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GOVT RESPONSE Mired in **MISSTEPS**

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WASIM BIN HABIB and TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

KING'S

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The government's response to the coronavirus outbreak has been plagued by inappropriate decisions, delayed actions and muddled thinking -- right from the beginning.

When the virus began to spread at an exponential rate from China's Wuhan -- the ground zero for the global pandemic -- to other countries in January, responsible ministers and government officials in Bangladesh assured people that "adequate measures" were taken and that "we are prepared".

On January 27, Health Minister Zahid Maleque urged the countrymen not to worry about Covid-19 and said, "We are working so that the virus cannot enter Bangladesh. The government is fully ready to face the situation even if the virus infects anyone."

Then again on February 3, he said Bangladesh took all necessary measures to prevent coronavirus from entering the country. "The situation at present is nothing to panic about. Even if it [the virus] comes, we're fully prepared," he said at a seminar in the capital's Segunbagicha.

Those words of assurance kept flowing even after the crisis began to unfold in the country. On March 20, Information Minister Dr Hasan Mahmud at a press briefing in Chattogram said, "Bangladesh has taken various steps and the situation in our country is still better than many other countries."

Three months down the line, those words appear to ring hollow as the country sees a surge in the number of Covid-19 cases with the measures turning out to be inadequate to fight against the deadly virus.

The authorities got three months. But they could not make adequate preparation and trailed behind in taking decisions like closing airports, sending expats to compulsory quarantine and imposing total shutdown.

There was a clear evidence of lax coordination among the government organisations in most of the steps taken. Many of its efforts now made it clear that the government could not fully grasp the gravity of the situation. SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



asked the driver to open the cargo hold in Nayabazar area of the capital yesterday. Indeed they were right. People illegally

All Parjatan hotels now free for the health staff

12 PAGES PRICE : TK12.00

Rashidul Hasan and Tuhin Shubhra Adhikary

Healthcare employees treating Covid-19 patients may stay in the hotels and motels of Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation for free.

The 22 hotels and motels across the country have been prepared to host them as per government instruction, said Ram Chandra Das, chairman of Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation.

the government instructed, they have kept prepared all of them. The health department

was looking for residential facilities for doctors and other employees engaged in the treatment of Covid-19 patients. Local administration

will be able to use the facilities for doctors and other health staffers whenever they need, Das said.

BPC's hotels and motels are in Dhaka, Khagrachari, SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Developed countries in Europe, North America, and East Asia, known for their strong healthcare systems, are today grappling to contain the deadly coronavirus. Bangladesh, where the healthcare system is not as developed, too is facing a rising number of Covid-19 cases. How should we go about addressing this crisis? Prof Dr Rashid-E-Mahbub, chairman of the National Committee on Health Rights Movement and former president of the Bangladesh Medical Association, shares his views with

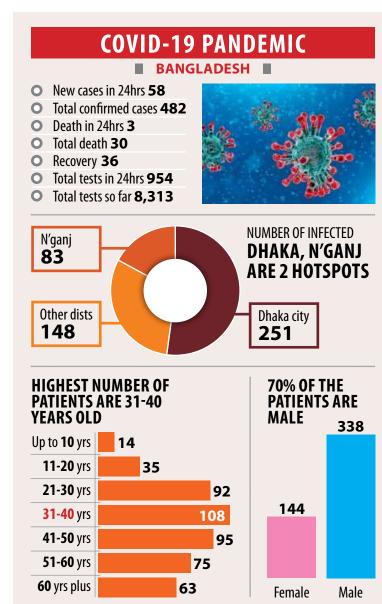
Some places on self-imposed lockdown

MUNTAKIM SAAD

Amid a gradual spread of Covid-19 cases, community groups in different areas in the capital are locking down streets and buildings by their own to ward off the looming crisis.

Bamboo barricades have been erected at the mouth of the streets and alleys in several areas while entry gates to many roads and passages were found to be locked in several areas, including Mohammadpur,

ross the country until vesterday 251 52 percent of the total infection. In such a situation, police are locking down the areas and buildings wherever any Covid-19 patients are found. But in some areas, building owners and community leaders have stepped up to limit movement without waiting for police and administration. Although many lauded the initiatives, some said it would hamper several emergency services, including the movement of ambulances, in those areas. Building owners in Mohammadpur's Iqbal Road and Sir Syed Road have closed five out of six entrances in the area. Only one gate near Mohammadpur Post Office was found open.



Three die in 24hrs, 58 new cases

Chaitra 29, 1426 BS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three more people died from Covid-19 and 58 new cases were reported yesterday with the government scrambling to expand testing facilities to grassroots level and set up facilities to treat coronavirus patients. The total number of

deaths in the coronavirus outbreak now stands at 30 and total cases at 482, Prof Meerjady Sabrina Flora, director of the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease

TDS: How do you analyse the present coronavirus situation in Bangladesh?

Dr Rashid: From the situation of other countries, I can say that cases here will reach their peak in the next one to two weeks. But the question is if we are prepared to deal with it. Daily testing capacity has increased significantly, which is good. But I would suggest the authorities conduct mass screening of people in areas now under lockdown. The government should go for antibody testing, which is based either on detection of proteins from the Covid-19 virus in respiratory samples (e.g. sputum, throat swab) or detection, in blood or serum, of human antibodies generated in response to the virus. Those found positive should be isolated and others should be under observation. The US and India have already approved antibody testing. Also, the government should have a prediction of the number of cases and prepare a fitting plan to address it. The problem we are facing now is that

Go for mass tests in locked-down areas

Porimol Palma of The Daily Star. not all people are realising the

need for isolation or home quarantine -- this needs to be enforced strictly. TDS: The rising number of

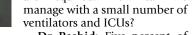
cases means more ventilators and intensive care units (ICUs) are required. How can we

Mirpur, Banasree, Niketan, Shantinagar, Dhanmondi and some parts of Old Dhaka. Among 482 Covid-19 cases reported from 67 areas in Dhaka city, which is about

Jontrol and Research (IEDCR), said in a daily bulletin. One of the three

deceased was from Dhaka while the others from elsewhere. They were aged 38, 55 and 74, she said. The capital continues to remain the worst affected with 14 new cases, bringing the total number of cases in the city to 251, which is almost 52 percent of all detected cases in the country. Eight of the newly

detected cases were reported in Narayanganj. SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



Dr Rashid: Five percent of the cases could require ICU. Government hospitals have some 500 ICU beds. It's difficult to install ICUs overnight, but whatever we have, these can serve well if there are proper technicians and trained doctors. But you cannot get trained technicians and doctors so quickly unless the government has a proper plan and experts are recruited to provide hands-on training. All the ICUs should be functional in order to save lives.

TDS: Under the present conditions, many hospitals or health professionals are refusing patients with Covid-19 symptoms. In some cases, patients have died though SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

7 die after showing virus-like symptoms STAR REPORT

The Auly Star

At least seven people, including a 6-month-old child, died after showing Covid-19 symptoms in six districts since Friday afternoon.

Meanwhile, two people, including a policeman in Manikganj, and an Italy-returnee in Noakhali, who died on Thursday, had tested positive for Coronavirus yesterday.

Local health and administration officials collected the samples from the victims' bodies and locked down their family members and neighbours to prevent the risk of spreading coronavirus.

In Brahmanbaria, a 35-year-old woman died of respiratory disease at her rented house in the town's Kawtoli area yesterday morning.

In Khulna, a 6-monthold child died of fever, cough and pneumonia at the Corona Isolation Unit of Khulna Medical College SEE PAGE 2 COL 6



A homeless family cooking whatever they could gather on a stove made of three bricks on the central reservation of a street in Kamalapur area of the capital yesterday. The Covid-19 outbreak has put the lowerincome group in a dire state.

PHOTO: **SK ENAMUL HAQ**

BORO HARVEST Labour crisis worries farmers

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

The labour shortage created by the current shutdown is worrying farmers ahead of the Boro paddy harvest, despite different measures taken by the government to ensure maximum crop yield.

Although the agricultural ministry is making special arrangements for transportation of labourers from different districts to the country's granaries, labour leaders are unwilling to leave home fearing coronavirus infection.

Even the ministry's sanctioning of Tk 110 crore to help farmers buy harvester machines at a subsidy might do little to ease the crisis as small and marginalised rice producers, especially in the haor region, cannot afford such investments.

Harvest of Boro paddy, the principal crop of the country, starts in the haor region in a week, in the Chalanbeel area of the north in two weeks and in other parts of the country in May, agriculturists and farmers say.

Every year, farm labourers from different regions, particularly from Rangpur, Rajshahi, Dhaka, and Barishal divisions, go to the haors to harvest boro before flash floods inundate the area by the end of April.

The labourers then rush to the Chalan Beel area, other plain lands and Barind region for the same work.

But this year, farmer Akbar Hossain from the haor area of Sunamganj district's Jamalganj upazila could not find any labourer with just a week left before the harvest of his boro paddy, cultivated on 50 acres of land.

'No labour leader could assure me of anything. If I can't find labourers, the flood will wash away my paddy," he feared.

Ali Hossain, a farmer of Chalan Beel are in Natore's Shingra, cultivated boro paddy on 31 acres of land. He SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

virus

the district.

offices.

Relief rice theft amid raging Covid-19 crisis

At a time when the country is struggling to deal with the coronavirus crisis amid shutdown, some public representatives and Open Market Sale (OMS) dealers have been misappropriating rice meant for vulnerable group feeding and OMS projects

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enforcers and local Law administrations have so far revealed at least 22 incidents of stealing rice in 20 upazilas and recovered 2,832 sacks of rice, each containing 50 kg, in the last 12 days

Police have so far arrested 24 people, including 10 public representatives, in connection with those incidents. Most of the other arrestees are local Awami League leaders, their relatives and close aides.

Such acts of misappropriating rice during the ongoing crisis have drawn huge criticism from the users of social media.

Yesterday, police arrested two traders for hoarding a huge quantity of essentials, which were meant to be sold by the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) in Rangpur city.

Police also recovered 30 cartons of bottled soybean oil and two sacks of sugar, each sack containing 50 kg.

Proshad, Uttam deputy commissioner of Rangpur DB, said they raided the house of a man around 1:00pm yesterday and arrested him for hoarding the essentials at a toilet of his home.

Police said the arrestee purchased the TCB products at cheaper prices and had been selling those to customers at much higher prices.

On Friday, police picked up a rice dealer and his abettor in Netrakona's Kendua upazila for allegedly stealing 90 sacks of rice meant for selling at Tk 10 per kg. The sacks contained 4,500 kg of rice.

The arrestees are Aminur Rahman Shakil, 45, the dealer; and Saiful Mia, 40, a scrap vendor of Aamlotola village in Kendua. Aminur is son of Boailbari union Awami League General Secretary Abu Bakar Siddique.

In Bogura, police arrested a local

All Parjatan

FROM PAGE 1

Bandarban, Rangamati, Cox's Bazar, Kuakata, Rajshahi, Dinajpur, Rangpur, Bogura, Benapole, Sylhet, Meherpur and Tungipara.

The facilities have around 750 beds, a BPC official said.

"Although we are offering our facilities for a great cause, we are a little worried about the protection of our staff," the official said, wishing anonymity.

He hopes the government would take necessary steps to ensure the health safety of BPC employees.

Some doctors, dealing with BPC's Hotel Abakash in the capital's

Krishak League leader from Sonatola upazila a few days ago in possession of 50 sacks of rice which was meant to be distributed among the people from low income families.

Besides, 115 sacks of rice were seized in Jamalpur's Melandaha upazila, 90 in Pirganj of Rangpur, 14 in Pabna's Saltha, and 87 in Tarail of Kishoreganj.

The stealing has reached such a level that the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has decided to monitor the situation and bring involved in the misappropriation to book.

Asked about the situation, State Minister for Disaster Management and Relief Enamur Rahman said it was really unfortunate that a section of people was getting involved in such activities despite the warning from the prime minister.

"No rice meant for relief has been stolen yet. The incidents revealed so far showed that OMS and VGF rice had been misappropriated. We have instructed all district administrations to monitor the situation strictly," the state minister said.

Meanwhile, the local government ministry in a statement yesterday said stern actions would be taken against those involved in corruption in relief distribution.

Dr Ifekharuzzaman, executive director of Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), said such a national crisis was expected to bring out the best of human virtues -- empathy, solidarity and philanthropy, which are seen around in many ways.

But most regrettably, the worst of human vices also came out now, which was not unexpected at all, he added.

"No words are enough to condemn that many of those involved in abuse of power, misappropriation and other forms of immorality and illegality are public representatives and OMS dealers who are also often politically linked.'

The TIB executive director said those beople must be brought to justice.

On March 31, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said she would not tolerate any corruption in relief distribution.

hospitals in the capital.

The hospitals are Kuwait-Bangladesh Maitree Hospital, Kurmitola General Hospital, Sheikh Russel Gastro Liver Institute and Hospital, Dhaka Mohanagar General Hospital (Naya Bazar) and Maternal & Child Health Training & Research Institute, Lalkuthi, Mirpur.

Over 50 doctors working at Kuwait-Bangladesh Maitree Hospital are staying at a private hotel and a prominent media reported that some cooks and employees fled the hotel fearing coronavirus infection.

Aminul Hasan said, "We are looking coronavirus patients, have started using for hotels for the accommodation of doctors and other health staffers."

Mired in missteps

FROM PAGE 1

Let's take a look at the steps the authorities had missed and how it mishandled the situation

In January, when countries like China -- epicentre of the virus at that time -- and South Korea responded with drastic measures, cutting themselves off from the world, the authorities in Bangladesh let flights from China and other Covid-19-affected countries to fly

The flight operations continued in Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka until March 29.

At that time, the authorities claimed that they had scaled up screening and testing measures of the incoming international passengers at airport.

The airport authorities, in fact, had only one operational scanner in January and February. Finally, in mid-March, they got six scanners. What they actually had done in the name of "testing" was checking body temperature with handheld infrared thermometers.

Then came the quarantine fiasco. The government was right to place more than 300 Bangladeshis stranded in Chinese city of Wuhan under 14-day quarantine at Ashkona Hajj Camp after they returned on February 1.

But it did not follow the same protocol when thousands of returnees from many European countries especially Italy, another epicentre for coronavirus, flew to Bangladesh in middle of March.

Without putting them in mandatory quarantine, the government just let the returnees go home, asking them to maintain self-quarantine. But there was no monitoring mechanism whatsoever.

More than 2 lakh people entered Bangladesh since March.

these people roamed freely around in

their localities and did other chores factories. along with his family members, leaving

people in their localities exposed to the

media, the authorities asked civil

surgeons to take help from local

administration to force the expatriates

A number of confirmed cases are

now being reported from different

districts. Madaripur became one of

the biggest hotspots in the country

as a large number of Bangladeshi

As there was a surge in the number

of positive cases, the government in

its desperate bid to stem the spread

of virus came up with major decision

of closing down public and private

holiday to be effective from March 26.

The next day, it suspended train, launch

and air services, but kept the public

As a result, tens of thousands of

Experts at that time labelled

people left Dhaka in crammed buses

and other transports after having

government's efforts as piecemeal in

nature and not carefully coordinated

as it did not take adequate measure to

dissuade people to stay home before

people could help spread the highly

contagious virus to the remote places

They believe that such an exodus of

Then came another severe blow to

Thousands of garment workers,

the holiday began, returned in similar

announcing holiday.

the already fragile situation.

of the country.

possibly been exposed to the virus.

transports open until March 26.

On March 23, it announced a general

expatriates returned to their homes in

to keep in home quarantine properly.

By this time, it was too late.

When the reports surfaced in the

But as they trudged back to Dhaka in the evening, many of them found their factories closed.

Although the government extended the holiday to April 14, the apex body of the garment industry gave no message to the workers. Instead, they waited for the government to announce the decision of closure of garment factories.

While many of the workers returned and many others stayed in Dhaka, the police closed the entry and exit points of the city.

Finally, the government ordered closure of all garment factories until April 14. But by this time maximum damage may have been inflicted.

When many counties including Saudi Arabia ordered its citizens to say prayers at home, the authorities in Bangladesh kept allowing people to go to mosques.

It took the authorities four weeks since the first case confirmation to come up with an order that allowed only those employed by mosques to offer daily or Juma prayers there.

Even now they seem not to be fully in control. A lack of coordination among government bodies continue to pose a major challenge in implementing the plans.

Health Minister Zahid Maleque, who is the chief of the National Committee on Covid-19, had to express his helplessness, saying nothing other than the health issues were discussed with them.

People are still crowding market places and thoroughfares ignoring the risk of getting infected while screenings to find out coronavirus positives and isolation units across the country are still not adequate.

who went home in hordes as soon as Meanwhile, the country continues fashion on April 3 because the garment to see a steady uptick in coronavirus owners announced to open their cases.

professionals, but this is not the time

to discuss that. PPE has to be ensured.

addressed?

TDS: What else should be urgently

Dr Rashid: There are efforts to

increase hospital beds for Covid-19

patients but I think things are not

moving fast enough. As the number

of patients goes up, more beds will

be required for their treatment. If

necessary, members of the armed

forces should be assigned to prepare

of all those involved in fighting

coronavirus is a must. Also, the

government has to maintain

transparency in what it does and about

Apart from this, strong coordination

hospitals for this purpose.

14 percent in low-income group have no food left

Finds Brac survey

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some 14 percent of the country's lowincome group people saw their food stock turned down to empty amid countrywide shutdown enforced by the government to contain coronavirus spread, according to a Brac survey report.

Besides, the extreme poverty rate in the country also increased by 60 percent amid the emerging situation, Brac said, issuing a press release on Friday.

The survey was conducted on 2,675 people belong to low-income group in all 64 districts from March 31 to April 5.

Low-income people are suffering great losses in their earnings since the enforcement of shutdown, it said.

Brac Advocacy for Social Change Programme conducted the survey with support from its Microfinance and Urban Development Programme as well as Partnership Strengthening Unit.

According to the survey, the average household income of the respondents was Tk 14,599 before the pandemic.

Of the respondents, 93 percent respondents reported a decline in income due to the outbreak.

In March 2020, their average income stood at Tk 3,742, which represents an average 75 percent decline from their family income of last month.

The report also said due to the shutdown, 72 percent respondents reported job losses or reduced work opportunities.

Eight percent of the respondents who are still employed have not received their payments, it said.

Non-agricultural wage labour experienced 77 percent more loss of income than wage labourers in agriculture sector.

A total of 51 percent of rickshawpullers, 58 percent factory workers, 66 percent hotel or restaurant workers, and 62 percent day labourers in nonagricultural sectors reported their income had reduced to zero in the current month.

The survey also found that most people did not have any idea about the directive that one should not directly go to any health facility with symptoms of the infection.

"Only 29 percent said they would ask the patient to call the helpline," it said. Recommendations

The survey came up with a number of recommendations to overcome the crisis.

It said large-scale awareness campaigns prevention, on

management and treatment should run on TV and social media. "Food assistance must immediately

Talking to The Daily Star, he said, paddy prices as he could not find buyers needs 25 labourers for seven days for labourers, who work at the cities and for his future produce yet.

As there was no effective monitoring,

Go for mass tests in locked-down areas FROM PAGE 1 equipment], as well as food and and their sense of pride. Till now, some blame has been placed on health

they did not have coronavirus. How do you explain this?

Dr Rashid: This problem has been there since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. People with cold and respiratory troubles went from hospital to hospital but were not treated or admitted until they were declared free of coronavirus.

I would suggest to have designated hospitals for such patients in all the divisions -- district hospitals or medical college hospitals can be dedicated for them. They should be quickly diagnosed and isolated, if found infected.

However, doctors, nurses, and healthcare technologists, who will come in contact with them, will need to have special arrangements including PPE [personal protective accommodation in a separate facility. They will need to work in turns -for example, one group will work for seven days and then will stay in institutional quarantine for 14 days while the other group works. A lot of healthcare personnel will be required to execute this plan.

TDS: There is a sense of fear among health personnel, who are on the frontlines attending Covid-19 patients. How can this fear be addressed?

Dr Rashid: Boosting the morale of health professionals is very important. government has declared The special incentives for the healthcare professionals, which should have been done even earlier. Nevertheless, it is good; it was necessary.

However, more important for the the evolving situation. There is no health professionals is their protection, alternative to free flow of information.

Labour crisis worries farmers

Mohakhali since Thursday, officials said.

"These hotels and motels had been empty since the coronavirus outbreak. If these hotels and motels can be used for the accommodation of doctors and other health employees in this national crisis, it would be of great satisfaction," Das said.

However, experts said the authorities must ensure the safety of the BPC staff first. Otherwise, coronavirus may get transmitted from there.

Bangladesh has been witnessing a sharp rise in deaths and new cases over the last few days. A total of 482 people tested positive for coronavirus until yesterday, of them, 30 had died.

The government has designated several hospitals for the treatment of patients infected by the highly contagious virus. Experts recommend special residential facilities for the doctors and other health staff to prevent infection to their family members and others.

Aminul Hasan, director (hospital) at Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) said coronavirus infected patients are now being treated at five

Some places

FROM PAGE 1

Similar restrictions were seen in Lalmatia areas as the alleys were closed with bamboos.

There were notices at the gates asking people to wash their hands before entering the area.

A gate adjacent to Aarong was kept open for entry and another gate near Dhanmondi Road 16 (old 27) for the exit.

Rasel Shikder, a resident of Lalmatia, told this correspondent that they have initiated the restriction to create awareness in the locality.

The scenario seemed quite similar in Old Dhaka where community groups have beefed up restriction in several areas, including Lalbagh, Azimpur, Bangshal, Wari and Sutrapur.

Many building owners in Mirpur, Banasree, Niketan, Shantinagar and Dhanmondi areas have also restricted movement by their own initiative. Dwellers can't go outside without urgent needs.

No strangers, housemaids and guests are being allowed to enter some residential buildings, locals said.

Even courier services or deliverymen are being barred from entering the

Prof Muzaherul Huq, former adviser (Southeast Asia Region) of the World Health Organization, said as per the ideal practice, doctors and other health employees treating Covid-19 patients, must be quarantined to prevent

ransmission of the virus. The authorities would ensure residential and other essential services to the doctors at the hospital where they would work and none of them would go outside, he said.

There should be four teams of doctors, of which one team would remain as reserve force and after working for 14 days, the four teams would be replaced by four other teams, he said.

Then the previous four teams would be in quarantine for 14 days before meeting their families and would join work after one or two weeks, he added.

Covid-19 Hospitals treating patients, must have the facilities, he

"If making residential facilities at hospitals isn't possible, they [doctors] can be kept at hotels, but similar safety measures must be taken there," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

buildings.

"We are facing this trouble for the last few days," he said a deliveryman at Foodpanda.

The first lockdown in the capital was put in Mirpur's Uttar Tolerbagh area after a 73-year-old man died in Covid-19 on March 21. The next day, a local community group locked down the area by their own and restricted the movement.

According to the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research, Tolarbagh is one of the hotspots for coronavirus in Dhaka and there are 19 Covid-19 patients now

Dhaka Metropolitan Police put 54 areas under lockdown following the virus outbreak. All kinds of shops except pharmacies were kept shut.

Police said such initiatives from the community is laudable.

"It's good if the community becomes aware and goes into selfimposed lockdown to contain the virus outbreak. But we have to be careful so that no emergency service is hampered," Masudur Rahman, deputy commissioner (Media) of DMP, told The Daily Star.

harvesting his paddy at the end of this month.

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"I am very worried. I have become tired of calling the labourers. None assured me of coming to work," he said. Labourer Abdus Samad from Pabna's Chatmohor wants to go to Shingra for the harvest but could not find any vehicle.

Labour leader Bhabani Kanta Sen of Patgram in Lalmonirhat district is also facing the same problem. He has been travelling to haor areas of Sylhet division during every boro harvest for the last one decade and leads a group of 20 farm hands for the last couple of years.

"I never witnessed a situation like this. Most of us are afraid of visiting the haors of Sylhet as we think that area is risky [for virus infection]," he said.

"We can't go out of our village [under law enforcers' watch]. No vehicles are plying on the roads," Bhabani said, adding that they also do not have the money to travel.

Each labourer of Bhabani's group used to earn around Tk 30,000 working for 25 days during the harvest. But this year, Bhanbani is willing to let go of the income.

"Lives are more valuable than money. We can earn money if we survive," he said. MEASURES BY MINISTRY

Officials of the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE), however, said they are providing safe transportation to agricultural workers. Director General Md Abdul Muyeed of DAE informed The Daily Star that in the second week of April they have already transported around 200 labourers from Rangpur and Pabna to the haor areas of Sylhet following

health safety measures by keeping them at distance in buses and providing them with masks. But Md Safar Uddin, DAE deputy

director of Sunamganj district, said the initiative for transporting labourers from outside the Sylhet region was discouraged in a meeting on April 6 to stem coronavirus spread.

The district administration officials noted in the meeting that maintaining social distancing would be difficult if the DAE ventures to bring labourers from other districts, he said.

However, it was endorsed that the currently unemployed labourers of stone and sand quarries as well as coal labourers can be engaged in agricultural ork, he added.

Secretary Md Nasiruzzaman of the agriculture minstry also feels that local nonagricultural workers, who have become unemployed due to the shutdown, will fill the labour shortage gap.

returned home following the Covid-19 outbreak, are basically from agriculture

They will work in crop fields in their locality as the cities have no jobs for them, he said.

Regarding labour transportation from other districts, Nasiruzzaman said local administrations were asked to allow movements of vehicles carrying agricultural labourers when harvest begins in different regions.

"We are identifying the labour leaders and asking them to hire labourers," he said, adding that for the uninterrupted movement of labour during the shutdown labour leaders shall be provided with a certificate detailing their travel destinations and number of workers under them.

The ministry of agriculture issued a circular in this regard on April 9.

The ministry also allocated Tk 110 crore to help farmers buy 800-plus combine harvesters, and 400 reapers and transplanters with subsidy this year. Of those, 180 new harvesters and 137 new reapers would be given to farmers in haor areas, that already have 362 harvesters and 1056 reapers.

A combined harvester can harvest paddy from 1.2 acres of land in an hour while a reaper is capable of harvesting 0.4 acres of land per hour.

Farmers would buy the machines while the government would provide 50 percent of the cost with the sanctioned money, the agriculture secretary said.

"Farmers of haor region are usually not interested in buying harvesters as they need it only once a year. So we will bring the machines from other districts to support them," he said, adding that similar steps will be taken in other regions.

CASH CRUNCH

Despite such assurance from the agriculture ministry, farmers in haors, Chalan Beel and the Barind regions cannot relax.

Jyotimohon Das of Sunamganj haor area cultivated boro on 6.8 acres of land and is worried about paying labourers' wages.

"Every year I borrow to pay off labourers with cash as they don't accept paddy in payment for difficulties in transportation. This time the lenders are not willing to provide loans. They say they don't have money," Jyotimohon said

Jahangir Alam Shah, a farmer who opened a farming library in Naogaon's Manda, said small and marginalised farmers often sell paddy directly from the field to pay off the labourers and lenders.

However, he is anticipating a fall in

Citing the coronavirus situation, the buyers are not getting into any contract and some are offering to buy paddy on credit, he said.

Nirod Boron Saha, president of Naogaon Paddy and Rice Businessmen's Association, said they are facing some financial constraints, but it would not impact their paddy purchase if the crop available.

"Our main concern is who will harvest the paddy if labourers are not available," he said.

Even well-off farmers like Saidur Rahman of Sunamganj's Dharmapasha upazila are worried about higher production costs. He fears local peasants, who work as farm labourers, would demand higher wages this year. At present, he added, the daily wage

for agriculture labour is around Tk 400 to Tk 500, but it will double during the harvest time.

According to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) data, the country has a total 165.63 lakh farmers. Of them, 78.62 percent are small and 6.83 percent are marginal farmers. The number of farm labourer families is 90.96 lakh, accounting for 25.6 percent of the 3.55 crore total households in Bangladesh.

THE PRINCIPAL CROP

Paddy is cultivated on 71 percent of the total 1.54 crore hectares of cropland in the country, according to official data. Boro accounts for more than half of the total 3.64 crore tonnes of rice produced in the country in the 2018-019 fiscal year, BBS data shows.

Rajshahi division provides percent of total rice production, while Rangpur and Dhaka divisions each provide 17 percent, Mymensingh 14 percent, Khulna and Chattogram each 13 percent, Sylhet five percent and Barishal division three percent.

Mymensingh tops among the rice producing districts followed by Naogaon, Bogura, Dinajpur, Tangail, lessore, Cumilla, Sirajganj, Rangpur, Netrokona, Jamalpur, Kishoreganj, Gaibandha and Chandpur.

For the last two years, farmers have not been getting expected prices for their boro crop. As a result, this year the crop was planted on only 47.54 lakh hectares of land instead of 48.66 hectares of land as expected by the DAE

Yet, DAE and Bangladesh Rice Research Institute officials are expecting a production of at least two crore tons of boro rice this year.

Dwoha Chowdhury from Sylhet, S Dilip Roy from Lalmonirhat, Dipanker Roy from Khulna, Mostafa Yousuf from Chattogram, Aminul Islam from Mymensingh and Susanta Gosh from Barishal contributed to the report]

reach the millions of households across the country suffering from acute food shortage. Otherwise they will be compelled to leave home to earn their living in violation of the social distancing measures, increasing the risk of spreading coronavirus," it said.

The survey finds that people who have returned to villages from urban centres are not enrolled in any social safety net programmes and so need proper delivery mechanisms to get food aid immediately.

UP member shot dead in Rangamati OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

A union parishad member was shot dead by unidentified criminals in Jurachhari upazila of Rangamati on Friday night.

The dead Hemanto Chakma, 32, son of Lokobidhu Chakma, was a member of Bonjogichhara Union Parishad

7 die

FROM PAGE 1

Hospital around 1:00am yesterday.

In Madaripur, a 45-year-woman died after showing similar symptoms at the isolation ward of Kalkini Upazila Health Complex around 11:00pm on Friday.

In Dhaka, an 82-year-old man died at his home in Dhamrai upazila's Batulia village around 12:00pm of Friday.

In Laxmipur, a 57-year-old man died of Covid-19-like symptoms at his home Jajira area in Kamalnagar upazila on Friday afternoon.

A 55-year-old man died after showing the same symptoms at his residence in the same upazila's Charmartin area on Friday night.

In Manikganj, a 60-year-old man, who was in home quarantine, died with breathing problems at his village home under Sadar upazila yesterday.

In Noakhali, a 45-year-old Italyreturnee from Sonaimuri upazila, who died on Thursday, tested positive for coronavirus yesterday.

Meanwhile, a police man and a trader, from Shivalaya upazila and Harirampur upazila, have tested positive for coronavirus.

Correspondents (Our from Brahmanbaria, Khulna, Faridpur, Savar, Manikganj and Noakhali contributed to the story.)



Switzerland pledges Tk 25cr support

4 envoys provide food assistance

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Switzerland has announced assistance of 2.8 million Swiss francs (Tk 25 crore) for Bangladesh as an immediate response to the coronavirus pandemic, which is taking a toll on people's health and the economy amid the shutdown.

The fund will be used through local and international partner organsations, said a statement of the Swiss embassy in Dhaka.

"As nations around the globe suffer from challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, Switzerland stands by Bangladesh in facing this crisis and implementing an effective response," it said.

In collaboration with Bangladesh, civil society, development partners and donor organisations, Switzerland continues SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



Two local volunteers splash disinfectant-mixed water on the streets of Kathalbagan yesterday around 12pm.

Stepping up for the city's animals

Activists, volunteers feed strays amid shutdown

HELEMUL ALAM

The streets of Dhaka have been deserted by humans, but one thing has remained constant there even during the shutdown. The city's resident strays are still roaming the streets, some scampering about by themselves, some sprinting in groups.

Their usual source of food, however, has disappeared. Dogs, cats and birds relied on scavenging food from leftovers dumped by restaurants, shops etc. But currently, almost all establishments are closed, so food is scarce for animals. the last few days at Mirpur's Rupnagar Residential Area.

Unfortunately, due to the spread of misinformation, many had stopped this practice, fearing that they might get infected by animals.

However, individual effort alone is not enough to feed so many animals. This is where volunteer organisations come in with a larger scope of impact.

Afzal Khan, founder and head of RobinHood the Animal Rescuer, said they have been providing food to stray dogs



Padma Bridge 28th span installed, 4.2km now visible

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 28th span of the much-anticipated Padma Bridge was installed yesterday, bringing into view 4.2 kilometres of the structure.

The span linking the 20th and 21st pier was installed around 9am yesterday, Dewan Md Abdul Kader, project manager (main bridge), told The Daily Star.

The span was taken to the spot on the river from the construction yard-1 yesterday, he said.

The 20th pier falls under the purview of Munishganj while the 21st under Madaripur, meaning the span liked two districts, Kader added.

The development came at a time when the country is facing a virtual lockdown with operation of all types of passenger transports suspended, and public and private offices closed.

Besides, 20 to 30 percent of the local workers involved in the project left the workplace due to the coronavirus situation, a project official said.

"However, the number of local workers has increased now as many of them have returned," he said, wishing anonymity.

All 667 Chinese nationals involved in the main bridge works are now working, he added.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Easing Overcrowding at Jails Govt mulling release of petty criminals, long-term convicts

RAFIUL ISLAM

Apart from over 3,000 petty criminals, the governemnt is planning to release 1,413 inmates who were sentenced to life-term imprisonment and have alresdy served more than 20 years in jail, amid the coronavirus outbreak in the country.

The aim of releasing around 5,000 prisoners is to lower the chances of coronavirus transmission in crowded jails, said sources.

The home ministry has sent a proposal to law ministry for its opinion. Contacted, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan said, "We have sent the recommendations to the law ministry. We will scrutinise everything

after getting a response." "We are thinking of releasing those who served more than 20 years in jail, but are stuck due to the new definition of life imprisonment given by former chief justice SK Sinha. Besides we are thinking of releasing some disabled prisoners," the minister told The Daily Star yesterday.

According to prison and home ministry sources, there are more than 5,000 prisoners, who have been convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment, in different jails.

Of them, 1,413 were named in the list for release as they have served more than 20 years in prison and there were no pending cases against them either; the ministry is planning on releasing them without condition, they added.

The release of many of them stopped after former Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha in a judgment in February 2017 said life imprisonment means jail sentence until natural death of the convict. A review petition against the judgement is still pending.

A prison official said as per the home ministry's order, they sent on SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Public transports to stay put till April 25

Emergency vehicles, goods-laden trucks out of purview

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has extended the ongoing suspension of all types of public transport operations till April 25 -- to contain the spread of coronavirus.

The Road Transport and Highways Division took the decision yesterday, said Abu Naser, deputy chief information officer of Road Transport and Bridges Ministry.

However, all goods-laden vehicles and vehicles transporting emergency services including daily essentials, fuel, medicine and media outfits will remain out of the purview of this suspension, he said.

No goods-laden vehicle would be allowed to carry passengers.

This is the second time the government extended the suspension on the operation of public transports in line with closure of all public and private offices. At first stage, the government closed all public and private offices from March 26 to April 4 and operation of public transports was also suspended for the same period.

With the number of coronavirus cases increasing, the government on Friday extended the shutdown till April 25.

In addition, suspension of Bangladesh's air-communications with 16 countries has been extended till April 30.

The countries are the UK, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Bhutan, India, Hong Kong, Kuwait, Malaysia, the Maldives, Oman, Qatar, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Thailand and Turkey, Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh said yesterday.

Flights to different domestic destinations will also remain suspended until April 30, CAAB said in a statement. Operations of cargo flight, air SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Shortage of manpower, logistics hampers Covid-19 testing in Ctg



Starved stray animals in the city have been dependent on the kindness of humans across the country, and the scene in Dhaka is no exception.

As we stand by people in need during this crisis, helping stray animals is also necessary, as they need us now more than ever. Keeping this in mind, several volunteer organisations and many individuals have come forward to provide them with food.

A lot of residents are preparing meals for cats and dogs at home and distributing them to animals at different parts of the capital.

Tahia Reza Prapti and her husband Ashraful Islam Razib, with the help of a local youth, have been feeding strays for since March 29. "We prepare 40-50kg of chicken and 25kg of rice [for dogs] every day," said Afzal. The organisation provides food to 1,100-1200 dogs at around 10 areas daily.

It is not all about the dogs, though. Cats, birds and other animals also share the meals among themselves.

"We distribute the food by driving around the areas. We have 32 volunteers who, by rotation, remain involved in these activities," he said.

Rakibul Haq, chairperson of PAW Foundation, said they have been providing SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

cope with the demand. PHOTO: **COLLECTED** cope with the demand. Located in Faujdarhat, BITID is the only hospital dedicated by the government for testing coronavirus in the division. Samples collected

day," said from at least eight districts are being tested in the laboratory, putting immense pressure on healthcare service providers.

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

At present, BITID has only one virologist and eight technicians to run the laboratory. With the existing logistics support, the laboratory can test around 40 samples a day. But now it has to test around 100 samples per day, said BITID officials.

With the number of samples increasing everyday

for testing Covid-19 in Chattogram, the lone

laboratory of Bangladesh Institute of Tropical

and Infectious Diseases (BITID) is struggling to

For example, the hospital collected 140 samples on Thursday but could test 104 of those on that day. On Friday, 94 samples were tested.

"I have to work for 14 hours a day in the lab. I come at 8am and leave around 10pm," said Prof Dr Shakil Ahmed, in-charge of BITID laboratory. "The lab has a capacity to test 40 samples a day but currently the number has increased to over 100 every day."

"We have only eight technicians who not only work in the lab but also collect samples," said Prof Shakil, also a virologist. "We do not have an office assistant to type reports, so we cannot deliver those to patients on time. We are all working at least three shifts," he said.

Prof Shakil said he requested the authorities for providing at least two microbiologists and four technicians along with two office assistants to increase the capacity of the laboratory. "More hospitals and laboratories in Chattogram can be included for Covid-19 tests to reduce our load."

Prof Shakil suggested engaging Chattogram Medical College Hospital (CMCH), Chattogram Veterinary and Animal Sciences University, and Chittagong University's Biotechnology and Genetic Engineering and Microbiology departments in this regard.

"All the institutions have ideal laboratories, testing Covid 19.

and if needed, we will arrange a training programme for them," he said.

Asked, BITID Director Prof Dr MA Hasan said they have been working to increase the capacity of the laboratory so that it can cope with the demand.

"We have already brought a PCR machine from the Genetic Engineering department of CU along with four research students of the department," he said.

Also, he added, "I have talked to the Chattogram divisional director of Directorate General of Health Services this morning [Saturday] and requested him to provide us with at least two microbiologists."

Contacted, Dr Hasan Shahriar Kabir, Chattogram divisional director of DGHS, said reinforcement will be provided to BITID soon to handle the increasing demand.

More laboratories in Chattogram will be added for this purpose very soon, he said, adding that CMCH will be engaged in a day or two for testing Covid 19.

Ensure TV journos' health security, pay their dues, salaries

Info minister urges owners UNB, Dhaka

Information Minister Dr Hasan Mahmud urged journalist leaders and managing committees of television channels to ensure health security and clear dues of journalists working for private channels.

He made the call while speaking to leaders of Broadcast Journalist Centre at his residence in the capital yesterday.

During this global crisis, journalists have been working under immense risk to their personal health, Mahmud said while talking about media workers who have contracted the coronavirus, while some have been sent to quarantine.

Informed by Broadcast Journalist Centre that some TV channels were not paying due salaries, Mahmud urged the authorities to clear the dues "even if you face any problems during this situation."

Among others, Broadcast Journalist Centre President Rezwanul Haque Raja and Secretary Shakil Ahmed were present.

Earlier in the day, 47 employees of Independent TV, who had been in isolation, completed their quarantine. They were sent to home-quarantine on April 3 after one of their colleagues tested positive for coronavirus.

Fire breaks out at Ulon grid substation UNB, Dhaka

A fire at grid substation at Ulon in Rampura area led to power cuts in the southern parts of the capital yesterday.

According to official sources at Power Grid Company of Bangladesh (PGCB), the fire broke out at the 132/33kV grid substation around 4pm, but the reason was not clear immediately.

Several units of Fire Service and Civil Defence rushed to the spot, and brought the fire under control at about 4:50pm, sources said.

A PGCB official said electricity supply to Motijheel, Rampura, Jatrabari, Lalbagh and Dhanmondi were severely disrupted following the fire.

"We're trying to restore electricity supply to the areas," a PGCB official said.

He said the substation was recently handed over to Dhaka Power Distribution Company (DPDC). "But still both the PGCB and DPDC officials were jointly in the operation of substation," he said.

Unilever pledges Tk 200m in fight against Covid-19 _{Crty Desk}

CITY DESK

Unilever Bangladesh Limited (UBL) has pledged Tk 200 million to help the nation in its fight against the novel coronavirus.

The commitment includes wideranging measures such as product donations, creating awareness, improving health infrastructure, protecting its people and livelihoods of those who work across the value chain such as extended distribution and supply chain, said a press release.

Ever since the outbreak, UBL has been donating hygiene and household products such as Lifebuoy soap, Surf excel and Wheel detergents, and Domex cleaner.

So far, UBL has donated products worth Tk 10 million and will continue its contribution by partnering with several organisations in order to reach out to the people in need.

Unilever Bangladesh is collaborating with organisations such as Brac, WaterAid, Unicef, Ek Takay Ahar to create awareness.

The company has already spent Tk 10 million in these efforts, according to the press release.



Few are out and about to notice it these days, but nature progresses nonetheless. Mango trees across the country are adorned with green mangoes, as they ripen toward their exquisite final form as the king of the fruit. This photo was taken yesterday.

April 5 the list of prisoners who are being considered for release or bail are under three categories.

"There are more than 3,000 prisoners in the first category who were sentenced to two-year imprisonment or less but served in jail for several months already. The second category includes 1,413 life-sentenced prisoners, and there are 36 disabled prisoners under the third category," he said.

"We are also preparing a list of under-trial prisoners who have been in jail for years for different crimes except murder, terrorism and rape," said another prisons official.

A home ministry official said they are yet to decide whether the prisoners under first category will be exempted or released on bail. It will be decided as per the law minister's response.

Public health specialists have expressed concern that many prisoners might contract coronavirus in the densely populated jails plagued by unhygienic living conditions.

Sources at the department of prisons said there are around 89,000 prisoners at 68 jails across the country, against a capacity of 41,244, posing a high risk of coronavirus outbreak inside the prisons.

Switzerland

FROM PAGE 3

to evaluate additional response activities to prevent and mitigate Covid-19 risks in Bangladesh better and faster.

Switzerland has further committed 14.4 Million CHF (Tk 126 Crore) to UN's global Covid-19 appeal as well as the International Red Cross and Red Crescent movements.

Meanwhile, in a sign of solidarity, ambassadors of four Muslim countries on their individual capacity yesterday provided six tonnes of food for the poor.

Palestinian Ambassador Yousef SY Ramadan, Saudi Ambassador Essa Yousef Essa Alduhailan, Egyptian Ambassador Walid Ahmed Shamseldin and Indonesian Ambassador Rina Prihtyasmiarsi Soemarno handed over the food assistance to Dhaka Deputy Commissioner Abu Saleh Mohammad Ferdous Khan at the state guesthouse Padma.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen was present at the ceremony.

The newly-installed 28th span of the Padma Bridge. With this, more than four

kilometres of the much-anticipated bridge has become visible. PHOTO: COURTESY

Stepping up FROM PAGE 3

food to stray dogs and other animals since March 26.

they distributed at Initially, Lalmatia, Dhanmondi, Mirpur, Islambagh and adjoining areas of Eden Mohila College. But now, they are providing food at other parts of the city too.

They distribute food among 400-500 dogs every day, and of course, other animals join in on the feast, he said.

PAW Foundation is currently preparing the meals at their office in Lalmatia and at Uttara Community Center of Dhaka North City Corporation. DNCC Mayor-elect

Atiqul Islam designated the centre for their operation from last Wednesday (April 8).

There are around 60,000 stray dogs in the city, according to rights organisations.

On Wednesday, PAW wrote a letter to the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock, requesting authorities to urge residents to not harm the animals and provide them with adequate amounts of food, he added. Fisheries and Livestock Minister SM

Rezaul Karim, in reply, said they will look into the matter.

Both organisations are operating through donations from benevolent individuals and groups.

With all educational institutes being closed, many animal lovers have one question in mind: how are the dogs at Dhaka University (DU) doing?

28th span

The 6.15-kilometre bridge

would have 42 piers and

41 spans. Of them, work of

all piers has already been

Thirty-nine spans have

arrived from China, 28 of

which have been installed

But the company in

China that is constructing

the remaining two spans

was closed for a long

time due to the Covid-19

two spans are expected to

start from China on April

20, according to the project

The ships carrying the

FROM PAGE 3

completed.

outbreak.

officials

Golam Rabbani, general secretary of Dhaka University Central Students' Union, said he himself gives food to 300 dogs of DU every day, so that they do not go hungry.

Animals often rely on the kindness of humans for survival, and during this crisis, people are stepping up for the innocent creatures. With more donations and help from those staying at home, these volunteer organisations and individuals can continue looking after the animals.

Public transports

DHAKA SUNDAY APRIL 12, 2020, CHAITRA 29, 1426 BS

FROM PAGE 3

ambulance, aid operation through air, special flight and emergency landing will remain out of the purview of the suspension. Bangladesh now has air communications with only China.

The government primarily suspended air communications with different countries from March 16 to March 31. Later it was extended till April 15 in two phases.

SUPREME COURT EXTENDS CLOSURE OF ALL COURTS **ACROSS COUNTRY TILL APRIL 25**

Meanwhile, the Supreme Court yesterday extended the ongoing holiday for all the courts across the country including its Appellate and High Court Divisions till April 25 due to the coronavirus outbreak.

Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain came up with the decision at a meeting with the judges of the Appellate Division at his official residence in the capital's Kakrail yesterday.

The Supreme Court has so far extended the court holiday for three times beginning on March 25, owing to the coronavirus outbreak.

Supreme Court's Registrar General Md Ali Akbar issued two separate circulars in this regard.

In a circular, it has been stated the apex court judges decided that the court functions should not be kept open on a short scale amid the ongoing coronavirus spread.

This is because judges, lawyers, officials and staff members need to gather for running the court activities, which may cause harm to their health, the circular further said.

Another circular said the ad-interim orders passed by the courts earlier -- giving bails to the accused, stay of trial proceedings of cases and directives for surrender of the accused to lower courts -- will be extended for two weeks after reopening of the courts.

Besides, one or multiple magistrates will remain standby at all the metropolitan and district areas as usual.

They have been asked to be on suty in order to deal with urgent cases such as remand prayers, according to the circular.

Three die in 24hrs

FROM PAGE 1

Meanwhile, three more people, including two males and a female, recovered in 24 hours till 2:30pm yesterday, taking the total number of recovery cases to 33. The cases increased for the first time since Sunday.

People aged between 31 and 40 accounted for 22 percent (108) of the total confirmed cases. Flora pointed out the highest percentage of infection was reported in that age group.

The age groups 21-30 and 41-50 accounted for 19 percent of total cases each. Almost 70 percent of all the cases are males, she added.

In the bulletin, Prof Abul Kalam Azad, director general of the DGHS said, "We want to know the [Covid-19] situation in every union, in every village and in every town. For this, we have decided to increase the number of tests. We will use staffers of community clinics across the country to collect samples.

"The number of tests will increase within the next few days," he said, adding, "The staffers in community clinics will be trained [in collecting samples] soon.

He also said dedicated hospitals with ventilators will be arranged at the district level for Covid-19 patients.

At the bulletin, Health Minister Zahid Maleque said the government was converting 3 new establishments into hospitals, which will have 4,500 beds.

Of those, Bashundhara Convention

places, mostly in Narayanganj, and Dhaka's Mirpur and Basabo areas. It has also spread to several other districts across the country."

Expressing concern over many still not maintaining social distancing and moving freely outside, he said, "We saw many people have travelled to other places from Narayanganj. It should not be happening . We have to stay indoors to the make the government lockdown programme

Don't commit

2017.

The ICJ said that the Rohingya in then every six months.

Meanwhile, Human Rights Watch in a statement said Myanmar's directive was not enough to protect the Rohingya.

The 600,000 Rohingya still in Rakhine

Make a list FROM PAGE 12

has stemmed from the coronavirus outbreak.

Barrister Shihab Uddin Khan served the legal notice to the secretaries to the ministries of planning, LGRD, health, and relief and disaster management, and the director general of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, asking them to take necessary steps in this regard.

In the legal notice, Shihab alleged that mismanagement and lack of coordination are reportedly taking place in the distribution of relief materials, including food and medicines, among the low-income and other poor people. Therefore, the financially vulnerable people are being deprived of the daily essentials.

The relief materials need to be distributed smoothly in order to save the lives of the poor, and this task needs to be given to the army personnel, he said in the legal notice.

He told The Daily Star that he would move a writ petition before the High Court, seeking necessary orders if the respondents didn't respond to the notice.

Clean all FROM PAGE 12

about our accessories. These are very important to take care of."

He said such accessories can also carry the highly contagious virus and spread it into the body.

Kaoser said that germs can be transferred from phone to the hand and it can also transfer into the ears while using it.

Don't lift curbs

FROM PAGE 12

than anywhere else in the world.

President Donald Trump, however, said that with the US infection trajectory "near the peak" and social distancing working well, he was considering ways to re-open the world's biggest economy as soon as possible. He acknowledged the risk of higher death

tolls if businesses restart too soon. "But you know what? Staying at home leads to death also," Trump added, pointing to the massive economic suffering for millions of Americans.

It is unclear when that will be possible, with New York Governor Andrew Cuomo saying millions in the state -- the hardest hit in the country -- will have to be tested before it can reopen.

More than four billion people are confined to their homes as governments worldwide have imposed never-beforeseen measures to halt the virus, which first emerged late last year in central China.

Like Trump, governments in Europe are under pressure to strike a balance between keeping people safe and keeping already battered economies stable.

WHO chief said Friday said there had been a "welcome slowing" of epidemics in some European countries - Italy, Germany, Spain and France - but there had been an "alarming acceleration" elsewhere including community transmission in 16 countries of Africa.

the pandemic, urged countries find the loopholes in their health care systems and fix them

Amid this gloom, glimmers of hope may be emerging in some countries.

Spain, the third-hardest-hit country, saw its lowest 24-hour toll in 18 days, after Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said the "fire started by the pandemic is starting to come under control". It reported 510 deaths yesterday.

And the daily rises in new infections in hardest-hit Italy have slowed dramatically. Still, the Italian government said it would extend lockdown orders until May 3.

Pakistan accepts FROM PAGE 12 **REPATRIATION ACCEPTED IN** PRINCIPLE

The question of repatriation had been accepted in principle by the government of Pakistan, L Marti, head of the International Committee of Red Cross in Bangladesh informed Bangladesh Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad on April 11, 1972. The repatriation procedure, including transport and finance, will be worked out soon. EIGHT NEW MINISTERS SWORN IN Eight new members are inducted into the Bangladesh Cabinet today. The strength of the Cabinet thus rises to 23.

GO BACK TO PREVIOUS POSTS The Bangladesh government has directed the officers who were in the employment of central and provincial governments in Bangladesh on March25, 1971 but were later recruited for work under the Bangladesh government at Mujibnagar to go back to the posts they were holding on March25, 1971. It has also been ordered that those who were appointed after March 25, 1971 by the occupation regime to the posts vacated by Mujibnagar appointees should vacate their posts in favour of Mujibnagar appointees.

FROM PAGE 12 flee into neighbouring Bangladesh since

Myanmar remain extremely vulnerable and needed to be protected from further bloodshed, while ordering Myanmar to report on its compliance by May 23 and

"Many of the government's existing policies aimed at repressing the Rohingya may be evidence of the ongoing genocide in Myanmar's Rakhine State," said Param-Preet Singh, associate director of International Justice Program at the HRW.

faced "a greater threat of genocide than ever" and remain largely cut off from healthcare and desperately needed humanitarian aid, trapped in villages and open-air detention centres that HRW "Novel coronavirus has spread to some recently warned are Covid-19 tinderboxes.

successful."

Center in Kuril will have 2,000 beds, one in Dhaka North City Corporation 1,300 and another in Uttara's Diabari will have 1,200 beds, he said.



স্বাস্থ্য ও পরিবার কন্যাগ মন্ত্রগালয়ের স্বারক নং-৪৫,০০,০০০০,১৫৫,৯৯,০০২-১৭-৮৭৭/১(৮) তারিখ্য ৫১-১২-২০১৯খ্রিঃ মূলে রাঙ্গামটি পার্বত্য জেলা পরিষদের নিয়ন্ত্রণাধীন বিলাইছড়ি খাছ্য কমপ্লেরে আওতাধীন বিভিন্ন খাছ্য প্রতিষ্ঠানের জন্য ২০১৯-২০২০টিঃ অর্থ বৎসরের এম,এস,আর, সামগ্রী (ঔষধ, যন্ত্রপান্ডি, কেমিকাল রিয়েজেন্ট, লিলেন, স্টাল আসবাবপর, গন্ধ ব্যান্ডেন্ন কটন) সরবরাহ কান্সে অভিন্নতাসম্পন্ন ঠিকালার/সরবরাহকারী/প্রস্কৃতকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিকট হতে সীলমোহরযুক্ত WANT WISHING WIT HIMS I

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٠	সংগ্ৰহকারী কর্ত্তপক্ষ	উপক্লেলা স্বাস্থ্য ও পরিবার পরিকরনা কার্যালয়, বিলাইছড়ি, রাঙ্গামাটি।		
8	দরণর ত্রন্য ও সঞ্চাহের গছতি	উন্মৃত দরগর।		
â	আহ্বানকৃত দরপরের সূর নং	উঃখাংকমঃবিদাই/এমএসআর/২০১৯-২০২০/২৯৩ তারিখঃ ০৮/০৪/২০২০স্টিঃ।		
6	ৰাজেট/তৰ্ববিলের উৎস	রাজস্ব বাজেট (জিগুনি)।		
٩	দরপত্র প্যাকেজের নাম	(ক) উষধপত্র, ইডিসিএল বহির্চৃত, (গ) যন্ত্রপাতি, (গ) কেমিকেল (রিয়েজেন্ট), (গ) গজ, ব্যাচেজ, কুলা ইত্যাদি, (৪) লিলেন সাম্ম্রী, (চ) এমএসআর আসবাবপত্র।		
4	দরপত্র বিরুয়ের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	২০/০৪/২০২০খ্রি, বিরুল ৪.০০ ঘটিকা (অফিস চলাকালীন সময় পর্যস্ত)।		
3	দরপত্র জমানালের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	২১/০৪/২০২০ন্ডিঃ, দুপুর ১২,০০ ঘটিকা পর্যস্ত ।		
20	দরপর বার খোলার তারিখ ও সময়	াথ ৫ ২১/০৪/২০২০ন্দ্রিঃ, দুপুর ১২.৩০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত দরপর্বনাত্তগগের সমূথে যদি কেহ উপস্থিত থাকেন।		
22	দরপত্র প্রান্তির স্থান	উপজেলা স্বাস্থ্য ও পরিবার পরিকস্কনা কার্যালয়, বিলাইছড়ি, রাঙ্গামাটি।		
22	দরপত্র দাখিলের স্থান	উপজেলা স্বাস্থ্য ও পরিবার পরিকল্পনা কার্যালয়, বিলাইছড়ি, রাঙ্গামাটি।		
20	দরপত্র সিঠিউলের মূল্য	প্রম্পা (ক) ৭৫০/-, প্রম্পা (খ) ৭৫০/-, গ্রম্পা (খ) ৪০০/- গ্রম্পাং (ঘ) ৪০০/-, গ্রম্পাং (৬) ৪০০/- এবং গ্রম্পাং (চ) ৪০০/- অফেরচযোগ্য।		
28	দরপর সিভিউলের মূল্য পরিশোষের নিয়ম	পর সিভিউলের মূল্য উপজেলা খাছ্য ও পরিবার পরিকর্মনা কার্যালয়, বিলাইছড়ি, রাঙ্গামাটি এর		
24	দরপরের সহিত দাখিলকৃত জামানতের পরিমাণ	গ্রুপ-ক ৫ গ্রুল খ এর জন্য ১৫,০০০/- (প্রতি গ্রুপ) এবং গ-চ গ্রুপ এর জন্য ১০,০০০/- (প্রতি গ্রুপ) উপজেলা খাছ্য ও পরিবার পরিবল্পনা কর্মকর্ত্রা, বিলাইছড়ি অনুকৃলে পে-অর্থার/ব্যাংক ব্রাফট দাবিল করিতে হবে।		

বিশেষ জাতব্যঃ

১৬। দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্মকর্তার নামঃ ডাঃ রশ্বি চাকমা।

১৭। দরগর আহবানকারী কর্মকর্চার পদবীঃ উপজেলা স্বাছ্য ও পরিবার পরিকল্পনা কর্মকর্তা।

১৮। দরপত্র আহবানকারী কর্মকর্তার কার্যালয়ের নামঃ উপজেলা স্বাস্থ্য ও পরিবার পরিকল্পনা কর্মকর্তার কার্যালয়, বিলাইছড়ি ১৯। দরপরা আহবানকারী কর্মকর্তার যোগাযোগের বিবরণঃ মোবাইল নম্বরা ০১৫৩৩-৫০২৩৭৪, ই মেইল নম্বরা <u>rashmi-</u>

chakma@vahoo.com

২০। কর্ত্রপক্ষ কোন কারণ দর্শানো ছাড়াই যে কোন নরপর অথবা সকল নরপর গ্রহণ/বাচিল করার ক্ষমতা সরেক্ষণ করে ২১। বিস্তারিত শর্তাবলী দরপত্র সিঠিউলের সহিত সংস্তৃক থাবনে।

en lange ander side biende ande adde ande i	ডাঃ ৰশ্মি চাকমা উপজেলা স্বাস্থ্য ও পৰিবার পরিবস্তনা কর্মকর্তা
জিভি-৭৩৭	বিলাইছট্ডি, রাঙ্গামটি পার্বন্ত্য জেলা

"Our eyes, ears, nose and mouth are very close to each

other. So, the risk of transmission is high," he said. Kaoser suggested wiping mobile phones with a cloth

soaked in sanitiser or alcohol pads.

The physician warned that those who use spectacles should be more aware because people frequently touch their spectacles, which is close to the eyes, nose and ears.

"It [spectacles] should be disinfected frequently," he suggested.

Kaoser also suggested that belts, wallets, earrings, and bangles need to be sanitised in the same manner.

Vegetable growers

FROM PAGE 12

Al-Amin, a farmer who has been farming for the last 32 years in Narayanganj's Sonargaon, this year cultivated ladies' fingers, asparagus beans, red spinach and malabar spinach on 45 decimal lands.

He used to sell his vegetables directly at a kitchen market in the capital's Jatrabari area in the previous

"Let alone the Jatrabari market, I cannot even sell my vegetables at the local market now," he said, adding that he was afraid of losing Tk 50,000 this season

He also said, "What is even more painful is many customers owe me around Tk 25,000 but they are not repaying me because of the crisis."

Visiting two big wholesale markets in the capital, our correspondents found that vegetables were being sold at a cheaper price than the usual.

Per kg tomato was sold Tk 10, ladies' finger at Tk 20-Tk 30, snake gourd at Tk 15-Tk 20 and brinjal at Tk 15-Tk 20.

Ahmedul Haque, a banker who visited Shantinagar Kitchen Market, said many people were prone to spend more money on dry items and foods that could be stored for longer period considering the recent situation.

"That is why the demand of vegetables is downward," he added.

Rokan Uddin, a vegetable wholesaler at Karwanbazar, said due to the fear of coronavirus spread, people were avoiding open kitchen markets.

"That is why retailers are buying less and we too are collecting less from local farmers," he said, adding that this created an imbalance in the whole supply chain.

In Jashore, the situation of vegetable farmers is so bad that some broke down in tears, reported our Benapole correspondent.

Rabiul Islam Robi, a farmer in Noapara upazila of Jashore, said, "We are counting a loss of Tk 12 each kg Potol [pointed gourd]. We used to sell those at Tk 40 per kg earlier, but now we barely able to sell it at Tk 28 per kg.

Sukkur Ali, another farmer in the district, said if the loss continued they would not be able to cultivate vegetables next season.

Asked, KAS Murshid, director general of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), said the government could initiate micro-credit loan for vegetable growers to encourage them in the coming days.

Yemen reported its first case of the novel coronavirus on Friday as aid groups braced for an outbreak in a country where war has shattered health systems and spread hunger and disease

Tedros said he was particularly concerned by the large number of infections reported among health workers.

"In some countries reports of up to 10 percent of health workers being infected, this is an alarming trend," he said.

A new UN supply task force will coordinate and scale up the procurement and distribution of protective gear, lab diagnostics and oxygen to the countries that need it most.

"Every month we will need to ship at least 100 million medical masks and gloves, up to 25 million N-95 respirators, gowns and face shields, up to 2.5 million diagnostic tests and large quantities of oxygen concentrators and other equipment for clinical care," he said.

The World Food Programme - the UN agency that handles logistics - will deploy eight 747 aircraft, 8 medium-sized cargo aircraft and several smaller passenger planes to transport the goods and aid workers needed in the operation which will have 8 hubs, he added.

Tedros urged donors to contribute to WFP's operation which will cost an estimated \$280 million, while the cost of procuring supplies will be "much greater".

He said no country was immune from

\$6.3M UNUSED UNHCR FUNDS FOR BANGLADESH

The government of India has decided to hand over to the government of Bangladesh 6.3 million US dollars, the amount remaining from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees fund for the relief of Bangladeshis who took shelter in India during Bangladesh's Liberation War.

About 26,000 tonnes of Indian oil will reach within next few days to meet the present shortage in the country. CANADIAN VACCINE FOR BANGLADESH

The Canadian government is shipping five million doses of small pox vaccine to Bangladesh under a 125,000-dollar grant from the Canadian International Agency.

SOURCES: April 13, 1972 issues of Bangladesh Observer, Dainik Bangla and Ittefaq.

	গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সর স্থানীয় সরকার প্রকৌশল অধিদং	T 24
	উপজেলা প্রকৌশলীর কার্যালয় সাটুরিয়া, মানিকগঞ্জ www.lged.gov.bd	"শেখ হাসিনার মূলনীতি গ্রাম শহরের উন্নৃতি"
শ্বারক নং-৪৬.০২.৫৬৭০.০		তারিখঃ ১১/০৪/২০২০ইং
	ভিড-১৯) পূর্বে প্রকাশিত দরপন্ন বিজ্ঞন্তি ন ী অপরিবর্তিত রেখে নিম্লোক্তচাবে সংশোধন ক বর্ত্তমান	
পরণর বিজ্ঞায়ি নং ও জারিখ	10-111	০৯/২০১৯–২০ জা ২২-০৩- ২০২০ইং
দরপত্র সিঙিউল বিরুয়ের সর্বশেষ তারিখ ও সময়	তাং ১৯/৪/২০২০ইং, সময়ঃ বিকাল ৫.০০টা পৰ্যন্ত।	তারিশঃ ১২/০৫/২০২০ইং, সময়ঃ বিকাল ৩,৩০টা পর্যন্ত।
দরপর দাখিলের সর্বশেষ	জাং ২০/০৪/২০২০ইং,	জারিশঃ ১৩/০৫/২০২০ইং
	সময়ঃ বিকাল ১.০০টা পর্যন্ত।	সময়ঃ বিকাল ১.০০টা পর্যন্ত।
তারিখ ও সময় দরপত্র থোলার সর্বশেষ তারিখ ও সময়	সময়ঃ বিৰুদে ১.০০টা পৰ্যন্ত। ভাং ২০/৪/২০২০ইং, সময়ঃ দুপুৱ ৩,০০টা পৰ্যন্ত।	
তারিখ ও সময় দরপত্র থোলার সর্বশেষ	'তাং ২০/৪/২০২০ইং, সময়ঃ দুপুর ৩,০০টা পর্যস্ত।	সময়ঃ বিকাল ১.০০টা পৰ্যন্ত। তারিখ্য ১৩/০৫/২০২০ইং,

INTERNATIONAL

Modi, state CMs agree in meeting AFP, New Delhi

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to extend the world's biggest pandemic lockdown for two weeks, state ministers said after talks on the growing fallout in the country yesterday.

The three-week lockdown is due to end Tuesday. But with the death toll rising, several chief ministers from India's 29 states and territories have been pressing Modi to the United States quickly becoming prolong restrictions for the 1.3 billion population.

Two states -- Odisha and Punjab -- have already extended the lockdown by around two weeks, but critics say a nationwide lockdown is needed to stop people moving between states and potentially taking the virus with them.

India has so far reported about 7,500 cases and 240 deaths. But the government says there is no community transmission.

Delhi's chief minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Twitter after the talks that Modi has taken the "correct decision" to extend the lockdown.

"Today, India's position is better than many developed countries because we started (the) lockdown early. If it is stopped now, all gains would be lost."

Other ministers who took part in the video conference talks yesterday told media the lockdown would go on for another two weeks.

The government made no immediate announcement and officials said Modi may not make a statement until today.

According to reports, the Hindu-nationalist government is worried about the impact of the restrictions and ban on international flights on the economy, which was slowing even before the pandemic crisis blew up.

Millions of people have lost jobs in the past three weeks and the lockdown sparked a mass migration as workers headed for their home villages.

Two more weeks of lockdown in India US suffers record death toll More than 2,000 die in a single day as cases pass 500,000

AFP, Rome The United States became the first country to report more than 2,000 coronavirus deaths in a single day, marking a grim milestone as billions around the world

celebrated the Easter holiday weekend under lockdown from home. The global death toll from the virus surged past 103,000 on Friday, with

the epicentre of the pandemic that first emerged in China late last year.

Europe has so far shouldered the majority of all deaths and infections -though there were signs of hope the curve could be starting to flatten in some of the hardest-hit countries.

Global infection rate now stands at more than 1.7m

Trump was considering ways to re-open world's biggest economy

On Friday, the United States reported 2,108 new deaths, the highest daily toll out of any country since the outbreak was first reported in the central Chinese city of Wuhan in December.

With more than half a million reported nfections, the United States already has more coronavirus cases than anywhere else in the world. The global infection rate now stands at

more than 1.7 million, though with many countries only testing the most serious cases the numbers are likely far higher.



But President Donald Trump said that with the US infection trajectory "near the peak" and social distancing working well, he was considering ways to re-open the world's biggest economy as soon as possible.

He acknowledged the risk of higher death tolls if businesses restart too soon - after the World Health Organization on Friday cautioned countries against lifting lockdown measures too quickly.

"But you know what? Staying at home leads to death also," Trump added, pointing to the massive economic suffering for millions of Americans.

It is unclear when that will be possible, with New York Governor Andrew Cuomo saying millions in the state -- the hardest hit in the US -- will have to be tested before it can reopen.

Easter weekend kicked off in nearempty churches around the world as

REUTERS, Wuhan

parishioners remained locked in their homes.

More than four billion people -- over half the world's population -- are confined to their homes from New York to Naples to New Delhi as governments scramble to contain the pandemic's deadly march across the globe.

Pope Francis was due to livestream his Easter Vigil from an empty St Peter's Basilica later yesterday, after he presided over an empty Good Friday Service to kick off the holiday weekend.

The pontiff was praised by Italy's prime minister for his "gesture of responsibility' to observe Easter in private.

"We will remember this spring as the one in which, for the first time in history, the pope presided over the general audiences and conducted the Angelus (prayer) by livestream," Giuseppe Conte wrote in Italy's Catholic daily Avvenire.

China reports Virus can travel rise in cases Wuhan hospital head up to 13 feet

remain airborne for hrs

AFP, Washington

A new study examining air samples from hospital wards with Covid-19 patients has found the virus can travel up to 13 feet (four meters) -- twice the distance current guidelines say people should leave between themselves in public.

The preliminary results of the investigation by Chinese researchers were published Friday in Emerging Infectious Diseases, a journal of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

They add to a growing debate on how the disease is transmitted, with the scientists themselves cautioning that the small quantities of virus they found at this distance are not necessarily infectious.

The researchers, led by a team at the Academy of Military Medical Sciences in Beijing, tested surface and air samples from an intensive care unit and a general Covid-19 ward at Huoshenshan Hospital in Wuhan. They housed a total of 24 patients.

CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC LATEST UPDATES

MORE THAN 103,257 DEATHS

Officials have recorded more than 1.7 million cases and more than 103,257 deaths in 193 countries and territories since the virus emerged in China in December, according to a Johns Hopkins University tally at 1200 GMT yesterday. The United States with 503,177 deaths is the hardest-hit country in terms of cases, of whom 18,761 have died. Europe remains the hardesthit continent in terms of cases and deaths. Italy has the highest death toll at 18,849 followed by Spain with 16,081.

93-YR-OLD PATIENT DISCHARGED FROM TURKEY HOSPITAL

Cheered by her doctors, 93-year-old Alye Gunduz was discharged from an Istanbul hospital after recovering from the novel coronavirus following 10 days of treatment. Her recovery from the disease that is killing chiefly the old offered some hope to health workers at Istanbul's Cerrahpasa Medical Faculty hospital as they battle the outbreak, which risks hitting Turkey hard.

APPLE, GOOGLE PLAN SOFTWARE TO SLOW VIRUS

Google and Apple unveiled a joint initiative Friday to develop a coronavirus smartphone "contact tracing" tool that could potentially alert people when they have crossed paths with an infected person. The move brings together the largest mobile operating systems in an effort to use smartphone location technology to track and potentially contain the global Covid-19 outbreak.

ROUHANI URGES IRANIANS TO RESPECT HEALTH PROTOCOLS

President Hassan Rouhani urged Iranians to respect health protocols to guard against the new coronavirus as "low-risk" economic activities resumed in most of the country yesterday, state news agency IRNA reported. So-called low-risk businesses resumed across the country from yesterday with the exception of the capital Tehran, where they will restart from April 18. Iran is the Middle Eastern country worst-affected by the highly infectious Covid-19 respiratory disease.

PM ABE CALLS FOR NIGHTLIFE SELF-RESTRAINT ACROSS JAPAN

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe yesterday called for citizens across Japan to avoid evening spots like bars and restaurants, NHK reported, in a ratcheting of social distancing guidance to fight the spread of the coronavirus. The nationwide call for citizens to stay home in the evenings follows the declaration of a state of emergency in Tokyo and six other prefectures last week. Abe has been gradually tightening guidance, seeking to lessen the impact on the economy as it is hammered by the pandemic, leading to criticism that he has been too slow to act and risks having the virus spread out of control.

PASSENGERS FROM CRUISE SHIP **LEAVE FOR AUSTRALIA**

More than 100 Australians and New Zealanders left Uruguay on a chartered flight after two weeks stranded aboard a virus-infected cruise ship, Montevideo's Carrasco airport said yesterday. Of 217 people aboard the Greg Mortimer liner, 128 had tested positive for new coronavirus and had been blocked from docking. SOURCE: AFP



in China since January

But Chinese authorities fear the possibility of a second wave triggered by arrivals from overseas or

asymptomatic patients. "We can't say that there

says can't ignore risk CDC study says droplets can

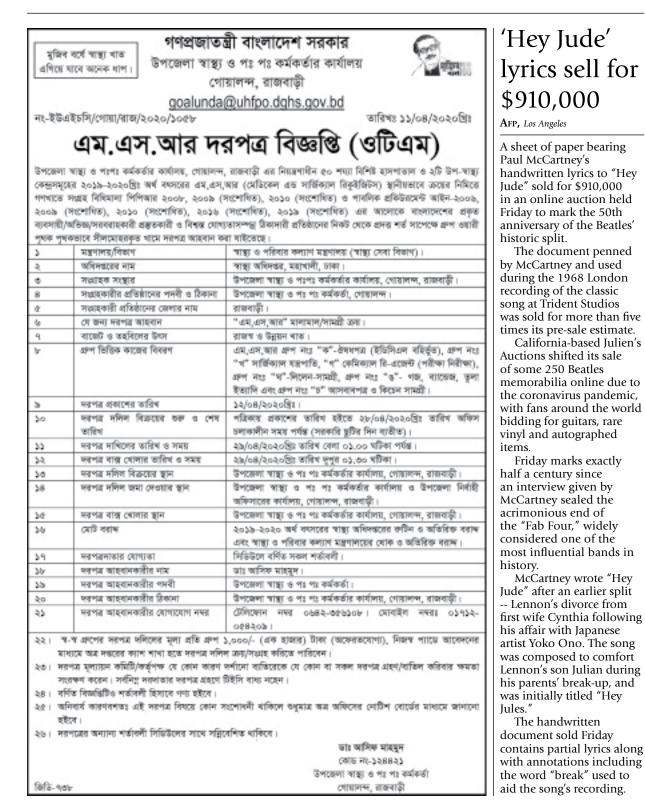
of another outbreak

China yesterday reported a rise in new coronavirus infections, mostly in travellers arriving from abroad, as doctors in the central city of Wuhan, where the virus initially

emerged, warned its behaviour was still not well-understood. Tough curbs imposed

have reined in infections sharply since the height of the pandemic in February, although it has spread worldwide to infect 1.6 million people with 100,000 deaths.

Healthcare workers (R) confort the wife of Esteban, a male nurse that died of the coronavirus disease at the Severo Ochoa Hospital in Leganes, near Madrid, on Friday. SOURCE: AFP



is no such potential risk,' said Wang Xinghuan, president of Wuhan's Leishenshan hospital, its second built especially for virus patients. While some experts do

not expect a big second wave, thanks to China's stringent controls, the possibility could not be ignored, he told reporters. "At present, from the hospital perspective, our understanding of the virus is still very insufficient," Wang said, during a hospital tour organised by Wuhan officials.

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Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Department of Public Health Engineering Office of Executive Engineer Research and Development Division DPHE Bhaban, 14, Shahid Captain Monsur Ali Sarani Kakrail, Dhaka-1000



Memo No. 46.03.2600.083.07.008.19-241

Date: 09/04/2020

Corrigendum Notice

All concerned are hereby notified that the following Amendments are made in the Invitation for Expression of Interest (EoI) Ref: 46.03.2600.083.07.01.19-230, Date: 25/03/2020 published on 27/03/2020 and below e-Tender invited in National e-GP System due to unavoidable circumstances.

Expression of Interest (EoI)

SI.	Description	Original	Corrigendum
1.	EOI closing date and time	12/04/2020, 2.00pm	30/04/2020, 2.00pm

e-Tender invited in the National e-GP System Portal

Tender ID No.	Package No.	Description	Original	Corrigendum		
449151	SWTSP- RBF-11	Tender last selling date	12-Apr-2020 12:00	30-Apr-2020 12:00		
449151		Tender closing date	12-Apr-2020 15:00	30-Apr-2020 15:00		
GD-735 A.H.M. Khalequr Rahman Executive Engineer (c.c.) Phone: 02-9330061						





DHAKA SUNDAY APRIL 12, 2020, CHAITRA 29, 1426 BS 🧿 starbusiness@thedailystar.net

TAMING CORONAVIRUS RAMPAGE

Govt's Tk 5,000cr lifeline for farmers all set

AKM ZAMIR UDDIN

There seems to be finally some light at the end of the tunnel for the agriculture sector as the central bank and agriculture ministry have finalised a Tk 5,000 crore rescue package for farmers, rice millers, producers of all agro-products and owners of dairy farms.

Since the countrywide shutdown was announced on March 25 with the view to flattening the curve of coronavirus, farmers have been passing sleepless nights as it essentially ruptured the distribution towards a pool of losses

With the hope of pulling them out of the pits, the government has prepared the at 2 per cent interest and disburse them at 2 percentage points to 7 per cent. package, which is due to be announced in a day or two

Along with the farmers, businesses and entrepreneurs of the agriculture sector will be allowed to take loans at 5 per cent interest from the packet, said central bank and agriculture ministry officials involved in drawing up the bailout package.

network for fresh produce tipping them constituted with the Bangladesh Bank's ministry official requesting anonymity. own funds to implement the package.

> Banks will take funds from the scheme 5 per cent interest.

working capital, with repayment duration Every bank will have to disburse 2.5 per being 18 months, including a six-month grace period.

Farmers' income source has now completely stopped due to the ongoing towards their annual farm loan target shutdown as most of them usually get according to BB officials.

A fresh refinance scheme will be by on daily earnings, said an agriculture

Besides, the central bank is working on slashing the interest rate on farm loans by

The BB has set a farm loan disbursement The borrowers will get the loans as target of Tk 24,124 crore for fiscal 2019-20. cent of their total loans per year to farmers.

But the amount the banks will disburse from the refinance scheme will not count

'Where will the money come from?'

The all-consuming question for small business owners

SOHEL PARVEZ and AHSAN HABIB

Since April 1, Farhana Nazira is having trouble sleeping.

The men's Panjabi boutique she owns at Shah Ali Market at Mirpur-1 in Dhaka has been shut since the last week of March, when it would have been brimming with customers looking for an outfit for the Pahela Baishakh and Eid-ul-Fitr.

This year, both Pahela Baishakh, the first day of the Bengali New Year and a cause for much merriment, and Eid-ul-Fitr, the biggest festival of the year for the Muslim-majority country, are taking place just a month apart.

The two occasions contribute to more than 60 per cent of annual sales of most of the clothing industry, so Nazira and many others in her industry went big this year: they invested a fair bit on making ready a vast range of collection and stock.

All those hopes have now been shattered to a million pieces with the outbreak of the lethal coronavirus in Bangladesh, which has necessitated a countrywide shutdown since March 26.

Even before shutdown, Nazira's sales were subdued as customers stayed away



Roadblock in going for full digital salary payment overnight

BGMEA survey finds just 13pc factories pay wages through banks, MFS

Refayet Ullah Mirdha

Only 9 per cent garment factories pay wages to workers through mobile financial services (MFS) and 4 per cent through banks, according to a new study, whose findings may make it difficult for the country to digitally pay 4.1 million apparel workers overnight.

As many as 76 per cent garment factories pay wages to workers through cash, while 11 per cent disburse salaries through multiple models, the survey of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) showed.

The BGMEA conducted the survey to know the payment modes used by factory owners as the factory management has been preparing MFS accounts for workers to submit to banks

The finance ministry and the Bangladesh Bank have made it mandatory for the factory owners to present the list of workers and their MFS and bank account numbers to banks if they want to use the government's Tk 5,000 crore stimulus package to pay workers.

The banks have been asked to directly pay to the workers' accounts.

The BGMEA survey was conducted among 160 factories, which employ 225,710 workers. Of the workers, 101,379, or 45 per cent of the workers surveyed, have MFS accounts. They use bKash, Rocket and similar kinds of MFS accounts.

"Using MFS, 1 per cent of the surveyed factories pay salaries to employees and 9 percent factories pay wages to workers. This is insignificant," the study said

In Bangladesh, garment workers are grouped in seven grades. Wages are given to the graded workers and the salary to the non-graded employees, such as freshers and trainees.

Some 147,111 workers, or 65 per cent of the total, have national identification (NID) cards.

Some factories have reported that the workers who were not able to provide NID had submitted birth certificates. This is a clear indication that NID information must be obtained for all workers of a factory to ensure proper background verification, said the study.

Since not all workers and employees possess a smartphone, it might get in the way of going for 100 per cent MFS coverage outright.

The limitation of the study is it asked about the smartphone, but a good number of workers may have feature phones that may be used to operate MFS accounts. The study recommended immediate action to enforce

once news broke on March 8 of confirmed cases of the highly contagious disease in Bangladesh.

"I could not give the full salaries to my 12 salesman and production workers for March or clear the bills of fabric suppliers and artisans and I don't know where the money will come from. I am close to bankruptcy.

And this is the first time in 13 years that Nazira, a university graduate, has been this cash-strapped, even though her boutique went through periods of lull in sales previously.

Her clothing store would register Tk 12,000-Tk 15,000 in sales daily when things were normal, and the annual turnover would stand close to Tk 60 lakh.

Nazira's plight is not an isolated case; some 5,000 small and medium local boutiques are in the same boat as her and might eventually have to take the bitter decision to shutter their stores.

Fashion Entrepreneurs Association of Bangladesh (FEAB) earlier estimated loss of Tk 2,000 crore in Baishakhi sales due to the coronavirus outbreak.

At the same time, payment of wages and salaries of employees and artisans for three months has become uncertain. The amount is nearly Tk 1,500 crore, according to FEAB.

to get high returns from our investment," said Mursalin Ahmed, owner of Kapor-E-Bangla.

With five stores in Dhaka and outside, Kapor-E-Bangla designed clothes to bank on the birth centenary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on March 17 and celebration of Independence Day onMarch 26 apart from Paĥela Baishakh and Eid.

"Eid is not even looking promising now," said the owner of Kapor-E-Bangla that could pay 30 per cent salaries to its staff for March.

The Muslim festival, which is due in the latter part of May this year, generates Tk 4,000 crore-Tk 5,000 crore in sales for local fashion houses, according to FEAB President Shaheen Ahmmed.

"We cannot even imagine what lies ahead for us," he said.

Md Helal Uddin, chairman of

said there are 56 lakh enterprises below 15 employees in the country.

Altogether these businesses employ nearly one crore people.

"We have owners of many shops who meet day to day family expenses based on daily sales. Now all is stuck up. All of us are suffering from a dearth of cash," he said, adding that shops and small businesses would be struggle to pay the salary for the current month

He urged the government to give lowcost loans to micro and small businesses to tide them over.

Bangladesh Hotel Restaurant Sweets Bakery Workers Union, said workers are end. in a serious hardship as most of them did not get wages of March.

The government needs to introduce "We are closed when we are supposed Bangladesh Shop Owners Association, from the risk of hunger during coronavirus I am really in tension."

crisis, he said. The owners of Farhana Fashion and Kapor-E-Bangla are looking at the Tk 20,000 crore stimulus package launched by the government to provide working capital to finance small and medium enterprises, including cottage-based businesses, to ride out the troubled waters.

"We need immediate bank support so that we can keep our employees,' said Ahmed of Kapor-E-Bangla, while urging the government to issue guidelines urgently so that firms can apply.

Nazira already inquired about the Akhteruzzaman Khan, president of bank she works with. But she is uncertain whether she would get any support at the

"There will be a lot of pressure of application in banks as all will try. So the question is whether I will get the finance ration to free 25 lakh workers in the trade and or not. If yes, how much would I get?

the opening of the MFS account of workers for wage payment.

There are a good number of workers who are not registered with the workers' database of the BGMEA.

It called for making workers' database registration mandatory and uploading the data within the next 30 days, or by May 10. The BGMEA's e-wallet should be rolled out immediately.

The survey asked the BGMEA to ask its members to collect the NID of workers and verify them well. The wages and salary payment should be well-preserved and it will be a part of critical resources for the industry, the study said.

Providing support to enhance the availability of smartphones or any kind of mobile devices for the workers can be ensured with the support of development partners.

This step can trigger the use of MFS accounts by workers, who now shy away from it for lack of mobile devices.

"MFS is not a choice for us any longer," said Rubana Huq, president of the BGMEA.

Rather it is mandatory to ensure transparency of the sector.

'Moreover, through a bank account or MFS, we could also save the hassle of workers coming to factories for salary. The sector does not have anything to hide or shy away from," Huq told The Daily Star in a WhatsApp message.

It's possible to open MFS accounts by this month, she said, adding that salaries for April need to be paid by the first week of next month.

"So, if we have the accounts by the first working days of May, it's all good.

All will be paid the salary for March. There's no reason to be worried about it, she said.

BGMEA members pay wages worth Tk 4,000 crore a month

Now handset assemblers, venture capital and private equity firms demand aid from stimulus package

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Mobile phone manufacturers have sought from the government-announced loans stimulus package to offset the fallout of the coronavirus pandemic as all the handset assembling factories are now closed due to lockdown.

In a letter to Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal, the Bangladesh Mobile Phone Manufacturers' Association (BMPMA) demanded loans from the Tk 30,000-crore stimulus package that the government would provide as working capital to industrial units and service sectors hit by the pandemic.

Under the package, banks will offer loans from their own funds based on their relationship with corporate clients.

The interest rate on this loan would be the regular 9 per cent but the borrowers would have to pay just 4.5 per cent, with the government

making up the difference in interest payment. In their proposal, the mobile phone manufacturers promised to pay back the loans within 18 months

The financial incentives were needed to pay the salaries and wages of the workers from April to September, the BMPMA said in a press statement on Thursday.

"Otherwise, a huge number of workers will be jobless.'

The association also called for a waiver of their utility bills for the next six months as their factories are now closed. Otherwise, the amassing bills would be a huge burden on the entrepreneurs once they resume production, it said.

"We had been under strain long before the lockdown was imposed in Bangladesh as most of our component parts are imported from China, where coronavirus had been on the rampage since December last year," said Jakaria Shahid, general secretary of the BMPMA.

He hoped that the government would consider the matter as it is an import-substitute industry. About two lakh workers are engaged with the production of mobile phones in nine plants in the country, he added.

Not only has their production come to a halt, but their cashflow has taken a beating too for the lockdown: they sold a huge number of phones on credit but are now unable to collect the monev

"So a big chunk of our money is now stuck in the market," Shahid said.

Currently, there is a 57 per cent customs duty on smartphone import, while the duty on the components of the locally-assembled smartphones is 15 per cent.

Buoyed by the tax benefits, entrepreneurs dived into handset assembly, setting up state-ofthe-art plants and taking over the local market with their relatively more affordable wares.

In another development, the Venture

Capital and Private Equity Association of income which has nosedived by at least 80 per Bangladesh (VCPEAB) has sought Tk 450 crore from the government's stimulus package for paying six months' salaries of employees of start-ups and clear their office rents.

The association said there are about 300 start-ups in Bangladesh that are in distress over the anticipation of more than Tk 450 crore losses as sales of products and services have come to a standstill

"That's why we are seeking the support from the government to save our industry,' said Shawkat Hossain, general secretary of the VCPEAB, which also sent the proposal to Kamal last week.

About 1.5 lakh people are directly employed by the start-ups and their jobs are at risk now, he said, adding that about seven lakh service providers who are associated with the start-ups are currently unable to provide their services. Many start-ups have export-oriented

cent recently, according to a statement of the association.

As the government is giving a spirited push towards the digital sphere by encouraging online classroom and online health consultancy and entertainment, local start-ups can be engaged and hired in content creation, it said.

Priority should be given to start-ups in government works and tenders such that they can stay afloat and expand their horizon.

At the same time, a collateral-free loan at 2 per cent interest has been sought for the startups, the other VCPEAB members and their portfolio companies to help them meet their working capital requirements.

"Implementation of these proposals will ensure continuous revenue and cash flow for the start-ups and their ventures can be saved from the existential threat posed by the ongoing crisis," Hossain added.





TAMING CORONAVIRUS RAMPAGE

Making the bell toll for the poor and the vulnerable



SK ENAMUL HAQ



agriculture, construction, micro industrial LPL estimates. based assistance and Tk 10 per kg rice through enterprises and a whole variety of services in The government has 1.7 per cent of GDP in open market sales are becoming increasingly

It is important to recognise that for these 44 million workers, the trade-off is between the virus risk and hunger.

ZAHID HUSSAIN

Are we doing enough to support households dependent on labour income from the formal and informal sectors in this time of distress?

The issue is particularly germane for the 125 million poor and vulnerable. For the vast majority of people in this category, labour is the only marketable endowment.

Let's assume the 6 million formal sector workers, who may not be poor but are surely vulnerable, are covered until the end of June by the Tk 72,750 crore concessional loan package announced so far for the formal sector, including large, medium and small enterprises in industry and services.

Assuming a 60:40 dependency ratio, this means 15 million poor and vulnerable have some sort of support.

The rest 110 million who depend on



While "testing, testing, testing" is the key to fighting coronavirus, "governance, governance, governance" is the key to delivering assistance to the poor and the vulnerable. the informal sector are totally exposed to the vagaries of coronavirus. Among them, the working population is

about 44 million. All of them are extremely distressed -- some more, some less, but distressed nonetheless. They are exposed to the risks of contracting the virus as well as enduring income losses.

It is important to recognise that for these 44 million workers, the trade-off is between the virus risk and hunger.

It is between the risk of suffering and dying by contracting coronavirus or bearing starvation pain, and even death, due to hunger if they stay home, where physical distance is a luxury for most.

Yet, staying home is surely better for the entire country and for them too if only it is economically bearable.

The question then is how much will it cost from the national budget to provide a minimum guaranteed income to the 44 million uncovered working people and their dependents during the crisis period?

In assessing the total fiscal cost of a guaranteed minimum income, we need to make assumptions about the length of the crisis period and the amount needed per capita per month.

What is a reasonable assumption about the length of the crisis period?

Even Anthony Fauci, the epidemic expert advising US President Donald Trump on the country's coronavirus response, cannot answer this question.

Whatever it is, it must include the time already elapsed. This is nearing a month now in Bangladesh.

The immediate question concerning the budget implementors is how much do we need to add to the fiscal 2019-20's budget?

If we assume, as seems plausible, the "sudden stop" period will not end by June, then for fiscal 2019-20's budget purposes, the crisis period is March-June, which is four months.

The minimum amount needed per capita per month can be derived from the national upper (UPL) and lower (LPL) poverty lines. These were respectively Tk 2,670 and Tk 1,865 in 2016/17. They need adjustment to account for inflation since 2016/17.

Using non-food and food inflation gives a range from which to pick the one that is affordable.

Based on the upper poverty line, this range is between Tk 3,088 to Tk 3,235 per capita per month. Based on the lower poverty line, it is between Tk 2,134 to Tk 2,234 per capita per month.

With 110 million beneficiaries, the total budget based on the UPL estimates ranges between Tk 135,872 crore to Tk 142,340 crore. The total budget has to be between Tk 91,096 crores to Tk 98,296 crores based on the

its social protection budget for fiscal 2019-20.

The public social protection programmes are known to have large inclusion errors.

The impact of coronavirus may have corrected at least part of these errors by making the hitherto ineligible currently eligible because of income losses.

However, a large part of the budgetary provisions may have been spent already.

Assume for simplicity that about two months' equivalent of provision may still be available to pitch in to provide a guaranteed minimum income per capita per month to the uncovered poor and vulnerable. It amounts to about Tk 7,200 crore.

Subtracting this from each of the above estimates, the net additional amount ranges from a minimum of 3.3 per cent of GDP (non-food inflation-adjusted LPL) to a maximum of 5.3 per cent of GDP (food inflation-adjusted UPL).

These are indicative back-of-the-envelope estimates for budget makers to consider based on 110 million poor and vulnerable outside the formal sector.

The latter may appear too large compared with other estimates floating around ranging between 40 to 70 million.

The issue here is how many of the vulnerable do we exclude from the cash assistance because we think they are not as badly affected as those below them and there are resource constraints.

evident every day.

Whether it is 40 million or 110 million beneficiaries is something that can be gauged from learning by doing.

Yes, faced with collapsing tax revenues, any addition to the budget is an addition to the budget deficit.

However, faced with a human disaster, surely, we can find a way to finance it, if necessary, through deficit monetisation, as we are most likely to end up doing to finance the support announced for the formal sector.

As suggested by the 2019 Nobel Laureates Abhijeet Banerjee and Duflo, we need to be much bolder with the social transfer schemes. Direct funding of the additional fiscal transfers by the Bangladesh Bank is necessary to facilitate a speedy response.

The key implementation challenges are to identify the beneficiaries and deliver the assistance.

Preparing a completely new list based on means testing is not feasible in quick time.

The existing lists of beneficiaries in various social protection programs are good starting points.

It will need to be expanded to include all poor and vulnerable dependent on the informal sector.

Occupational and geographical targeting can substitute for means testing under the circumstances.

Lawrence Summers, a former chief economist of the World Bank and Treasury Secretary under former US President Bill Clinton, says that the first law of crisis response is to overreact rather than underreact.

The silver lining from the lower estimates is that a lower effort in percentage of GDP -say 1.2 to 1.9 -- is needed to help at least 40 million depending on which per capita level of assistance we choose.

There is no time to waste being too clever about the design of interventions, says the 2019 Nobel Laureate Esther Dufflo.

Let's zero-in on the minimum cash income guarantee for the poor and the vulnerable in the informal sector.

Cash social assistance is a widely used intervention chosen by 71 out of the 106 countries that have announced emergency responses to fight the poverty impact of coronavirus.

The logistical, social distance and governance challenges in delivering the food-

Agriculture, transport, hotels and restaurants, personal services and so on are good candidates.

We have the benefit of poverty maps based on 2016/17 Household Income and Expenditure data.

It should not be too difficult to identify the distressed using data available at the national and local levels and the local knowledge of the staff working for the local level government and non-government institutions.

Delivering assistance to workers who have no bank accounts or access to mobile financial services (MFS) is another challenge already highlighted by many even in the case of formal sector workers.

This number may not be as large as touted, but it is likely to be significant enough in the informal sector to warrant attention.

Instead of seeing it as a deterrent, it could be regarded as an opportunity to expand financial inclusion.

Let's do whatever is necessary to support bringing them into the MFS net using the 500,000 MFS agents that we currently have. Also, as far as I understand, about 80 per cent of the population above 18 years of age in Bangladesh have at least a paper ID.

The finance ministry needs to take the lead with other relevant ministries, parastatals, non-governmental organisations and MFS providers, as needed, to help reach cash assistance to the target groups.

While "testing, testing, testing" is the key to fighting coronavirus, "governance, governance, governance" is the key to delivering assistance to the poor and the vulnerable.

Lawrence Summers, a former chief economist of the World Bank and Treasury Secretary under former US President Bill Clinton, says that the first law of crisis response is to overreact rather than underreact.

This applies to both coronavirus containment and mitigation measures as well as measures to prevent the emergence of conditions undermining the effectiveness of the mitigation measures.

Without minimum social assistance, the hand-to-mouth poor and vulnerable people will have no choice but to defy orders.

Justifiably, one may worry about the impact on the prices of essentials after the cash transfers kick in.

Inflation generally should not be a concern in the present context if the reliance on deficit monetisation is strictly restricted to the duration of the emergency measures linked to the health crisis.

What would be important is to ensure that the supply chain of essentials remains functional and the stock of essentials available in the local markets is adequate. There is an overall contraction in domestic and export demand anyway.

The key priority to focus on now is the mitigation and containment of the virus spread, the consequent deepening of poverty and the spectre of hunger.

The author is an economist

EDITORIAL



Govt's special stimulus package for the extreme poor

Make sure no one goes hungry during the nationwide lockdown

TE commend the government for its plan to offer cash aid to the 34 lakh poor families who have been hard-hit by the ongoing shutdown due to the Covid-19 outbreak across the country. The families will get a monthly allowance for three months starting from April through mobile banking, while farmers will also get an amount to boost crop production. The government also plans to give farmers loans at only three percent interest rate.

Since the enforcement of social distancing measures and countrywide lockdown to contain the spread of the deadly Covid-19, the low income people-the rickshaw and rickshaw-van pullers, transport workers, construction and hotel workers, street hawkers, agricultural and day labourers, garment workers, porters and domestic helpshave been suffering the most as they have lost their livelihoods. A Brac study, conducted between March 31 and April 5, has found that the number of people living in extreme poverty has increased to 60 percent during this lockdown. The study also reveals that 14 percent of low-income respondents do not have any food at home while average household income has fallen by 75 percent during this time.

Under the circumstances, the stimulus package the government is planning to unveil for the extreme poor is really important. Because if financial aid and food assistance do not reach those who need them most, it will compel them to leave home to earn a living defying the lockdown and social distancing measures, which will eventually increase the risk of spreading the virus more.

Therefore, the government should plan judiciously to reach these people and provide them with food and financial assistance. Its plan to send money to vulnerable groups through mobile phones seems to be a good idea as this would, hopefully, prevent corruption in disbursement. However, a key challenge for the government would be to identify all the families who are in need of urgent assistance. We hope the large mobile phone operators in the country would give their full support to the government in tracking these people. However, special efforts will be needed to track and reach the people who do not have access to mobile phones. We hope the nongovernment organisations working with the most vulnerable groups of society can help the government in doing so.

Since, according to IEDCR, we are now at stage-3 of the coronavirus outbreak, we need to strictly maintain the lockdown and social distancing measures taken by the government. If we fail to do so, we will soon reach the stage-4 of the outbreak, meaning that the spread will be practically uncontrollable. In order to stop that from happening, the government must make sure that all sections of people stay at home willingly. And that will only be possible if food and financial assistance reach the poor and extreme poor

Notes from a frontline healthcare worker in the UK

MD SALIMUZZAMAN BHUIYAN

continue to look after ventilated Covid patients in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU). We are dealing with the sickest patients in the hospital. Last night I heard the most dreadful, heart breaking news that the first Bangladeshi doctor has died in London after fighting for his life for two weeks on a ventilator. He is Dr Abdul Mabud Chowdhury Faisal. He was a consultant urologist and working in the NHS as a front line health worker. He wrote an open letter to the Prime Minister Mr Boris Johnson before he was attacked by the virus, urging the prime minister to protect the health care workers by providing them with PPEs and arranging for Covid tests for every health worker. At the time of writing this, Mr Johnson himself is admitted with Covid in a London hospital. This virus doesn't discriminate. I salute my fellow fighter Faisal and express my deepest sympathy to the bereaved family.

In my entire professional life, I have never seen such a severe damage to the lungs caused so quickly by a virus. The condition is called Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome (ARDS) of lungs. With some patients, we are struggling to maintain the normal oxygen level in the blood despite delivering them with the highest possible oxygen

One of the most

process is that we

relatives to come

in our ICU. This

is a safeguarding

relatives.

measure to stop the

virus spreading to the

painful parts of this

can't allow patients'

near their loved one,

even if they are dying

concentration (100 percent) through a ventilator. We are using high PEEP (Positive End Expiratory Pressure) in our ventilators. We have been regularly "proning" (putting them in a face-down position, lying on the abdomen) and "de-proning" (having them lie on their back) our sedated and ventilated patients twice daily. We usually leave them in the

found in Covid-afflicted lungs following post-mortem studies in Spain, Italy and USA. We have started using a blood thinning Clexane injection (1.5 mg/ kg) to break up the clots in the lungs (for the sickest patients only). A young patient was transferred to ECMO (Extra Corporal Membrane Oxygenation) support at the nearest centre in Manchester recently. We

sent water, drinks, chocolate, snacks, fruits and hand lotions to our unit. The medical director of the hospital and the senior executive members are visiting us frequently. These efforts are providing us with the most needed moral support. I received a phone call from the central BMA this morning. They are sending personal support packs (hand sanitizers, razor,



Healthcare workers are on the frontline of the Covid-19 pandemic, and around the world, people have come up with inventive ways to thank them.

"prone" position for 20-22 hours and the couldn't maintain the patient's normal "de-prone" position for four to six hours. We found that these measures improve the oxygen level of the blood. But this is very hard work. We have trained and developed a designated proning and deproning team among the theatre nurses. Now we encourage more patients to continue with Non-invasive Ventilation (NIV) and Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) before they end up on a ventilator. Awake patients with CPAP/NIV can practice proning and de-proning on their own. Some other patients, meanwhile, are treated with hydroxychloroquine as well as a broad spectrum of antibiotics as a prophylactic measure.

An evidence of pulmonary microthrombosis formation was recently

blood oxygen level despite aggressive ventilation for six days.

One of the most painful parts of this process is that we can't allow patients' relatives to come near their loved one, even if they are dying in our ICU. This is a safeguarding measure to stop the virus spreading to the relatives. It is stressful and emotionally upsetting, but we try to call the family members twice a day and update them about the patient's condition over the phone.

I would also like to talk about the local and national supports we are receiving here. The local hotels and restaurants in my town are sending food to our ICU every day. One garden centre sent flowers to all our staff last week. The local population have raised funds and

PHOTO: OLIVIER DOULIERY/AFF

tooth paste, soap, etc.) to our hospital. Many of my friends and relatives (who happen to be Bangladeshi doctors), including my daughter and son-in-law, are working in the NHS as frontline health workers. I thank you all. I express my sincere thanks to the brave doctors, nurses and healthcare workers in Bangladesh-I am aware that they are risking their lives dealing with the Covid patients against all the odds and despite huge difficulties. I also sincerely congratulate all the voluntary organisations and volunteers in Bangladesh who have come forward to serve the nation in this difficult time. We shall overcome this crisis one day and build a healthy nation again.

Md Salimuzzaman Bhuiyan is General Secretary, Bangladesh Medical Society in the UK. Email: mszaman57@yahoo.co.uk

Covid-19 and its aftermath

A national council is imperative



UCH has National Preparedness and Response Plan for COVID-19-well formulated headed by the prime minister working 24/7, to coordinate, supervise, guide,

at the right time.

Brands must put their money where their mouth is

They can't dishonour contracts and push millions into poverty

 \mathbf{T} T is truly unfortunate, unfair and unethical that top fashion brands and retailers are cancelling L orders or refusing to pay suppliers in their supply chain over the Covid-19 outbreak, pushing millions of workers around the world, who live from hand to mouth, into unemployment and poverty. In Bangladesh, USD 1.8 billion in orders have been put on hold and another USD 1.4 billion have already been cancelled, according to the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA). Planned orders for April-December, amounting to nearly USD 1.7 billion, have also been cancelled. As a result, tens of thousands of workers have already been laid off and it is estimated that at least one million RMG worker will lose their jobs in the coming months if brands refuse to share the burden of the economic catastrophe.

Over the decades, brands have continued to push costs downwards and increase their pressure on suppliers despite their professed goals in public to end the exploitative conditions in Bangladeshi factories. According to a research by Mark Anner, director of the Center of Global Rights, the FOB prices for all RMG products have actually fallen by 8.84 percent over the last 10 years, with retailers making no adjustment in prices for the better since the minimum wage was increased in 2013. Meanwhile, retailers have decreased lead times from 94 to 86 days from 2011 to 2016; and they pay suppliers 30.17 days after shipment in 2016 as opposed to 22.74 in 2011.

The pandemic has further exposed the limits of the global supply chain and highlighted the hypocrisies of global brands who claim to care about workers' rights to their consumers while engaging in highly unethical practices themselves with impunity, such as abruptly cancelling orders or declining to pay for products which have already been produced or are in the process of being produced. International labour rights watchdogs have criticised these "bullying tendencies of brands and called upon brands to respect the contractual terms and conditions as well as take an equitable approach to sharing the financial burden of the crisis.

We reiterate this call to brands and remind them that they are the ones who reap the most benefits in a highly exploitative supply chain, and as such, they should also bear the most responsibility in protecting those who are most vulnerable down the chain.



in December 2019 and now. By the time this piece appears in print more than a million and a half people around the world in more than 200 countries will have been affected

the time the virus

struck in Wuhan

and nearly a hundred thousand will have succumbed to the virus. China, the first country to be affected by the new virus, appears to have come out of the worst of the pandemic. Not so for many other of the more than 200 countries affected. At the time of writing this piece, one person is succumbing to the deadly disease every two minutes in New York/US.

Bangladesh is facing a situation of unprecedented severity, whose intensity may not be like what some countries are contending with, and hopefully be spared the outcome that has befallen on some countries in terms of number of infected and fatalities.

The health issue has to be tackled with urgency under elaborate action plans. But even that, it appears, lacks wellorganised implementation due mainly to the lacunae in the management of the anti COVID-19 efforts. It would appear that specific SOPs for implementing the guidelines by various subcommittees, as the said national committee guideline calls for, have not been worked out as yet. And thus, the PM's guidelines cannot get along properly.

Admittedly, this is an extraordinary health situation but its imminence in Bangladesh was not entirely unforeseen, given the rapid spread of the virus in other countries. But it would not be fair to say that the administration was not prepared, at least theoretically, to face the situation. The "National Preparedness and Response Plan for COVID-19" issued by the DG Health in March this year, which lays down in very great detail what the four likely ways that virus will find its way into our country, and how to deal with those, is an evidence of the government anticipatory work, at least conceptualisation of the course of action.

Under the plan there is the National Committee for Prevention and Control of Covid-19 headed by the health minister and National Coordination Committee for Prevention and Control of Covid-19 headed by the PM's Chief Physician who himself is a medical specialist. And there are committees down to upazilla level including rapid response teams. However,

and drawn from the WHO guidelines published in February 2020-addresses only the health aspect of the issue.

The government has deployed its resources and it is good to see the prime minister take charge of directing the anti-COVID effort. But, in spite of the best intention of the PM and the administration at the centre, its efforts to implement the action plan to a lower level has gone a bit askew at places. And that calls for working out a comprehensive strategy to deal with the several problems both now and the future. I submit that COVID-19 requires addressing a few other likely outcomes that the pandemic will leave in its wake. Apart from the health issue, we shall have to face other problems long after the virus has taken its last toll, most importantly the economic problem.

and provide the overall direction of the operation for the implementation of the directives more efficiently under the

national strategy. For example, although the policy paper spells out the four ways the virus can spread, the first being from the categories of people arriving from contaminated countries, and lays down the courses of action, the on-ground work were inadequate. Vital actions in some instances were a little late in coming, ostensibly due to lack of decision; the consequences were evident. All instructions and announcement must come from the proposed national council. That would help avoid unwarranted situations, the kind of which the RMG workers faced. In a situation like this the decision to keep the RMG factories open or closed cannot be left to



The government has deployed its resources and it is good to see the prime minister take charge of directing the anti-COVID effort.

We may not face the same trauma health wise as some countries are facing, but we cannot escape the consequences of the pandemic on the world economy which unlike the 2008 meltdown will have a cascading effect on us. And unless all issues are addressed and preparatory action taken for what might come in the future, the consequences might be more severe in terms of human lives and last long after the virus is defeated.

And this, we feel, requires a multipronged approach under a comprehensive strategy which makes imperative the creation of a council at the national level

individual owners, as the trade minister had suggested. That decision should be for the government to take.

One feels that the preparatory action in anticipation of return of our citizens, particularly from those countries infected with COVID, could have been better planned and more efficiently laid out. The quarantine station for the incoming Bangladeshi may be OK for haj pilgrims in transit for a day or two, but for families to be quarantined in such a condition for not one two or three days but a least fourteen is unbearable.

Also, for example the government

We may not face the same trauma health wise as some countries are facing, but we cannot escape the consequences of the pandemic on the world economy which unlike the 2008 meltdown will have a cascading effect on us.

has taken certain decisions which affect people's daily life. The worst affected group is the marginalised, the day labourers and fixed wage earners who no longer have earning opportunities. Getting necessities for subsistence to these people is a big exercise which can't be played by ears. Lack of coordination will lead to wastage of resources and duplication of effort, and lack of strict supervision will result in pilferage, as was evident.

As this paper has repeatedly stressed, what we face today is a kind of war, and like war it must be faced. In this regard it is imperative that a national council be established immediately. Apart from the PM, the Council may consist of home, health, finance, foreign, trade & commerce, overseas employment, transport and labour minsters, PM's Security Advisor, the heads of services, PSO, AFD, cabinet Secretary, PM's Principal Secretary, IGP, senior virologist, epidemiologist and public health experts. The national council should vet the comprehensive strategy and direct the implementation of it in totality during the ongoing pandemic and after it has ended. That we hope will be sooner than later.

The nodal point should be the national council. Centralised planning and clear-cut directives and coordination, and decentralised implementation at the ground level would ensure more efficient application of the strategy and efficient use of resources. Policy decisions should come centrally and not from any individual ministers, that too from those who are not directly related to the issue.

. Brig Gen Shahedul Anam Khan, ndc, psc (Retd), is a former Associate Editor of The Daily Star

Demise of an iconic scholar and activist

Shaheen Anam

N March 22, Professor Emiritus Sultana Sarwatara Zaman and Sultana Apa to those who knew intimately passed away, leaving behind a host of friends, relatives and admirers to mourn her death. To me, she embodied what we as women of South Asia aspire to be, strong, courageous, principled, independent yet steeped in the positive culture, values and traditions of our society. She showed us how one can be a professional of the highest calibre yet be a loving wife, devoted mother, and doting grandmother.

Born to an eminent family of Chottogram in 1931, she lost her author mother at a young age. Her father became a Sanyasi after her mother's death and Sultana Zaman's upbringing was left to neighbours, relatives and siblings. She showed promise from a young age and excelled in her studies. She passed matriculation and HSC with distinction. Soon after she got married to Captain Nuruzzaman in 1951 and went to live in West Pakistan. Her studies was disrupted for few years as she played the role of wife and mother bringing up their three children. Her husband, Colonel Nuruzzaman, later to become Sector Commander, Bir Uttom, our most wellknown and valiant freedom fighter was her true partner as they shared a relationship of love, companionship and friendship.

Sultana Zaman went back to her studies and completed her Bachelors and then Masters in Psychology from Dhaka University in 1967 with distinction and was appointed as assistant professor at Dhaka University. In 1971 her family, Colonel Zaman, their two daughters and son joined the war of liberation. She went back to teaching at DU after the war was over. A teaching job in the most prestigious university of the country would most individuals content, but not her. She wanted to do something that would leave a lasting impact on society. She chose to devote her life to improving the lives of vulnerable people, especially focusing on children with intellectual disabilities.

In 1972 Sultana Zaman set up the Dipshikh Vidyalay for disadvantaged women and children where women were given vocational skills to become economically independent and created opportunity for street children to get education. Her desire for achieving excellence in her field of work made her seek higher studies and at the cost of great personal sacrifice she obtained a Phd degree from Emory College Georgia USA in 1975. In 1977 she established the Society for Children with Intellectual Disability. However, her most important contribution was setting up the Bangladesh Protibondhi Foundation (BPF) in 1984, a not for profit organisation with the aim of providing opportunities and inclusive education to children with intellectual disabilities. In the years that followed BPF has become recognised as the premier institute for introducing state of the art testing, screening and procedures for early diagnosis and prevention of intellectual disabilities in children.

By now Sultana Zaman realised that to sustain work and growth in the field of child intellectual disability there has to be a regular flow of trained professionals. She then founded the Department of Special Education in 1993 at the Institute of Education and Research (IER) Dhaka University. This department is credited for developing high quality human resource for the special education sectors, and continues to train hundreds of young



Sultana Zaman

women and men to join the profession Department of Gender Studies at DU. Sultana Zaman has received many and generate new knowledge awards such as the Rokeya Padak, the through path breaking research and Henry Kessler award etc. Besides many publications. For this contribution other things, she will be remembered she was awarded the prestigious title for her ability to not only conceive of Professor Emeritus. She is one of of an idea but bring it to fruition by the only two women to receive this award in the past half century. The galvanising and inspiring others. She has left a lasting imprint on the lives other is Professor Emeritus Dr Najma Chowdhury for establishing the of young women in the country who

aspire to go beyond the ordinary and do something extraordinary. She has been an inspiration and mentor to so many and I have been fortunate to be one of them. Most importantly, she built institutions to remain as a legacy of her extraordinary leadership qualities.

She was truly grounded in family values of bringing relatives and friends together. She built a welcoming home with her warmth and hospitality. The Friday afternoon lunches which she cooked herself were sought after by all who knew her. She loved spending time with her four grandchildren and inculcated in them love for the country and its cultural traditions. Yet, she did all this with such elegance and a matter of fact style. Along the way she mentored a host of Phd students who would often say "ish, apar moton jodi ektu hote partam" ("if only we could be a little like Apa"). To add to all this, she took to singing in her later life which gave her much joy and comfort.

Finally, she has gone and her absence will be felt by those whose lives she touched. Her students, professionals in the field, children and their parents who have benefitted from her vision of an inclusive world for children who are differently abled. She lived a full and fulfilled life and has left behind a legacy in her family, her two daughters, who have both attained excellence in their field of work. Dr Naila Khan, Professor of Child Neurology and now Director, Clinical Neuroscience Centre BPF is taking her work to even greater heights. I remember today her with deep respect, admiration and love. She was truly one of a kind, a role model whose life can be emulated by many.

Shaheen Anam, Executive Director, Manusher Jonno Foundation, is a direct student of Dr Sultana

Defeating the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

MANZOOR HASAN and SANAUL MOSTAFA

A friend enquired whether the four horsemen of death, famine, war and conquest are anywhere to be seen given the current pestilence followed by the recent fires, floods and exodus of millions. Set aside the religious connotation, it is generally agreed that we are globally experiencing Second, all deaths (not registered as Corona-induced) with symptoms like cough, fever, difficulty breathing, pneumonia in both lungs (https:// www.canada.ca/en/public-health/ services/diseases/2019-novelcoronavirus-infection/symptoms.html) have been tested. This pre-supposes that all people who have died recently and had corona-like symptoms sought villages using overpacked transport could be one of many such sources of dissemination of COVID-19. In addition, prayer congregations in mosques, temples and churches could be another potential source.

In order to pursue "Save Lives" goal we need to understand our situation in the context of four-stage framework. Stage-1 (imported cases of domestic production must get absolute priority. The farming population should be protected by any means to safeguard agricultural production. In addition, the agricultural land presently not used for other purposes, e.g., housing, should be used for cultivation. In France, the urban educated class is responding to calls of the farmers to work in the field. Special care should Third, the transformation of hospitals into "Corona Care Units" should happen without disbanding other emergency services. In addition to support for physical health, provisions should be made for mental health. Whatever time we have should be utilised most effectively before the window shuts. It is a race against time.

Third strategy: Ensure a congenial

an existential threat. The present lockdown offers us the opportunity to reflect on our immediate future. Here are some thoughts.

On April 10, the world recorded nearly 1.6 million corona infections, 95,000 deaths and 3,55,000 recoveries. The US leads, followed by Spain, Italy, France, Germany, China and others. The trend is somewhat exponential and there is no WHO-approved remedy in sight, except that people are advised to practice physical distancing. Based on Chinese and Korean experience, the epidemiologists believe that such a practice reduces the degree of spread of the virus allowing the health service providers to cope with the crisis. "Save Lives" has become a de-facto global goal for all. Corona has become the ultimate leveler-education, wealth, social standing, colour, religion, ethnicity, gender, and nationality hardly matter.

Compared to China, Europe and America the South Asian countries seem fortunate but these are early days, and there is no room for complacency. Some South East Asian countries (e.g., South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore) may have deflected COVID-19 reasonably well. South Asia and others should learn from the South East Asian experience.

Figures from John Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center give us a global real-time snapshot, and Bangladesh's situation looks favourable compared to many other countries, if the figures are reliable—61 infections, 6 deaths and 26 recovered (April, 4). The Government of Bangladesh have demonstrated its commitment to face this pandemic with courage and the prime minister has announced policies for the poor, businesses and general population to withstand the expected fallout of COVID-19. The citizens wholeheartedly support the government's guidance. The armed forces have stepped in to support the civil administration, which has been welcomed generally. Notwithstanding the figures on Bangladesh, there are some serious concerns and they need to be reviewed.

Assumptions

It appears that Bangladesh's situation is subject to a series of assumptions. They are: First, all COVID-19-like symptoms-affected people have been tested. This pre-supposes that people with such symptoms sought medical care and they were subsequently sent to appropriate medical facilities. medical help and their samples were sent for effective testing.

Third, people, who have been socially together with the "positive" tested persons (alive or dead) have also been tested. This pre-supposes that the health officials kept an eye on these people.

Fourth, those who were tested "positive", effectively practiced physical distancing at home and outside. This pre-supposes that these people and their family members have practiced physical distancing. COVID-19, which are relatively easily traceable); stage-2 (imported cases and transmission within family and friends, which can still be traceable); stage-3 (community is affected, which becomes untraceable); and stage-4 (mass scale infection, which becomes a serious public health threat). Where are we now? Most likely we are still in stage-2.

In stage-2, Bangladesh's livelihood environment will start to become insecure. As in other countries, unemployment will increase, food availability will become problematic, be given to children, expectant and nursing mothers and adolescents under the motto "save our future".

The food supply and distribution should be handled in the most cost-effective, cost-efficient and equitable manner. Community-Based Programmes with the participation of local government, army, civil society and police should ensure that the food delivery is made to all families. The government could contemplate reducing gasoline price given the fall of petroleum price in the international



Mayor Sayeed Khokon during a government food distribution programme on March 31.

PHOTO: STAR

Fifth, the testing kits used were reliable. Given that certain brands of the kits were proved ineffective in Spain and Italy, this pre-supposes that we undertook quality control before using such kits.

Sixth, the personnel using the kits are skilled enough to understand the instructions. This also pre-supposes that the users fully understood the instructions. Recently, the Chinese suppliers have cautioned users about it.

The question is whether these assumptions hold in the case of Bangladesh. If any one of the assumptions don't, the aforementioned data given for Bangladesh are unlikely to reflect the true picture. It will be true of other countries, let alone Bangladesh. Therefore, it is realistic to assume that there are untested corona cases in Bangladesh, which are and will remain potential sources of COVID-19 spread. The return of numerous hardworking migrant workers to their health infrastructure will face severe stress, and due to prolonged lockdown people will look for "escape routes" putting law enforcing agencies under huge challenge and scrutiny, businesses will face liquidity crisis and supply chains will be threatened. If the period of lockdown is increased, which is quite likely, the transition to stage-3 will take the stage-2 factors to an even more acute level. The "Save Lives" goal requires an inter-related system of four strategies, they are:

Strategies

First strategy: Ensure a smooth food supply chain for all. Assuming that Bangladesh doesn't have a strategic food reserve of more than a season, we must ensure access to suitable (macro and micronutrient) and sufficient food for all. This pre-supposes that the food is available. Under current reality, importation of food might be difficult, as there will be a "me-first" policy adopted across the world. Therefore, market. A general Food-for-Work Programme may be initiated for those who will assist the farmers. The farmers should have easy access to all agricultural input-support and expertise. The government should consider importation of food grains to establish a strategic food reserve as part of mid to long-term plan to avoid crisis in the future.

Second strategy: Ensure coronaspecific health services. Regarding Health Services, Bangladesh can just pursue "Follow the Leader" approach. Other than experts, such as, WHO, Bangladesh can seek information and advisory support from countries, which are experiencing and managing the corona carnage and have already gathered together valuable lessons. Second, the Bangladeshi diaspora, who are actively involved in the health care system in many countries, are sharing their advice on social media. They should be approached for guidance.

social, legal and institutional ecosystem. The "Save Lives" goal can only be achieved if the activities occur under a favourable governance environment. If the Corona crisis prevails for another month or more, the business sector will be in crisis. Job and income losses, and fall of remittance are likely immediate impacts, challenging the livelihood of others. These factors will force people to break out of self-isolation in an attempt to find other options to survive. This could create a serious law and order crisis, and thus undermine country's peace and security. Therefore, a concerted government effort is required, which will bring together all the main societal stakeholders. In order to save lives our approach should be to unite and work together irrespective of party affiliation, religion, ethnicity, professional strata and economic standing. Failing to do so will result in social injustice and greater fragility within our society.

Fourth strategy: Devise a gradual exit strategy from the present lockdown situation. While the country prepares for a possible stage-3 situation and a possible extension of the present lockdown, we also need to plan an exit strategy. The government may engage various working groups led by experts, practitioners, academics and scientists, who will craft strategies to explore opportunities in the post-corona environment. Revival of export market, rebuilding of the business sector, export-friendly currency and monetary policy, introduction of the post-corona safety net for the affected population, restructuring of the public health service delivery, and pro-people governance.

We are experiencing a unique event-a global pandemic-and this calls for a new but immediate partnership among the private, public and non-profit sectors. Uncoordinated approach to this once-in-a-lifetime challenge will cause irreparable damage. This has to be avoided at all costs as the pandemic can easily become a spiralling cycle of destruction given our existing fragilities. On the other hand, the corona crisis can be an opportunity to transform and create a "new Bangladesh", which will empower all its citizens to re-embrace the freedom of independence on our 50th anniversary in 2021.

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Chloroquine, zinc tested to treat COVID-19 infection

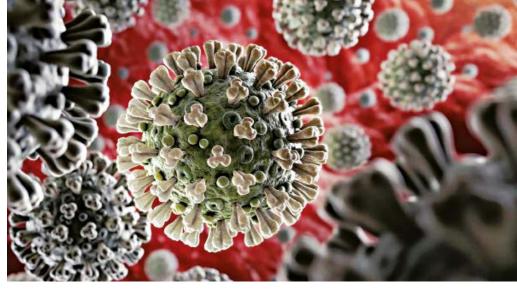
STAR HEALTH REPORT

In the United States and Europe, a handful of clinical trials have begun to test ways to keep healthcare workers and other vulnerable people safe from coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

Most are testing drugs called chloroquine or hydroxychloroquine that have long been used to prevent and treat malaria, and also as a therapy against rheumatoid arthritis and lupus. The hope is that, given before infection or early in the course of the disease, the drugs will protect someone against infection and illness from the virus, or, if they do, will ensure that their case is mild. But whether these drugs will help, hurt or do nothing remains an open question.

The virus that causes COVID-19 uses a backdoor to enter the cell. As it enters, it is exposed to an acidic, vinegar-like environment, which is actually needed for the virus to get all the way inside. Hydroxychloroquine, metaphorically keeps the cap on the vinegar, Greene says, preventing acidification. Thus, there is a scientific rationale for how this drug might exert an antiviral effect.

Mahir Ozmen, a professor of surgery at the Istinye University,



School of Medicine in Istanbul, Turkey, says he thinks the best way to use chloroquine is in combination with zinc and vitamins C and D. He is running a clinical trial, testing to see whether this combination protects health care workers and their immediate families – including his own.

Ozmen, who is collaborating with a chest medicine specialist, an intensive care physician, and two infectious disease experts, says he intended to include only 80 participants, but 98 quickly volunteered. He began providing prophylactic therapy 2 weeks ago, and expects to complete the trial by July.

Ozmen says, "Hydroxychloroquine helps the zinc get inside the infected cells to destroy the virus, and vitamins A and D support immune function". He gives volunteers a low dose of hydroxychloroquine every 3 weeks, and a vitamin tablet every day – or every other day for people prone to kidney stones. At the end of the trial, each participant will be checked for antibodies to COVID-19, suggesting an infection, whether they realised it or not. This kind of prophylaxis will give us the time to develop a vaccine that will offer protection to everyone.

In perhaps the fastest-moving, large prophylaxis trial, researchers at Duke University are leading a US\$ 50 million collaboration across hundreds of American healthcare systems, which will test 15,000 volunteers. Half the health care workers will take hydroxychloroquine, and half a placebo. Other drugs could be added to the study if they prove promising for preventing or lessening infection, says Adrian Hernandez, the trial's principle investigator.

In France, researchers are running a trial with 1,200 healthcare workers to test prophylactic use of hydroxychloroquine or a combination of two HIV drugs, Lopinavir and Ritonavir, which failed as a treatment in people with severe COVID-19 infections but may work as prevention. It is expected to take 6 months.

In a 40,000-person trial led by the University of Oxford in England, participants in Asia will receive chloroquine or a placebo, and in Europe, hydroxychloroquine or a placebo. That trial is expected to take a year.

Robert Salata, chairman of the department of medicine at UH Cleveland Medical Centre, is including 4,500 patients in his trial of an antiseptic that healthcare workers will spray into their mouth three times a day. The antiseptic, called ARMS-I, made by ARMS Pharmaceutical of Cleveland, is already present in lower concentrations in some mouthwashes, he says.

CHILDHOOD CANCER 11 million children are expected to die from cancer

Improving care for children with cancer worldwide will bring a triple return on investment and prevent millions of needless deaths, according to a new commission report published recently by The Lancet Oncology entitled Sustainable Care for Children with Cancer.

Without additional investment in childhood cancer care, new estimates produced for the report reveal that over 11 million children aged 14 years and younger are expected to die from cancer over the next 30 years worldwide. The vast majority of those—more than 9 million deaths (84%) will be in low-income



and lower-middle-income countries.

The landmark report synthesises existing evidence with new modelling and economic analyses to demonstrate that—with investment in expanding worldwide coverage of achievable costeffective interventions and strengthening health systems—millions of children's lives could be saved, with huge economic benefits that far exceed the costs.

This report provides compelling evidence that improving outcomes for children with cancer is both feasible and a highly cost-effective investment for all countries rich and poor alike. Expanding access to achievable diagnostics, treatment, and supportive care, alongside strengthening health systems more widely, could prevent more than 6 million child deaths and bring almost US\$2 trillion in economic benefits over the next 30 years. The time is right for a global push to expand coverage of care for children with cancer.

Source: WebMD

H E A L T H bulletin



Pregestational diabetes profoundly affects perinatal outcomes

Nearly 3% of reproductive-aged U.S. women have type 1 or type 2 diabetes and 6% of pregnancies are complicated by gestational diabetes. In addition, diabetes diagnosed before pregnancy (pregestational diabetes) is a wellknown risk factor for poor pregnancy outcomes, including birth defects.

Assessing risk for individual birth defects related to diabetes has been challenging because of the low incidence of specific anomalies. Therefore, investigators examined data on 31,000 pregnancies affected by 50 distinct foetal anomalies in the National Birth Defects Prevention Study (NBDPS) from 1997 through 2011 to assess more accurately the association of an isolated defect with pregestational or gestational diabetes. Statistically significant associations (many very strong) with pregestational diabetes were noted for 22 of 26 non cardiac anomalies, and for all 24 of the cardiac anomalies assessed. These strong associations underscore the detrimental impact on pregnancies of pregestational diabetes, a condition that is dramatically growing in prevalence. Ideally, women should modify their lifestyles to lower their risk for developing type 2 diabetes - and preconception care should be encouraged as it has been associated with a 20% decrease in haemoglobin A1c levels and a 75% decrease in birth defects.

COVID-19: What should we do? *In Conversation with Prof. Samir Kumar Saha*

Star Health Desk

In the current global pandemic scenario of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) Prof Samir Kumar Saha, Head of the Department of Microbiology at Dhaka Shishu Hospital and Executive Director of Child Health Research Foundation (CHRF) shared his views with the Star Health and shed light on the direction of handling the global pandemic in the context of Bangladesh.

When asked about the virus Prof Saha said that we know very little about this virus. New things are getting unfolded every day. Coronavirus was there in this world for many years. In the past, coronavirus caused only minor sickness like sneezing and coughing etc. But now it is causing severe

sickness like sneezing and coughing etc. But now it is causing severe respiratory infections. The virus has evolved going through different animals like birds, especially bats and some other hosts.



Prof Samir Kumar Saha, Head of the Department of Microbiology at Dhaka Shishu Hospital and Executive Director of Child Health many pharmaceuticals, research organisations and universities trying to develop a vaccine but the progress is not known. We are not sure whether there will be a vaccine in a short time. Even if there is any development of the vaccine within the next six months, it will probably take at least a year to come to us because the discovery of the vaccine and then producing it in bulk is not very simple. It requires a lot of time and the involvement of many industries to produce millions of doses.

About the psychosocial consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, Prof Saha says, "This global pandemic teaches us that human beings cannot live alone. They should live together and they should help each other - that is the only way they can survive. No matter how strong we are, wherever we live in this world, we cannot get



WHO lists two COVID-19 tests for emergency use

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has listed the first two diagnostic tests for emergency use during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The move should help increase access to quality-assured, accurate tests for the disease. It also means that the tests can now be supplied by the United Nations and other procurement agencies supporting the COVID-19 response.

Both in vitro diagnostics, the tests are genesig Real-Time PCR Coronavirus (COVID-19) and cobas SARS-CoV-2 Qualitative assay for use on the cobas[®] 6800/8800 Systems.

The Emergency Use Listing procedure (EUL) was

Bangladesh is possibly on the brink of a disaster. Maybe a very big wave is coming at us, and we do not know what is going to happen. The next few weeks will be very critical because the viral infection has moved to the community level. We are not sure how it will behave. We could not screen a large

number of cases in Bangladesh because we did not have the arrangements to do the tests. We could not involve more laboratories in time to perform the tests. If we could have done something about it a little earlier, it would have been much more effective in measuring the situation.

Executive Director of Child Health Research Foundation (CHRF)

Prof Saha thinks that there should be more detection of cases and immediately they should be isolated. If it is not done the nation might be at risk. It depends on how disciplined we are, and how we are maintaining everything. We need to follow the social distancing, quarantines and all the other instructions that are being placed by the government. If we do not follow that we could face a major problem very difficult to handle.

About the development of a vaccine for COVID-19, Prof Saha says globally there are protected. We should realise this and try to be a true human being with compassion for each other."



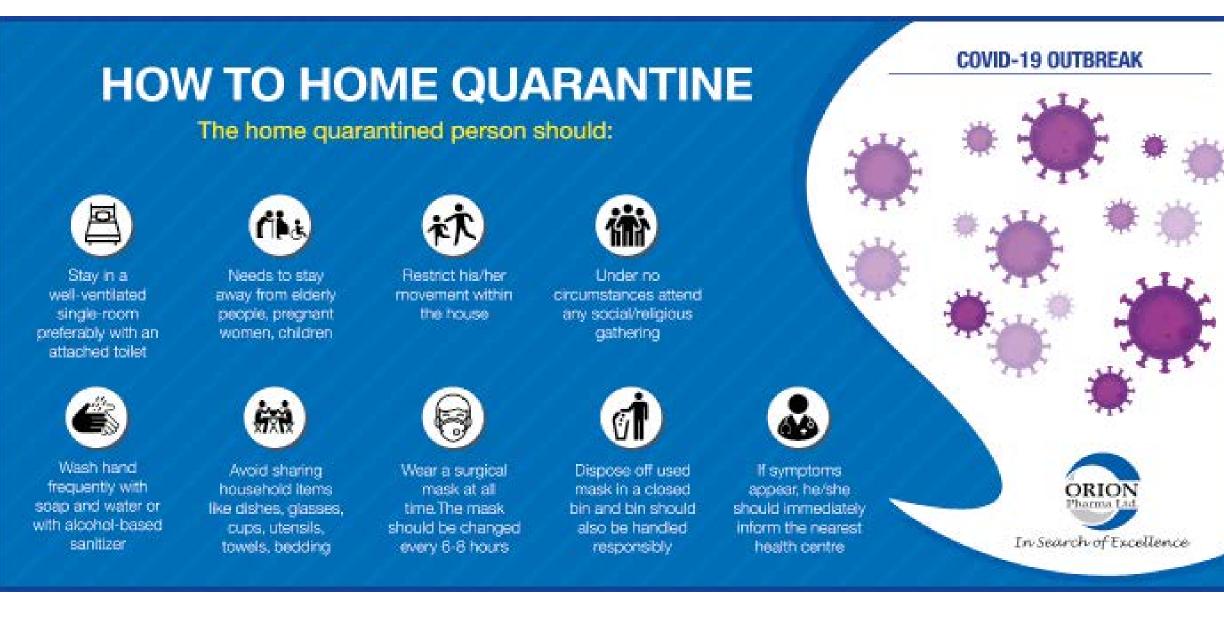
Scan the QR code to listen to the full interview of Prof Samir Saha.

established to expedite the availability of diagnostics needed in public health emergency situations. It is intended to help procurement agencies and countries navigate the large presence of different devices on the market and, by assessing them, provides assurance of the products' quality and performance.

The genesig Real-Time PCR Coronavirus (COVID-19) (Primerdesign, United Kingdom) is an open system more suitable for laboratories with moderate sample testing capacity, while the cobas® SARS-CoV-2 for use on the cobas® 6800/8800 Systems (Roche, United States of America) is a closed system assay for larger laboratories.

Source: World Health Organisation





e-mail: sports@thedailystar.net DHAKA SUNDAY APRIL 12, 2020, CHAITRA 29, 1426 BS



সন্তানের যত্নে আপনি যেমন তেমনি নিবিড় যন্ত্রে বারবার নানা পরীক্ষায় প্রক্রিয়াজাত হয় আড়ং ডেইরি পণ্য



Support staff looking for BCB's support

MAZHAR UDDIN



Bangladesh The Cricket Board (BCB) has come forward to provide one-time monetary support non-contracted to

first-class cricketers who were taking part in the Bangabandhu Dhaka Premier League 2019-20 season, and the move was highly appreciated.

The BCB has already handed over cheques to respective clubs to support the cricketers in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. This was done as the BCB apprehends that the DPL, which was postponed after the first round, may not resume anytime soon.

However, there are coaches, trainers and physios who work their socks off to ensure the game keeps rolling and these people earn their bread through the Dhaka league.

Although the cricketers have got the financial support from the BCB, the coaches and the support staff remain overlooked in these testing times, with their livelihoods heavily dependent on such remuneration.

Among the twelve DPL clubs, each have at least four to five support staff which includes head coach, assistant coach, physio and trainer.

There are a few coaches who are among paid employees of the BCB



Mamunur Rashid Sumon, assistant coach of Legends of Rupganj, with cricketer-turned coaches Aftab Ahmed and Nazmul Hossain.

such as Khaled Mahmud and Foisal Alamgir Kabir who are among the Hossain Dickens, both working for paid employees of the BCB. Abahani. There are others like Talha Jubair, Rajin Saleh, Sohel Islam, twelve clubs are not enlisted as

But coaches of half of those

BCB's employees and they mostly rely on earnings from the DPL, which is currently suspended indefinitely.

Mamunur Rashid Sumon, an assistant coach of Legends of Rupganj team, is one those coaches who is not a BCB employee and one whose livelihood depends on earnings from the DPL.

Since it is still not certain when the league will resume again, Sumon is passing anxious time at home and looking forward for support from the BCB.

the non-contracted "Like cricketers got one-time monetary support from the BCB, we, the support staff, also expect something like that. As I have taken coaching as a profession, I have no other income source except for cricket and DPL is one of the biggest sources of income for me. Although I am also a coach of a cricket academy, but that too has stopped due to the coronavirus. BCB is our guardian and I expect the board will consider our situation too. Things are getting really difficult everyday," Sumon told The Daily Star yesterday.

As the future seems uncertain for many due to the growing spread of the virus, the affluent cricket board should extend its support, not just towards the cricketers but also towards people who work behind the scene.

Barca deny wrongdoing

AFP, London

Dalglish

infected

Liverpool legend Kenny Dalglish has tested positive for coronavirus but is not showing symptoms of the disease, his family said Friday.

The 69-year-old former Scottish international striker was admitted to hospital on Wednesday for treatment for an infection which required intravenous AFP, Madrid Barcelona have denied what the club describes as . "serious and unfounded accusations" of corruption LaLiga after a former vice-

president claimed someone "had put their hands in the Emili Rousaud was one of

till"

six board members to resign on Thursday night as Barca continue to be embroiled in political crisis under their current president Josep

discredit opponents of Bartomeu investigate any irregularity. online, including players like Lionel Messi and Gerard Pique.

"If the auditors tell us the cost of these services is 100,000 euros and we have paid one million, it means someone has put their hand in the till. I have no evidence and I cannot say who," Rousaud told the programme

RAC1 on Friday. Barcelona responded with an official statement that read: "In the light of the serious and unfounded accusations made this morning by Emili Rousaud, ex-vice president of the club, in different interviews with the media, FC Barcelona categorically denies any activity that can be described as corruption and therefore reserves the right to any legal action that may correspond. Bartomeu terminated the club's contract with I3 Ventures in February. He said the company had been hired Barcelona were accused of hiring only to monitor posts on social media

"The analysis of the monitoring services of social networks is being subjected to an independent audit by PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PWC), which is still ongoing and, therefore, without any conclusions," Barcelona's statement added.

Rousaud had been appointed as a club vice-president in January and was seen as a leading candidate to succeed Bartomeu, who cannot stand again when the presidential elections come round next year.

Matin raring to return

ANISUR RAHMAN



National team's forward Matin Mia is eagerly counting days to return to the pitch after recovering from a hamstring injury

which he sustained during the Bangabandhu Gold Cup's semifinal against Burundi on January 23.

Matin, who scored a brace against Sri Lanka in a group-stage match, left the field just four minutes after kick-off with a muscle cramp as the home team suffered a 3-0 defeat.

The 22-year-old then missed out on the first six matches of the Bangladesh Premier league (started on February 13) for his club Bashundhara Kings, who have struggled to sixth position on the 13-team table before league was suspended due to coronavirus

The lad from Sylhet has now recovered and he feels fit enough to help his side back to the top of the table, but the suspension of the league is delaying his return.

"After the injury, it took me 20 days to get back to training but the injury returned again. Then it took me another 20 days to be fully fit. At the moment, I feel I'm in good condition and fit enough to play competitive matches," Matin told The Daily Star over phone from Sylhet.

Explaining his fitness, Matin said, "Before the postponement of the training camp on March 17, I sprinted smoothly and raced separately under the supervision of the club trainer and I did not face any problem or feel any pain. Even after returning home in Sylhet, I have been training on the school ground adjacent to our home as per the trainer's instructions.

Last year Matin, along with Brazilian striker Marcos Vinicius, formed a lethal

attack for Bashundhara Kings, scoring 25 goals together to help the side win the league title in their debut season. But now Matin feels bad to see his side struggle, especially after failing to play because of injury

"It doesn't feel good when the team loses or draws. I feel I could have contributed had I been on the ground. Last season, we were always on top but this time we are going through ups and downs. I think we lack a good striker like Vinicius. If I get an opportunity to play in the starting eleven, I think the coach will play me in flank with (Daniel) Colindres in striking zone and I believe I can assist Colindres to score," said Matin, who had readjusted his target of scoring more goals than the 11 he scored last season. His initial target, before injury, was to score 20 goals.

The promising forward, who also scored in the final of the Independence Cup last season to help Bashundhara Kings lift the trophy, has a regret of not being able to play AFC Cup due to the injury

"I did not play AFC Cup before, so I had a dream of making debut against TC Sports but I had to watch the match from the gallery. However, it was really pleasing to see my team win 5-1," said Matin.

Matin believes the postponement of all domestic and international competitions will give him an opportunity to represent both the club and the national team when normalcy returns.

"I could have missed all international matches had those been held in time but the postponement of the World Cup qualifiers is giving me an opportunity to represent the country again. I really dream to play against India and I believe my dream will come true," said Matin, who has been playing top-flight football for the last three seasons.



antibiotics. "He was subsequently

tested for COVID-19 despite having previously displayed no symptoms of the illness," said a family statement. "Unexpectedly, the test result was positive but he remains asymptomatic.'

The coronavirus has claimed the lives of nearly 9,000 people in Britain.

Maria Bartomeu.

All six resigning board members called for the 2021 presidential elections to be brought forward in a joint letter published on Friday by the newspaper La Vanguardia.

In an interview with Spanish radio station Cadena Ser, Rousaud discussed the social media controversy that rocked the club in February, when a company called I3 Ventures to and announced an internal audit to

Bartomeu has overseen a string of political spats in recent months being played out in public, with Messi also involved.

Messi reacted angrily in January to Eric Abidal, the club's technical secretary, suggesting the players were to blame for the sacking of Ernesto Valverde and last month, the Argentinian criticised the club's handling of negotiations with the squad over pay cuts.



A fan sits in the empty stands during a Belarus **Premier League** match between FC Neman and **Belshina in Grodno** on Friday. Belarus remains one of the four countries where football is still rolling despite the coronavirus pandemic.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Tough transitioning back as a player: Holder

ICC



West Indies Test captain Jason Holder confessed that his transition from ODI captain to "just a player" has not been

smooth.

Holder was replaced by Kieron Pollard as the white-ball captain last September, and he admitted adjusting to the new demands was tricky.

"To be quite honest, it has been tough transitioning back just as a player," he told the Cricket Collective podcast. "In hindsight, it has been tough trying to understand how to get back in as just a player."



Holder admitted that he has not been a consistent performer over the past year. He took eight wickets in eight innings in the 2019 World Cup. But since then has picked up just seven wickets in 10 ODI innings.

"Performances obviously haven't

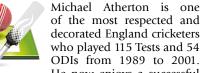
been there as I would've probably liked, but I'm not too disheartened," he said. "I don't get too worried because I know my ability. I know what I can produce. I just know that an innings is around the corner, a owling effort is around the corner."

The 28-year-old said that playing lot had taken a toll on him and a break from leadership would allow him to recharge his batteries.

"I felt I needed the break after the India series [in December] particularly, just to refresh," he said. "I had played every single series in the entire year [in 2019], I played county cricket as well, and my batteries needed a little bit of a recharge.

'Love, enjoy and tell good stories'

Agencies



He now enjoys a successful career as a broadcaster with Sky Sports and as a journalist with The Times as their chief

cricket correspondent. Atherton visited Pakistan early last month, before the Covid-19 outbreak forced the postponement of the Pakistan Super League, to work on a documentary on the revival of cricket in Pakistan, which is likely to be aired as part of the Pakistan team's build-up for the summer tour of England.

"Love the game. Enjoy the game. Tell good stories. I still think it is about good storytelling. I know statistics and technique and all those kind of things are important and are very much at the heart of the modern landscape. But I think telling good stories is still at the heart of what journalists, broadcasters, documentary-makers and commentators, whatever tell good stories about a great game," Atherton said during a podcast with the PCB when asked about his advice to the current and future generations of cricket correspondents.

He believes that it has indeed become a lot harder for players with the advent of social media than it was during his time as a player.

"I think it is harder for players now than played. There was no social media when played. Of course, you still had criticism from commentators and journalists and maybe the tabloid media was a bit stronger in England then than it is now. The social media interest didn't exist then and I think

it is tougher for young players now as it is very hard to get away from social media. The players are encouraged to be on social media for all kinds of reasons: for personal sponsorships and general availability.

"But that level of vitriol and criticism is quite tough to deal with particularly if you are young. I was thinking of some of the young England cricketers. I saw some of the Under 19s this winter in South Africa, who got dumped out of the tournament at an

early stage and took a fair bit of criticism



on social media. At 19, that is quite hard to deal with, but it is a fact of life.

Atherton also believes that the players no longer have something called a personal space due to the social media engagements.

"That is how life has gone a bit. People are much more open than perhaps they were in my generation. Today, in fact, there is an eight-part Amazon Prime documentary series on the Australia cricket team where the cameras have been in the dressing room. They have been in every team meeting and I think the filmmakers had 2,600 hours of footage there and that's just outside of the cricket.

Ronaldo warned over training

AGENCIES, Lif Bone

Cristiano Ronaldo has been warned over his conduct after he was pictured training at a football stadium in Madeira during the lockdown.

The 35-year-old was pictured training at the Madeira national stadium and was far from the only person in attendance. Madeira's regional secretary of health, Pedro Ramos, has urged a global superstar to set a good example for others when it comes to social distancing.

"Ronaldo has no special permission to train. Ronaldo has the right to train as long as he respects the rules like all citizens, there is no privilege," Ramos said. "All citizens can leave the house and do so, as long as they do not cause gatherings and maintain safe distance during the exercise. Therefore, Ronaldo did what we have seen. There was no special authorisation because we are all the same, we are all facing the same pandemic.

"The best player in the world must use his image to set an example, but Cristiano seems to me to have done just a few minutes of exercise and, therefore, there is no harm in the world. I would not like it to be said that it is trivialisation, because we are all responsible."

The Baily Star



CORONAVIRUS FALLOUT Vegetable growers count huge losses

MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Vegetable farmers are incurring severe losses amid the countrywide shutdown that has been imposed to contain coronavirus spread.

One such farmer Saad Mia said he cultivated bitter melon on a 45-decimal but now he was not getting right price for the vegetable because of rapidly decreasing demand of perishable vegetables.

Our correspondent found Saad, who grow vegetables at Haripur village in Cumilla's Meghna upazila, at Shyambazar wholesale market in Dhaka while he was separating rotten bitter melons from the good ones.

"I am offering these vegetables at Tk 60 per kilogramme which is half of its production cost. Still, I do not have customers," he said, adding that he brought around 50 kg bitter melons at Shyambazar.

He later sold his vegetables to a retailer at Tk 40 per kg in front of the correspondent.

According to Saad, he cultivated the bitter melons risking his life amid the Covid-19 outbreak and had a bumper production, yet he had a lot to worry about his future considering the situation.

"I am ruined. I will lose over Tk 1 lakh this season," tearful Saad said.

Amid the countrywide shutdown, people nowadays are visiting kitchen markets less often. Besides, many are prone to buy dry foods and slow perishable items.

Vegetable farmers are bearing the brunt of this situation. The situation was so bad that in some cases farmers were also seen not plucking their vegetables and letting those damage in the fields.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



Bitter gourds gone bad are dumped at a corner of Shvambazar kitchen market in the capital. The shutdown has left many avoiding kitchen markets, resulting in poor sales. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: MAHBUB KHAN



MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Along with clothes and hands, it is also necessary to disinfect accessories such as rings, bracelets, watches, mobile phones or even wallets.

Experts suggest washing hands with soap or using hand sanitiser to mitigate the risk of catching and spreading the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19), but people have to remove all accessories and sanitise those as well before washing hands.

Kaoser Alam, medical officer of the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, said, "During the days of shutdown, we stay inside our homes but some of us may have to go outside for groceries.

"So, we wear masks and wash hands properly, but we rarely care SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Don't commit genocide Myanmar president orders civil servants, military officials

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Nearly three months after the International Court of Justice's ruling on the Rohingya genocide case, Myanmar President has asked civil servants, military officials and the general people "not to commit genocide".

In an order issued by Myanmar President's Office on April 8, it directed all ministries, regions and state governments "to ensure that its personnel, officers, staff -- whether military or other security forces, or civil services -- and locals, under its control or direction, do not commit the acts mentioned in Articles II and III of the Genocide Convention."

The order, published on April 9, in Myanmar's Ministry of Information says each ministry, region and state overnment shall transmit any credible information that it may receive from subordinates about possible acts to the president's office. They were also asked to provide a quarterly report on relevant developments. This came in response to the January 23 ruling by the ICJ, the top UN Court, that had asked Myanmar to prevent acts of genocide against the country's persecuted Rohingya minority and to stop destroying evidence. In November, the Gambia filed a suit against Myanmar alleging it was committing "ongoing genocide against its minority Muslim Rohingya population", which forced around 740,000 Rohingyas SEE PAGE 4 COL 2





Bangabandhu addressing members of the Awami League Parliamentary Party at Engineering Institute on April 11, 1972.

APRIL 11, 1972 Shamsuddoza Sajen

NEPALESE MESSAGE TO

BANGABANDHU The prime minister of Nepal Kirtinidhi Bista has sent a message of greetings and good wishes on behalf of his majesty's government to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his government on the historic occasion of the inaugural convening of the Constituent Assembly of Bangladesh.



Don't lift curbs prematurely

Warns WHO as Trump considers opening US economy

Agencies

The World Health Organization (WHO) has warned countries to be cautious about lifting restrictions introduced to curb the spread of the new coronavirus as global death toll from the pandemic soar passed 100,000.

The United Nations agency would like to see an easing, but at the same time "lifting restrictions could lead to a deadly resurgence," WHO

Ghebreyesus told a press conference. Extraordinary measures from New York to Naples to New Delhi have seen businesses and schools closed in a desperate bid to halt the virus's spread, and the IMF has warned that the world now faces the worst economic downturn since the Great

Depression. More than 103,536 people have died of COVID-19 with 1.7 million infections detected globally, according

Director General Tedros Adhanom to a Johns Hopkins University tracker, with nearly 70 percent of the fatalities in Europe.

The United States, now the pandemic's epicentre, became the first country to record more than 2,000 virus deaths in one day and is closing in on Italy's 18,849 fatalities currently the highest national figure.

With more than half a million reported infections, the United States already has more coronavirus cases SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



GOVT PROSECUTORS FOR WAR

CRIMES TRIBUNAL APPOINTED

The government has appointed SR Pal and Serajul Haque as the chief government prosecutors of the War Crimes Tribunal to try the Pakistani prisoners of war for their atrocities and genocide in Bangladesh.

BHUTTO ACCEPTS INDIA'S OFFER FOR TALKS

Pakistan President ZA Bhutto says today that he has sent his reply to the Indian prime minister's letter dated April 9, 1972, accepting her proposal for a meeting of the emissaries of the two countries to prepare a summit meeting between him and Indira Gandhi.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



Army personnel and law enforcers struggle to manage traffic at the capital's Nayabazar as many ventured out around noon yesterday. Inset, army personnel halt some people near Buriganga second bridge for ignoring restrictions.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



Make a list of those vulnerable

Writ seeks food aid, medicines for the poor in a week

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Supreme Court lawyer yesterday sent a legal notice to the authorities concerned of the government requesting them to make a list of the country's financially vulnerable people and distribute food and medicines among them through the army within a week.

The move is aimed at helping the people during the crisis which SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



PRAYER TIMING APRIL 12 Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha AZAN 4-35 12-45 4-45 6-24 7-45 AMAAT 5-10 1-15 5-00 6-28 8-15 SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

ভিড-১৯ থেকে বাচতে ঘরেই থাকি

করোনায় সারা বিশ্ব আজ বিপর্যন্ত।

- মানুষ বাসা-বাড়ি থেকে বের না হলে সংক্রমণের ঝুঁকি বহুলাংশে কমে যায়।
- মনে রাখবেন, অসাবধানতায় যে কেউ যে কোন সময় করোনা ভাইরাসে আক্রান্ত হতে পারে।

কাজেই ঘরেই থাকুন সুস্থ থাকুন

- একান্ত প্রয়োজনে বাইরে গেলে অবশ্যই মাস্ক পড়ন।
- স্বান্থ্য অধিদন্তর কর্তৃক প্রদন্ত সব স্বাস্থ্যবিধি অবশ্যই মেনে চলুন।
- বারবার সাবান পানি দিয়ে কমপক্ষে ২০ সেকেন্ড হাত ধোবেন। অপরিচ্ছন্ন হাত দিয়ে মুখ, নাক ও চোখ ছোবেন না।
- ত্বর, সর্দি, কাশি, গলা ব্যথা হলে বাড়িতেই আলাদা থেকে চিকিৎসা নিন। প্রয়োজনে করোনা বিষয়ক হটলাইনগুলোতে ফোন করুলঃ ১৬২৬৩; ৩৩৩; ১০৬৫৫; ০১৯৪৪৩৩৩২২২ অথবা নিকটন্থ স্বান্থ্যকর্মী বা হাসপাতালে যোগাযোগ করুন।

মনে রাখবেন আপনার সুরক্ষা আপনারই হাতে



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