





# Hard times for expat workers

Thousands face shortage of food, essentials amid Covid-19 pandemic

RASHIDUL HASAN and JAMIL MAHMUD

Several thousand Bangladeshi migrant workers in the Middle East, Italy and some Southeast Asian countries are facing acute shortage of food and other essential commodities as their income sources remained shut amid shutdown enforced by the countries to contain coronavirus spread.

The Middle East and Southeast Asian countries include Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Jordan, Qatar, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Brunei and Malaysia.

Against this backdrop, the Bangladesh missions in those countries have come forward with food assistance after being instructed by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, said sources at the mission offices.

Golam Moshi, Bangladeshi ambassador to Saudi Arabia, said the prime minister asked the foreign ministry to extend support to Bangladeshi expatriates in different countries.

As per the instruction, the expatriates' welfare and overseas employment ministry has so far allocated about Tk 4.5 crore, he told this newspaper over phone on Wednesday.

The Saudi embassy received about Tk 80 lakh from the allocation and bought food packages for 1,000 Bangladeshis living in Riyadh and Jeddah, he said.

With each package a person would be able to survive for 20 days, Moshi said, adding the Saudi mission would gradually extend the food assistance initiative to other major cities in the Gulf country.

The ambassador said the mission already circulated on

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Ignoring the advice of social distancing to slow the spread of coronavirus, buyers and sellers, both wholesale and retail, crowd a street near Karwan Bazar in the capital around 7:00am yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## MIGRANTS IN ISOLATION Singapore to give food, free treatment, salaries

JAMIL MAHMUD and PORIMOL PALMA

The Singapore government has promised food, wages, and treatment costs of Bangladeshi migrant workers who are in isolation in the country's dormitories.

The decision comes after a surge in coronavirus cases at the workers' dormitories.

"We are maintaining regular contact with various departments of the Singapore government regarding your [workers] overall condition. They have assured us of the three things," Bangladesh High Commissioner in Singapore Mustafizur Rahman yesterday said in a video message to the workers.

Singapore saw 287 new coronavirus cases on Thursday, a record for the country. About 70 percent of the infections were linked to foreign workers' dormitories, reports The Straits Times.

The Singapore government declared five dorms -- Tampines Dormitory, Sungei Tengah Lodge, S11 Dormitory in Punggol, Westlite Toh Guan and Toh Guan -- as isolation facilities to prevent the spread or possible outbreak of Covid-19.

Residents of these lodgings were ordered to remain in their rooms for 14 days.

The number of Bangladeshi workers living in those dorms remain unknown.

Singapore is home to around two lakh Bangladeshis, mostly employed in the construction sector.

According to foreign ministry sources, at least 244 Bangladeshi migrant workers in Singapore have been diagnosed with coronavirus.

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## Many Rohingyas gather at border to enter Ukhiya

BGB steps up patrol

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Some couple of hundred Rohingyas have allegedly gathered across the Myanmar border on the other side of Naf river to enter Bangladesh.

The Border Guard Bangladesh said they came to know that a group of Rohingyas were trying to enter Bangladesh through Ukhiya border on Thursday night, said Lt Col Ali Haider Azad Ahmed, commanding officer of BGB-32 battalion.

BGB members have beefed up patrolling along the Anjumanpara border as no new Rohingya will be allowed to enter Bangladesh, he said.

Meanwhile, local people took position on several points of Ukhiya and Teknaf border in Cox's Bazar to assist the border guard members.

Palongkhali Union Parishad chairman M Gafur Uddin Chowdhury said some Bangladeshi fishermen reported to the local representatives after seeing several hundred Rohingyas waiting in the Myanmar territory to enter Bangladesh.

Saiful Islam Saif, upazila nirbahi officer in Teknaf, said they would take necessary steps in this regard.

## FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

### 'All shades of opinion will be considered'



Bangabandhu speaking at the inaugural session of the Constituent Assembly of Bangladesh on April 10, 1972.

APRIL 10 & 11, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

### GONOPARISHAD OF BANGLADESH COMMENCED

The first Constituent Assembly of Bangladesh commences its session on April 10, 1972, with a promise to give the new nation a constitution on the basis of four pillars of the state policy: nationalism, socialism, democracy and secularism. Prime Minister Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who is also the leader of the house, tells the house that all shades of opinion will be taken into consideration in framing the constitution. The discussion will

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## 2 girls raped in Jashore, B'baria

2 suspects held

STAR REPORT

Two minor girls were allegedly raped in Brahmanbaria and Jashore on Thursday, and two suspects were detained in these connections.

In Brahmanbaria, a nine-year-old girl was allegedly raped in Sonarampur village of Ashuganj upazila on Thursday evening.

Police later detained Liton Mia, 25, a rickshaw puller, in this connection.

Javed Mahmud, officer-in-charge of Ashuganj Police Station, told The Daily Star that the girl was playing near a rice mill in Sonarampur village. At that time, Liton came there and took her to a paddy field where he raped her.

"The accused fled leaving the victim in the field. On information, victim's mother rescued her in a critical condition and took her to the police station."

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## STAY HOME, STAY WELL

### Fight against the 'infodemic'

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Falsehoods and rumours thrive during a crisis and even more when the crisis revolves around a threatening disease.

Much like the virus itself, misinformation is spreading quickly during the coronavirus outbreak.

Media experts say misinformation is so dangerous that it could threaten people's lives.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) is warning of an "infodemic" after an influx of misinformation online about the novel coronavirus.

The WHO described it as "an overabundance of information -- some accurate and some not -- that makes it hard for people to find trustworthy sources and reliable guidance when they need it".

Recently, a number of rumours have surfaced on social media platforms. To prevent this, law enforcers have started working at the field level.

"Rumours and hoaxes promising false cures cause panic amid uncertainty," Shabnam Azim, associate professor of Department of Mass Communication and Journalism at Dhaka University, told The Daily Star.

Shabnam said misinformation is spreading in

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### PRAYER TIMING APRIL 11

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha  
AZAN 4:35 12:45 4:45 6:24 7:45  
JAMAAT 5:10 1:15 5:00 6:28 8:15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

## VAT offices to remain open April 12-15

Only to facilitate submission of VAT returns, says NBR

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) will keep its VAT offices open from April 12 to April 15 to facilitate submission of VAT returns for the month.

A NBR press release made the decision public yesterday, hours after the government extended general holiday for the third time to slowdown the spread of Covid-19.

The NBR directive will prompt over 370 VAT offices to remain open across the country.

Meanwhile, the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) urged NBR to extend the deadline for VAT returns submission without penalty on Thursday.

The apex trade body said it would not be possible for many business entities to furnish VAT return on due time because of

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Although there is fear all around over coronavirus, farmers are not confining themselves indoors. They are growing crops to feed the nation. In this picture taken on Thursday, a farmer is seen spraying pesticides on his paddy in Mohanpur village of Dinajpur.

PHOTO: STAR

## Indo-Pak border fighting escalates

REUTERS, New Delhi

Indian and Pakistani troops in disputed Kashmir are engaged in their most frequent cross-border fighting of at least two years, official data shows, even as both nuclear-armed rivals battle surging coronavirus outbreaks.

Kashmir has long been a flashpoint between the neighbours but tension was renewed after New Delhi withdrew the autonomy of the Himalayan region last August and split it into federally-administered territories.

Both countries claim the region in full, but rule only parts, and often accuse each other of breaching a 2003 ceasefire pact by shelling and firing across the Line of Control (LoC), an informal border in Kashmir, and of killing dozens every year.

Indian Army data reviewed by Reuters shows 411 ceasefire violations by Pakistan's military in March, the highest number in a single month since at least 2018. That compares with 267 violations in March last year recorded by the Indian Army.

"(The) Pakistan Army never initiates ceasefire violations along LoC, but it has always responded belligerently to Indian Army's unprovoked firing," said Major-General Babar Ifkhar, of the public relations wing of the Pakistan Army.

Ifkhar said Pakistan's military had recorded 705 ceasefire violations by the Indian Army since the beginning of the year.

The Indian Army data showed 1,197 Pakistani violations during the same period.

Reuters is not in a position to independently verify the competing claims.

Four Indian army officials said the heightened border activity was a cover to help militants from Pakistan-backed groups infiltrate into Indian Kashmir, as some troops help to run health camps and hand out food in the battle on

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