



# The Daily Star



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**BANGLADESH UPDATE** **219** New cases in 24hrs **1,231** Total cases **50** Deaths **49** Recoveries **GLOBAL UPDATE** **128,071** Deaths **2,000,984** Total cases

## Save Boro first, then Aush

Experts urge govt to support farmers in need of irrigation; Covid-19 fallout packages fail to ease their woes

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

The government incentives announced so far to deal with agricultural fallout of Covid-19 provide little relief for farmers awaiting harvest of Boro, the principal crop of the country.

The Tk 5,000-crore package declared recently leaves out crop and cereal producers. Even, the agriculture ministry's offer of free seeds, fertilisers and reduced irrigation charges will mainly aid the cultivation of Aush paddy, starting next month.

Boro accounts for more than 50 percent of the country's total rice production while Aush less than 10 percent, according to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) data.

Yet, the ministry is backing their decision to aid the cultivation of Aush instead of Boro, saying it is too late to cover Boro cultivation cost.

"Boro cultivation is almost over. The growers are now awaiting the harvest," Md Nasiruzzaman, secretary of the Agriculture ministry, told The Daily Star earlier this month.

"We are unable to provide any support to them [Boro farmers] right now. Implementing agricultural supports requires time, which has run out

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## First doctor dies from coronavirus in country

DWOHA CHOWDHURY

Md Moyeen Uddin, assistant professor at Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital (SOMCH), died of Covid-19 yesterday.

He breathed his last around 6:45am at the intensive care unit of the capital's Kurmitola General Hospital (KGH), Brig Gen Jamil Ahmed, director of the hospital, told The Daily Star.

The 48-year-old tested positive for coronavirus on April 5.

Moyeen left behind his wife and two sons -- aged seven and 12.

He is the first doctor of the country die of Covid-19.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina mourned Moyeen's death and expressed her condolences to his family.

Health Minister Zahid Maleque also expressed



Insaaf Barakah Kidney and General Hospital in the capital's Moghbazar area has been put under lockdown following a government directive, as 10 staffers there, including doctors, nurses and other workers, have tested positive for coronavirus.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

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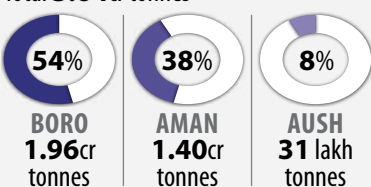
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### RICE OUTPUT

Total 3.64cr tonnes



### IRRIGATION OF CROPLAND

Rajshahi division	85%
Rangpur	69%
Khulna	69%
Dhaka	66%
Sylhet	60%
Chattagram	52%
Barishal	15%

### IRRIGATION PROVIDERS

BMDA	5.06 lakh hectares	BADC	5.29 lakh hectares	PRIVATE PROVIDERS	42.39 lakh hectares
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SOURCE: BBS 2018-19



### CONSUMPTION

HUMAN 2.50 crore tonnes  
OTHER PURPOSES 95 lakh tonnes

TOTAL FARMERS 1,65,62,974

SMALL FARMERS 1,30,21,671 (78.62%)

MARGINAL FARMERS 11,31,763 (6.83%)

### NUMBER OF POSITIVE COVID-19 CASES

## All of reality may not be reflected

Experts fear flaws in suspect detection, sample collection keeping the rate low

MOUJID AHMED SUJAN

Flaws in detecting suspected coronavirus cases and collecting samples might be contributing to a relatively low number of positive cases compared to other countries at similar stage, say experts.

The worry stems from the disparity in the number of positive cases found at the testing lab at the capital's Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University and 15 others elsewhere.

Equipped with a skilled manpower, the BSMMU lab goes through a rigorous background check before carrying out any test. And the result is a higher percentage of positive cases.

The situation at the other labs is not the same. The number of negative cases remains high there, giving what may be a false impression that coronavirus infection has been low in certain areas, said the experts.

Between January 28 and March 26, the

government's disease control agency -- Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) -- tested samples from 920 people, and the rate of positive cases was 4.8 percent (44 tested positive).

After March 27, the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) expanded the testing facilities to 16 labs across the country, apart from the one at the IEDCR.

Till yesterday, the authorities tested 14,868 samples in total and confirmed 1,231 positive cases across the country, which means 8.2 percent of the samples are positive.

But for the first 9,562 tests in the United States, the rate was 22.9 percent, according to covidtracking.com. Collectively, the rate was 19.6 percent out of 28,05,892 tests in the US as of Sunday.

Of the other countries severely hit by the pandemic, Iran carried out the Covid-19 tests most extensively. Its tally of positive cases currently stands at over

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## Record new cases, tests

219 identified in 24hrs; infections surge to 1,231, deaths to 50

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country yesterday recorded 219 confirmed cases of Covid-19 -- the highest in a single day since the first case was reported more than a month ago -- with four more deaths from the viral disease.

Among the dead, a doctor from MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital in Sylhet died in Dhaka's Kurmitola General Hospital.

Meanwhile, seven more coronavirus patients have recovered, taking the tally to 49 so far.

Within five days since April 10, the number of detected patients has risen around three folds higher -- from 424 to 1231 -- after the authorities accelerated numbers of tests around the country.

In 24 hours till 2:30pm yesterday, 17 labs across the country tested samples of 1,740 individuals, Health Minister Zahid Maleque said in a bulletin.

"Tests for Covid-19 are being done in 20 labs now. Many are hiding their illness and do not want to be tested. Do tests and stay safe to protect your family," the minister said at an online media briefing at the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) office in Dhaka.

"As the number of tests are being increased, we will increase the number of hospitals and beds for Covid-19 patients," he added.

Including a 2000-bed hospital in Bashundhara Convention Center, a total of 4,500 beds are being prepared in different hospitals in Dhaka, the minister informed.

Reiterating his call to maintain social distancing, the minister said, "Many people are gathering in markets breaking lockdown rules. It should not be. The more you go out, the higher the chances of the infection spreading, and it would be tough to give treatment to all."

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## Stimulus packages to save people, economy

Says PM

Bss, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said her government announced various stimulus packages worth around Tk 1 lakh crore to save the people and the economy from the crisis arising out of the coronavirus pandemic.

"We have already declared various financial stimulus packages of around Tk 1 lakh crore. This has been done not only for overcoming the present crisis, but also for the next three years so that all can run their businesses and industries properly after the bad time they are facing now," she said.

The PM was addressing a programme from the Gono Bhaban through videoconferencing, marking handover of donations. PM's Principal Secretary Ahmad Kaikaus received the donations in cheques on behalf of

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People still disregard physical distancing at a makeshift kitchen market on Ashulia School and College playground. Authorities shifted Ashulia's largest kitchen market to the playground two days ago to ensure distancing, but to no avail. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## Tk 10/kg rice card for the poor

PINAKI ROY

Amid allegations over theft of rice meant for poor, the government has postponed the open market sale (OMS) and taken an initiative to issue cards for lower-income people across the country to sell them rice at Tk 10.

Under this programme, rice will be sold to those having cards in presence of officials from the local administration, law enforcers and local public representatives including councillors.

Law enforcers will also ensure that people buy rice maintaining physical distance to contain coronavirus transmission.

Only those who are not getting supports from the food safety schemes will only to be included under this new initiative, food ministry sources said.

Dr Mosammat Nazmanara Khanum, secretary of the food ministry, said they have directed the local administration to make a list and issue cards.

"People who will get the cards will be able to buy monthly 20kg rice at Tk 10," she told The Daily Star.

A ministry order issued last week said lower-income groups -- like day labourers, rickshaw pullers, people from hijra (third gender) communities, industrial labourers, small businessmen like tea-stall owners -- will get rice at Tk 10 and flour under this programme.

And only one person from a family will get have this card.

The ministry asked the local administrations to compile detailed information of the card holders.

Asked how many people will be covered under this programme, the secretary said it is not fixed yet. But two tonnes of rice for a district town and three tonnes for metropolitan cities will be allocated for a day.

And this rice will be sold three days a week -- Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday -- from 10:00am to 3:00pm. A card

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