, it published the first comprehensive report on challenges faced by women. The data and statistics required to integrate the needs of women into policy were generated; knowledge creation became a prominent tool of the women's movement.

Throughout the 70s, there was a growing consciousness of the varied experiences of women across Bangladesh. With the establishment of organisations such as *Banchte Shekha* (Learn How to Survive), the scope of the women's movement was expanded beyond the urban upper and middle-class.

The activism of Dr Angela Gomes, Founder and Executive Director of *Banchte Shekha*, grew out of her personal experiences and observations. She was raised in a small village near Dhaka. As she rode around the countryside of Jashore on a bicycle, she began interacting with fellow women, talking about the different forms of violence that they had faced. Many women were either abandoned or abused by their husbands. Through these conversations, she began to offer what little help she could. Seeing her as a threat to the traditional way of life, men in stark opposition threw rocks and human excrement at her. To legitimise her presence, she established *Banchte Shekha* as an NGO in 1976. Her work is rooted in the goal of helping women achieve financial independence, mimicking the ideals Begum Rokeya brought forth over half a century ago. As such, the organisation teaches rural women income-generating skills like fish farming, raising crops and livestock, and handicrafts. With their earnings, women have formed extensive networks of money-lending schemes to help others during times of crisis. Primary schooling programmes for adults, as well as courses on maternal and basic health, are also provided. Even further, the organisation trains

paralegals in Muslim family law. As a result, the typical all-male mediation panels for issues such as domestic violence, dowry disputes and child support now include members of *Banchte Shekha* as arbitrators.

The organisation's reach today is 25,000 women in 430 villages. With Dr Gomes' acute understanding of the demographic, each programme rises out of a specific need felt by the women she works with. "The aim of *Banchte Shekha*," Dr Gomes said in an old interview, "is not to rescue women, but to help them learn to live."

While Bangladeshi women's issues became more and more prominent in the national landscape, there was a severe lack of representation of indigenous women's rights. In 1988, the Hill Women's Federation (HWF) was formed to help bring focus on raising consciousness among the Jumma women about their rights and duties as the most repressed section of the Jumma society in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Kalpana Chakma, the 20-year-old organising secretary of the Federation, rose to prominence because of her tireless activism and began to garner both national and international attention. She helped bring attention to an issue that still prevails in our country today: the repression of indigenous people by Bengali settlers. She put emphasis on working for the rights of indigenous women by organising conferences, seminars and meetings in several areas of the Hill Tracts. The HWF is, as Kalpana Chakma was, exceptionally vocal on the topic of Jumma women resisting repression at the hands of the

their position in society and starting national dialogue around women's bodily rights, including sexual rights. One of their more controversial campaigns was under the theme *Shorir Amar, Shiddhanto Amar* (My Body, My Decision). While the aim was to strive for women's right to take decisions about their own bodies, the slogan was deemed as overly sexual or vulgar, with sexual freedom being equated with promiscuity. Today, Naripokkho has expanded their focus to issues surrounding gender and healthcare, environment, and political empowerment.

Naripokkho has also been a strong ally in the fight for sex workers' rights in Bangladesh. Following the evictions of sex workers from brothels in the late 1990s, sex workers mobilised and became more politically active in the context of the women's movement. Mumtaz Begum, an evicted sex worker from one of the brothels, contacted Naripokkho and staged a protest in front of the Press Club. This led to the formation of Ulka, an organisation that aimed to destigmatise the life and work of sex workers. Sex work in Bangladesh is often seen as a function of poverty, thus evoking the standard welfare response of rehabilitation into marriages and "respectable" occupations. Ulka's campaign questioned these "rehabilitation" prescriptions and instead raised an agenda of "social acceptance" involving recognising sex work as a legitimate occupation. After the Tanbazar eviction in 1991, Ulka and Naripokkho joined forces in order to strategise ways to bring the situation under control. Around 84 women's and human rights organisations and development NGOs representing a wide spectrum of views on social change came together to form Shonghoti, an alliance in support of the rights of sex workers. By bringing the hardships of sex workers into the limelight, the links between the many different realities of women in and out of sex work became evident. These efforts changed how sex work was viewed in the community. A shift in terminology was observed when print media started referring to sex workers as *jouno kormi*, instead of *politia* (prostitute; literal meaning: "the fallen one"). This was a step towards removing the shame associated with sex work, and the social discrimination that was attached with it. Sex work was finally addressed as an occupation and sex workers had claims to workers' rights. The importance of sharing the stories of sex workers in order to remove the stigma surrounding this field of work was recognised. A new solidarity between sections of the "mainstream" women's movement and sex workers' struggles was forged.

has been fighting to improve workers' rights in the garments sector in Bangladesh for over 32 years. Working at garments factories since the age of 11, she witnessed the abusive nature of typically male employers towards female workers. The trade unions, meant to offer solutions, were plagued with their own issues of gender-based discrimination, so she ultimately decided to form her own. Founded in 2003, Awaj Foundation is driven by the vision of decent work, dignified lives and gender equity in the industrial sectors of Bangladesh. It raises awareness on garments workers' struggles, educates them on their rights under national and international legal frameworks and builds their capacity for leadership and negotiation of better working conditions. 52 anti-harassment committees have been set up in factories in Dhaka and Chattogram divisions with their assistance. As a women-led organisation, addressing gender-based violence is one of Awaj's main priorities. Nazma Akter puts particular emphasis on increasing women's participation in decision-making at the workplace and at home. Thereby, Awaj Foundation ushered the ideals of the women's movement into a crucial sector.

Trans Rights

From an early age, Joya Sikder's experience as a transgender woman has made her vulnerable to violence and degradation. The abuse she faced was not only limited to strangers but persisted even within her own home and community. She began her activism at an NGO and continued it as a research



Torch Procession with acid survivors.

SOURCE: NARIPOKKHO

associate seeking to depict the issues faced by the Bangladeshi transgender populace, eventually founding her own organisation, Somporke Noya Setu (SNS). Through her work, she strives to help members of the transgender community live as free citizens – providing them with work opportunities, promoting safe working conditions, actively protesting against their exclusion from a sexual rights bill on the basis of sexual "disability" and publishing articles on the abuse and harassment they face as sex workers. She played a significant role in persuading the government to recognise *Hijras* as a third gender. Currently, she is working on the official definition of "transgender" in Bangladesh and trying to clear misconceptions held by wider society. What started out as a fight for trans rights for Joya, has now grown to include all gender diverse and sexual identities.

The nature and scope of feminist organising in contemporary Bangladesh has changed. Organisations working on issues of gender rights are largely influenced by international donor organisations. Dependency on foreign funds means that local agendas and priorities are not given precedence, with a focus on projectised organisational models as opposed to movement building.

Bangladesh has had a rich history of feminist organising, as shown above. Throughout our history, women have recognised and prioritised the same core feminist issues of choice, autonomy, and opportunity. While this is not an exhaustive timeline by any means, it attempts to contextualise the role of the organisations and individuals within the greater feminist movement in Bangladesh. We hope the radical work of the women before us will help inspire new generations to join the fight.

The authors are members of Kotha, a youth-led organisation that tackles the culture of gender-based violence by working at the intersection of education, research, policy and the arts. They can be reached at contact.kotha@gmail.com.



Torch procession by Shonghoti to protect the rights of sex workers.

SOURCE: THE DAILY MUKTO KANTHA, 28 AUGUST, 1999

Bangladesh Army, and organises protest demonstrations on all incidents of human rights violations against them. In a country where dialogue centred on the rights of indigenous people is left out of the national discourse, Kalpana Chakma helped create momentum on this journey by trying to build a more inclusive community.

MY BODY, MY RIGHT – 1990s

In the 1990s, a new form of organising amongst women's rights organisations – at the intersection of activism, research and advocacy – seemed to emerge. There was a focus on the physical and sexual violence experienced by women in public and private spheres.

One of the more radical groups during this time was Naripokkho, a collective of women's rights activists with a mission to centre their work on their personal experiences as women. Naripokkho played a significant role in establishing the issue of violence against women as a determinant for

A prevalent form of violence against women at the time was acid throwing. Nasreen Huq, a member of Naripokkho, founded and led a national campaign against acid violence and this, in turn, led to the formation of the Acid Survivors Foundation. Through her work, Nasreen Huq moved beyond providing survivors with medical and legal support and helped reintegrate acid survivors into society through education, employment and social interaction. In fact, her relentless advocacy actually led to a sharp fall in the number of acid attacks against women in Bangladesh.

TOWARDS GREATER INCLUSION: 2003 AND BEYOND

Economic Justice
This was a period of economic transition for the agriculture-dependent society of Bangladesh. More economic opportunities also created scope for labour exploitation, especially of women. Nazma Akter, Founder and Executive Director of Awaj Foundation,

PONTING'S FAVOURITE MEMORABILIA

Ponting on Sunday shared a photograph of the Australian baggy green that he wore throughout his Test career and the new one that he had received from his wife Rianna Jennifer Cantor and Cricket Australia when he retired in 2012. "This is my favourite piece of memorabilia gifted to me by Rianna and Cricket Australia when I retired. A brand new cap on the left and my pride and joy on the right, looking a bit worse for wear after about 140 odd tests," he said in his tweet. Widely rated as one of the greatest Australian captains and batsmen of all time, Ponting won three back to back World Cups in 1999, 2003 and 2007 and the latter two victories came under his captaincy.



Croatian tennis player Borna Coric posted this picture of himself doing exercises at home and went with the simple caption: "Stay home but stay active."

PHOTO: TWITTER

There must be stories to tell

BISHWAIT ROY



"Why is only Test cricket being remembered?" The grandson suddenly asked this question of his grandfather while he was minutely reading every line of a report in the newspaper where a cricket legend has recalled a great Test knock from another modern-day great in order to encourage people and remind them of the need to maintain discipline in the fight against Covid-19.

The bespectacled grandfather, with a furrowed yet beaming face, took some time to respond.

Cricket rarely dominates conversations between the two, although one is a lifelong fan and another has no shortage of excitement for the game. It's now however time for a breather and a chat following the suspension of all outdoor activity to stop the spread of coronavirus.

The grandson sat on the middle couch beside by his oldest friend and that particular question came to his mind as Indian legend Sachin Tendulkar had offered an unusual take on the coronavirus fight by comparing it to Test cricket, urging for patience and teamwork, and warning "we have to defend well". "While the world battles the Covid-19 pandemic, this is probably the time for us to draw lessons from the grand old format of the game," Tendulkar wrote in a commentary.

Meanwhile, another legend and the other genius of their era, Brian Lara recalled Tendulkar's unbeaten

241-run knock against Australia as the world battles Covid-19. Having gotten out playing cover drives all series, Tendulkar did not play a single cover drive during the mammoth knock.

Then is there no place for one-day and T20 cricket? The junior had grown up at a time when all the hype surrounded the shortest format of the game, but is still a big fan of the two legendary cricketers, which is why their take on Test cricket in a crisis gave him food for thought.

On the other hand, the grandfather is a lifelong cricket fan who has watched so many Test matches, read all the great stories of the game and, now spends his retired life watching cricket, mostly on TV. Upon his grandson's instigation, he went down memory lane and it seemed all stories were alive and well in his mind.

"You know all sorts of stories of Test matches, almost like you are telling me stories of your own life," said grandfather.

"A fine left-handed bowler, who possessed marvellous stamina. Breaks from both sides. Has the easiest of deliveries. Seldom tires. Can bowl all day long. Keeps an excellent length. Never sends down a loose delivery. Understands the game thoroughly. Places the field to a nicety, catches come [to the fielders], they do not have to go in for them. Decidedly a 'head' bowler," he reminisced the lines about a great pre-modern era subcontinent bowler he read in a famous book.

Yes, here is also the story of patience and discipline, the grandson thought. "These sorts of stories about Test

cricket are abundant in my mind. I believe you also have such stories," said grandfather.

The grandson also could remember a few memorable matches but it seemed that lacked the stories his grandpa had been telling one after another. "We watch too many matches, especially T20 matches these days, so it's hard to track all the details," replied the grandson. The grandfather only responded with a smile.

Are we going back to old ways of life when everyone has been talking about the new world in every sector in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic?

"We don't know what exactly will happen after this current coronavirus shock. But see, the cricket didn't go back in time after World War II when the longest Test match was played between South Africa and England in Durban, that continued for nine days before the English players had to leave to catch their boat back to England.

"The question was raised after the World War, a kind of cricket which is predominately defensive, both batting and, more to the point, bowling... it is not pleasant to watch, and it is not pleasant for adventurous young men to play," the grandfather continued.

The grandson breathed a sigh of relief. "So, there is no conflict between Tests and the other formats."

Note: It's an imaginary conversation.



In scoring 241 without a cover drive and hitting a sublime 153 not out to single-handedly turn around a Test series against Australia, the stories of Sachin Tendulkar and Brian Lara provide examples of the discipline the world now needs.

PHOTO: COLLECTED



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.

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI from Mirpur, 2008



Having preferred the couch at home to the stadium seats for a large part of a decade as a cricket fan, I was first introduced to a live experience by a group of friends who had gotten me a ticket for an international fixture between Bangladesh and touring Zimbabwe back in 2008. With some of my favourite international players taking their bow from cricket, my curiosity for the modern game was yet to be reinstated and my interest was perhaps waning, developing a mildly condescending amusement towards how cricket at large was changing.

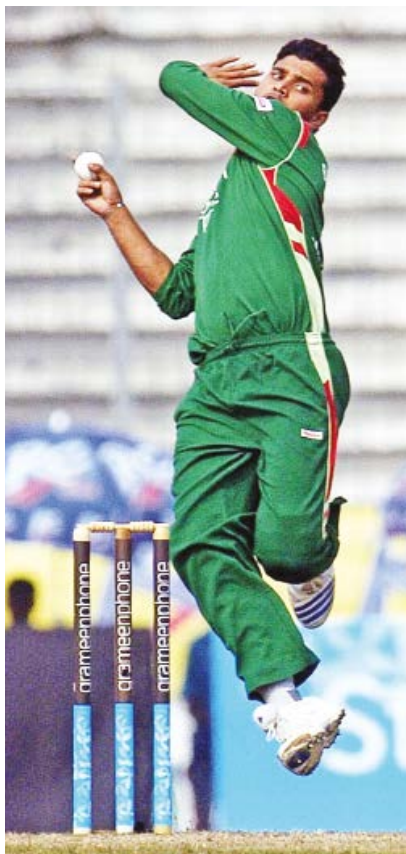
Living in Mirpur had its perks, however, as the local aura would change significantly whenever cricket was home. Any achievement by the national cricket team was rejoiced with gusto in the vicinity of the stadium and even in those slightly less exhilarating times of international cricket which nonetheless were galvanizing years of the country's cricket culture, a win for the Tigers -- no matter in what part of the world -- would explode into thumping fists and loud roars at Mirpur and be reverberated around the rest of Bangladesh.

I got a taste of the growing culture too that day at Mirpur's Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium during my first-ever foray into a cricket stadium. It was a largely transformative phase for the national team but us fans were fully expecting a Bangladesh victory in the first ODI of a three-match series against a Zimbabwe side that were looking back at their past years with a sense of longing and trying to get a foothold.

We arrived at the stadium draped in red and green colours of Bangladesh and from the onset I could tell that a Bangladesh match had its own unique environment. I was mesmerised by the look of the lush green outfield of the ground as the players warmed up; the excitement coursed through me as well while enjoying some tea and snacks awaiting the start of the match.

Unlike the witty and cerebral conversations with a parent or a friend while watching a match at home, the environment at the ground was blazed with a party atmosphere with cause for both hope and frustration. That was certainly evident to me as things unfolded.

Having won the toss, Bangladesh had elected to bat first but excitement soon turned to despair and loud cheers replaced by boos as the Tigers stuttered to an early slump. In the stands we looked at the coming of each Bangladesh batsman, filled with new cause for optimism. But local heroes Tamim Iqbal, Mohammad Ashraful, Shakib Al Hasan, Mushfiqur Rahim and Mahmudullah Riyad failed



to fire with the bat as the Tigers were bowled out for a meagre 124.

Having always admired the faster bowlers for the excitement they introduced, it was a sight to behold Mashrafe Bin Mortaza in action. The journeyman was cause for excitement and the only action and enduring memory from that game was his run-up to the crease. I have simply forgotten in what way the Bangladesh batting was dismantled even as I looked up the scorecard while sitting to write this piece.

The Tigers had made a contest of it after we had fully expected Zimbabwe to run away with the match that would lead us to exiting the stadium way before the expected duration. Mashrafe had given early breakthroughs and as the scorecard now tells me, both he and Shakib bagged three wickets each.

While re-visiting the memory, I certainly remember the re-ignition of hope after a poor batting performance and also the relief at the chance to cheer to our hearts content, enjoying the fact that the game was not just going to end fast, bringing an end to our adrenaline jump.

Alas that the Zimbabwe batting line-up produced a late game-saving performance as the Tigers lost by just two wickets. However, it was also one of those times that the team and the Big Five of Bangladesh cricket would show that they were not bowing down easy in the face of a rout. The Tigers would turn things around in the remaining two ODIs but my disappointment that Bangladesh lost the first-ever match that I attended, will remain with me.

Watkiss lends a helping hand

SPORTS REPORTER

Following head coach Jamie Day's footsteps, Bangladesh national football team's assistant coach and technical director of Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF), Stuart Watkiss, came forward to join the federation's effort of help feed the needy people during coronavirus pandemic.

"We all are experiencing difficult and strange times. I would like to send my wishes and help you. I'm aware of the BFF-taken responsibility and also the initiatives to feed needy people.

"I would like to bear tomorrow's [Sunday] lunch," Watkiss said in a video message sent by BFF.

Pressures grows for shortened IPL

AFP, New Delhi



Players are putting pressure on cricket authorities to plan a shortened Twenty20 Indian Premier League later in the year to "kickstart" the sports economy after the coronavirus lockdown.

The world's richest cricket tournament has been postponed until April 15, which coincides with the end of India's 21 day nationwide shutdown to halt the spread of the pandemic.

But with the number of cases and deaths rising and India isolated from international travel, few believe any sport will be possible in the sub-continent for at least three months.

"Let's say July-August is the earliest," said Kevin Pietersen, the former England batsman. "I do truly believe the IPL should happen. I think every single player around the world is desperate to play the IPL."

Pietersen suggested the eight-team tournament be shortened from its eight-week duration and played behind closed doors.

The league is a huge revenue earner for the BCCI and is estimated to generate more than \$11 billion for the Indian economy.



Cristiano Ronaldo got a haircut from partner Georgina Rodriguez while in quarantine. The five-time Ballon d'Or winner couldn't resist doing his infamous celebratory cry during the short clip, which was accompanied by the words "stay home and keep stylish."

PHOTO: INSTAGRAM

PL handling of pay row 'a disgrace'

AFP, London



Wayne Rooney has criticised the government and the Premier League for placing footballers in a

"no-win situation" over proposed pay cuts after a warning from players' representatives that National Health Service coffers could suffer.

The former England captain, now playing with Championship side Derby, penned an impassioned column in the Sunday Times saying his fellow professionals were "easy targets" in the wider response to the coronavirus crisis.

Rooney made it clear he had both the means and the will to make financial contributions, either in the form of salary reductions or direct donations to the NHS, but felt the public pressure being exerted on players was unhelpful.

The Premier League's suggested strategy involving a combination of pay cuts and deferrals amounting to 30 percent of wages, was discussed in a conference call with players' and managers' representatives on Saturday.

Initial talks were already ongoing before key political figures, including Health Secretary Matt Hancock, called for action.

"If the government approached me to help support nurses financially or buy ventilators I'd be proud to do so -- as long as I knew where the money was going," wrote Rooney.

He added: "I'm in a place where I could give something up. Not every footballer is in the same position. Yet suddenly the whole profession has been put on the spot with a demand for 30 percent pay cuts across the board. Why are footballers suddenly the scapegoats?"

"How the past few days have played out is a disgrace."

The Premier League has been seen as lagging behind other European leagues in its response to coronavirus and was accused by one British lawmaker of operating in a "moral vacuum".

But Rooney questioned the wisdom of the Premier League in preempting behind-the-scenes talks involving players with its own proposals for sweeping reductions.

"In my opinion it is now a no-win situation," he said. "Whatever way you look at it, we're easy targets."

England defender Danny Rose, on loan

at Newcastle from Tottenham, told the BBC players were "keen to make something happen".

The Professional Footballers' Association said its members wanted to play their part but warned that a projected 30 percent salary reduction would cost the country 200 million pounds (\$245 million) in lost tax receipts.

A PFA statement released on Saturday following the conference call said the combined tax on player salaries was a significant contribution to funding essential services.

"Taking a 30 percent salary deduction will cost the Exchequer a substantial sum," it said. "This would be detrimental to our NHS and other government-funded services." - Furlough row -

A handful of top-flight clubs, including last year's Champions League finalists Liverpool and Tottenham, have opted to furlough non-playing staff using the safety net of the government's job retention scheme.

But former Liverpool players Jamie Carragher and Stan Collymore strongly criticised the move by the European champions, who in February announced pre-tax profits of 42 million pounds (\$51 million) for 2018/19.

Rooney's former England and Manchester United teammate Gary Neville, now a leading broadcaster, was highly critical of the Premier League.

"The PL are handling the CV (coronavirus) crisis terribly," he wrote on Twitter, before outlining a checklist of perceived mis-steps including their slowness in imposing a lockdown and the "PR disaster" of furloughing.

Oliver Dowden, Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport said he was concerned about the way the talks had progressed.

He tweeted: "Concerned about the turn football talks have taken tonight. People do not want to see fighting in our national sport at a time of crisis."

"Football must play its part to show that the sport understands the pressures its lower-paid staff, communities and fans face."

The Premier League said on Friday that the 2019/20 season would only return when it was "safe and appropriate to do so".

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

Identify Covid-19 hotspots, ensure social distancing

Economists, health professionals urge govt; stimulus packages must reach the needy

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

A group of leading economists, civil society leaders and public health professionals have suggested that the government identify the hot spots of Covid-19 in the country and begin a wider communication campaign to ensure social distancing to prevent further spread of the coronavirus infection.

They also called for rightly identifying the groups of people most affected by the shutdown due to the pandemic and make sure that the government's stimulus packages reach the people who really need those.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday declared an allocation of Tk 72,750 crore under a set of stimulus packages to address the possible impact of coronavirus on the country's economy as nine people died and 88 tested positive in Bangladesh yesterday.

In a video press conference yesterday, the professionals said this is a time of national disaster and the NGOs are willing to work hand-in-hand with the government.

BRAC Chairperson Dr Hossain Zillur Rahman said it is very important to know the levels of Covid-19, which is possible via testing. Alternatively, authorities also need to identify the hot spots of the infection.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



An elderly couple sitting on the footpath in front of Sonargaon hotel in the capital yesterday, hoping that someone passing by would offer them food. Homeless people living in the city are hit the hardest by the virtual lockdown.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

STAY HOME, STAY WELL
Disinfect house to protect family

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Homes are supposed to be a safe space where people can relax. Unfortunately, people wind up bringing home the world and all its germs through exposed hands, shoes, clothing, and phones. This is all the more dangerous during the unfolding coronavirus pandemic.

The important point to note is that cleaning and disinfecting are separate things - cleaning removes dirt, food and other impurities that can contain germs, while disinfecting kills those germs.

The virus can survive on different surfaces for various lengths of time. So, even if the home looks clean, it may still harbor contaminants that could affect health.

Prof Dr Md Rafiqul Islam, head

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Getting closer to corona test kit production

Gonoshasthaya gets essential reagents from China

PORIMOL PALMA

Gonoshasthaya Kendra yesterday received the reagents that were needed to manufacture the low-cost kit developed by the organisation to detect novel coronavirus infection.

"We have got half a kilogram of reagents from a company based on China's Guangzhou. A Bangladeshi who flew from China by a US Bangla flight carried it for us," Mohib Ullah Khondoker, managing director at the Gonoshasthaya-RNA Biotech Limited, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Bangladesh embassy in China has extended all-out cooperation in this regard, he added.

"It's a great news that we have received the reagents," Mohib said, adding that they have already requested the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research to provide five samples of Covid-19 positive cases to trial the new kit.

"After testing the samples, we will hand over the kits to the Directorate General of Drug Administration (DGDA).

"The DGDA will then send the kits to the World Health Organization (WHO). After getting approval from the WHO, we can go for mass production," Mohib added.

The raw materials arrived two weeks after the DGDA issued a no-objection certificate to Gonoshasthaya-RNA Biotech Limited, a sister concern of Gonoshasthaya Kendra (GK), for its import.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES 'Help repatriation of Bangalees'



Tushar Kanti Ghosh, editor of Amrita Bazar Patrika and Sukomal Kanti Ghosh, editor of Jugantor, present some books to Bangabandhu when they call on him on April 6, 1972.

April 6, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

BANGABANDHU EXPELS 16 MCAS FROM PARTY
Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, President of Bangladesh Awami League today expels 16 Member of Constituent Assembly (MCAs) from the party for acting against the discipline, interest and directions of the party. Bangabandhu takes the decision in pursuance of power vested in him as the president of the party and the decision will come into effect immediately. Most of the expelled MCAs are known to have maintained links with the Yahya regime when all people of Bangladesh were engaged in the liberation struggle.

Obaidullah Majumdar, for example, who was elected Member of National Assembly (MNA) from Noakhali constituency, was one of the members of the Pakistani Governor Dr Malek's so-called Council of Ministers. He is now in custody.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

COVID-19 OUTBREAK Callousness of a few puts many lives at risk

WASIM BIN HABIB and MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Dhaka city has been virtually paused. Streets are almost empty, shops shuttered, restaurants closed, families cloistered at home -- all attempted to slow the spread of the new coronavirus.

Many people in the city have had to

postpone their planned celebrations -- from birthdays to weddings -- as they took the stay-home and social distancing orders seriously.

But, some people, who are not in dire need to go out, are still venturing out into public spaces, aimlessly roaming on the otherwise empty streets and gossiping in groups,

oblivious to the danger they could be in.

Despite the patrol of law enforcers and army personnel, these people were spotted hanging out or having a chit-chat in narrow allies and on some roads in the city over the last two days.

Yesterday afternoon, a group of six

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



A motorist rides through a disinfection tunnel during a government-imposed nationwide lockdown as a preventive measure against the Covid-19 coronavirus in Chennai, India yesterday. Inset, police officials walk through the disinfection tunnel.



PHOTO: AFP

Twelve killed in Kashmir violence

AFP, Srinagar

Nine suspected militants and three soldiers were killed in two separate incidents in Indian-administered Kashmir, officials said yesterday, as authorities enforced a lockdown to combat the spread of the coronavirus pandemic.

Kashmir, a restive region claimed by nuclear rivals India and Pakistan, had already been under a long-running curfew imposed to quell unrest as New Delhi scrapped the Himalayan valley's semi-autonomous status on August 5.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



PRAYER TIMING APRIL 6

Fajr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4:40	12:45	4:45	6:21	7:45
JAMAAT 5:15	1:15	5:00	6:24	8:15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

গণবিজ্ঞপ্তি

- আপনার জ্বর, হাঁচি, কাশি, সর্দি, গলা ব্যথা, শ্বাসকষ্ট ইত্যাদি সমস্যা হলে নিকটস্থ হাসপাতালের মোবাইল নম্বরে কল করুন। সম্ভবহিসাবে করোনাকারীদের আক্রান্ত ব্যক্তির ব্যক্তিকে ঘিরে নমনীয় সতর্কতা করা হবে।
- ঘরে বসে চিকিৎসকের পরামর্শ নিতে কল করুন ১৬২৬৩৩ (স্বাস্থ্য বাতায়ন) বা ৩৩৩ নাম্বারে অথবা IEDCR এর Hot Number '10655' বা ০১৯৪৪৩৩৩২২২ নাম্বারে।
- বিশেষ ফেরত ব্যক্তি অথবা জ্বর, হাঁচি-কাশি ও সর্দিতে আক্রান্ত ব্যক্তিদের মসজিদে না যেতে পরামর্শ প্রদান করেছে বাংলাদেশ ইসলামিক ফাউন্ডেশন (ইফা)।
- সামাজিক দূরত্ব বজায় রাখুন, পরস্পরের মধ্যে কমপক্ষে তিন (৩) ফুট দূরত্ব বজায় রেখে চলুন।
- মাস্ক পরার আগে ভালোভাবে হাত সাবান পানি দিয়ে পরিষ্কার করুন। মাস্ক হাত নিয়ে স্পর্শ করবেন না। মাস্ক খোলার সময় পিছল নিক থেকে মুখ এবং চাকলায়ুজ ডাস্টবিনে ফেলে দিন এবং সাবান পানি দিয়ে কমপক্ষে ২০ সেকেন্ড হাত পরিষ্কার করুন।
- মুখের লাম্বা দিয়ে ঢাকা শোনা ও বইয়ের পাতা উল্টানো বন্ধ করুন। বাড়িতে অবস্থান কালে ধর্মীয় রীতিনীতি পালন, শারীরিক ব্যায়াম করা, বই পড়া, গান শোনা, সঠিক হিসোলনমূলক কাজে নিজেকে ব্যস্ত রাখুন।
- বাচ্চাদের স্বাস্থ্য বিধি শিখান এবং তাদেরকে ঘরে রাখতে খেলাধুলা, গল্প, ছড়া, শিকার ও বিশোলনমূলক কাজের সাথে সম্পৃক্ত রাখুন।
- বিশেষ ফেরত ব্যক্তি বা ইতিমধ্যে কোভিড-১৯ এ আক্রান্ত ব্যক্তির সংস্পর্শে আসা সকলকে ১৪ দিন কোয়ারেন্টাইনে থাকা নিশ্চিত করুন এবং কোয়ারেন্টাইনমুক্ত ব্যক্তির সাথে স্বাভাবিক আচরণ করুন।
- বাহির থেকে এসে কোন কিছু স্পর্শ না করে সাবান পানি দিয়ে হাত বৌত করুন এবং পরিধানের কাপড় সাবান পানিতে আধা ঘণ্টা ডিজিজে রেখে ধুয়ে দিন। সম্ভব হলে ঘরে ফিরে সাবান দিয়ে গোসল করে দিন।
- জ্বর, সর্দি, হাঁচি-কাশি, গলাব্যথা বা গা হ্যাঙ্কময়াজ ডাব হলে এবং শ্বাসকষ্ট না থাকলে বাড়িতে থাকুন। জ্বর কমানোর জন্য পারাসিটামল ও সর্দি-কাশির জন্য একিহিস্টামিন (যেমন ফেন্সোফেনাডিন, গ্লোরফেনিরাডিন ইত্যাদি) খেতে পারেন। গলা ব্যথায় কুসুম গরম পানি পান করুন। গরম পানি দিয়ে গড়গড় করতে পারেন। বাড়িতে অভিজিদের আসা বন্ধ করুন। ঘন ঘন সাবান পানি দিয়ে কমপক্ষে ২০ সেকেন্ড হাত ধুতে হবে। হাত নিয়ে নাক, চোখ, মুখ ছোঁবেন না।

আতঙ্কিত না হয়ে সতর্ক হ'উন ও ধৈর্য্য ধারণ করুন। নিজ গৃহে অবস্থান করুন। করোনা সংক্রমণ প্রতিরোধ করুন।

স্বাস্থ্য অধিদপ্তর
স্বাস্থ্য ও পরিবার কল্যাণ মন্ত্রণালয়