



# The Daily Star



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**BANGLADESH UPDATE**



**266**  
New cases in 24hrs



**1,838**  
Total cases



**75**  
Deaths



**58**  
Recoveries



**GLOBAL UPDATE**



**147,337**  
Deaths



**2,181,508**  
Total cases

## Surge in deaths rings alarm

15 Covid-19 deaths in a single day; expert fears high fatality as strain from Italy could have spread by returnees

MOUDDUD AHMED SUJAN and WASIM BIN HABIB

Deaths from Covid-19 hit a new high as the authorities said another 15 people died in 24 hours till 2:30pm yesterday, taking the official death toll to 75.

This is so far the highest number of deaths reported in a single day.

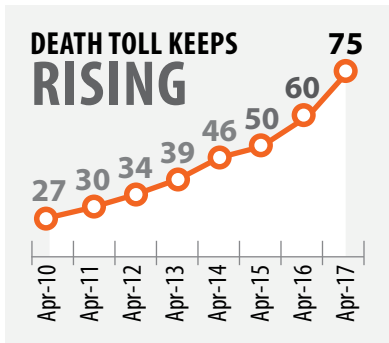
Besides, 266 new cases of infection were confirmed over the same period, bringing the total number of detected coronavirus cases in the country to 1,838.

Talking to The Daily Star on the rising number of deaths and infections, an infectious disease expert said the virus might have come to Bangladesh from Italy.

He feared the situation might worsen if effective measures, including strict enforcement of lockdown, were not ensured right away.

"Many Bangladeshis returned from the European country between late February and the end of last month. We've seen that the virus started to spread here following their arrival. So there is a possibility that the strain of the virus here predominantly came from Italy," said Prof Saif Ullah Munshi, chairman of virology at the capital's Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU).

"If it turns out to be true, we may face a situation similar to that in Italy," he told The Daily Star yesterday.



A woman goes through a spray arch on a street in Mirpur-6 in the capital yesterday. Local youth organisation Artana built the arch and set it up there so that everyone getting into their neighbourhood are disinfected first. *Inset*, Inside of the arch.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

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### FRONTLINE LESSONS

## From Ebola to Covid-19

OSAMA RAHMAN

On May 25 last year, Hasina Akhter, the then country director for Brac in Uganda, received a call from her colleagues alerting her to a possible outbreak of Ebola -- a rare but deadly virus -- in the landlocked East African country.

Hasina was in the US at the time to attend her daughter's graduation. But she set off for Uganda and reached two days later.

Hasina, with her years of experience, told The Daily Star over phone she saw some parallels between the current coronavirus situation in Bangladesh and the Ebola outbreak in Uganda last year.

Hasina, the area director at Brac's humanitarian crisis management currently stationed in Cox's Bazar, stressed on promptness.

**SPEED, SPEED AND SPEED**

"We must react to this with utmost speed. No time can be wasted," Hasina said, recounting how the Ugandan government took immediate steps, including focusing on comprehensive resource mapping, using lessons from the 2014 outbreak, promoting quarantine practices and working towards setting up the needed infrastructure.

"By the time I arrived, even before the first case was confirmed on June 3, I saw that the airport was already equipped with infrared and thermal scanners in place. The Ugandan government did not wait.

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### BANGLADESHIS STRANDED IN INDIA

## 8 special flights to bring them home

Excessive airfare, inadequate number of seats, transport to Indian airports amid lockdown are major issues of concern

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN and RASHIDUL HASAN

The US-Bangla Airlines will operate eight special flights on Chennai-Dhaka and Kolkata-Dhaka routes from April 20 to bring back over 1,000 stranded Bangladeshis who went there for treatment.

Six of the flights will be operated from Chennai from April 20 to April 25 while two from Kolkata will be operated on April 21 and April 23, Kamrul Islam, general manager (public relations) of the airline, told The Daily Star.

He said they decided to operate the flights after the two governments had recently come to an understanding on this score.

Flights on Chennai-Dhaka route are scheduled to take off at 12:15pm (Bangladesh local time) every day from April 20 to April 25 and will land at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA) at 3:15pm.

Flights on Kolkata-Dhaka route are scheduled to depart at 11:30am (Bangladesh local time).

All flights will be operated with Boeing 737-800 aircraft with a seating capacity of 164 passengers.

India has been under lockdown since March 25 and extended it up to May 3.

In this situation, many stranded Bangladeshis heaved sighs of relief at this arrangement while many are concerned about how effective the initiative would be.

Excessive airfare, inadequate number of seats, transport to Chennai and Kolkata airport amid lockdown, institutional quarantine in Dhaka are some of the many issues that made them wary of the arrangement.

Md Rashed, a Bangladeshi now stranded in Vellore, said, "The usual one-way airfare from Chennai to Dhaka is not more than Tk 14,000. However, the fare of these special flights is more than Tk 31,000. So, for the three members of my family, it would cost almost Tk 100,000. It's nothing but a daylight robbery."

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## 7 die after showing symptoms

STAR REPORT

Seven people have died after showing coronavirus-like symptoms in six districts in the last two days.

Health workers collected samples from the seven bodies for tests. The district administrations put the houses of the victims and those of their next door neighbours in lockdown, said officials.

Meanwhile, the authorities enforced lockdown of Madaripur and Pirojpur districts on Thursday night, report our district correspondents.

In Mymensingh, eight people, including a doctor, a nurse and a staffer of Gafargaon upazila health complex, tested positive for coronavirus yesterday.

In Khulna, two patients, aged 24 and 10, died at Khulna Medical College Hospital (KMCH), yesterday. The two were undergoing treatment at the isolation unit of the hospital.

The youth died around 10:00am, around an hour after being admitted to the hospital, said Dr Shailendranath Biswas,

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The Covid-19 crisis has affected the entire world and hit the developing countries like Bangladesh even harder -- a fact that calls for greater global cooperation and solidarity. How can that happen? UN Resident Coordinator in Bangladesh Mia Seppo shares her views on it with The Daily Star's diplomatic correspondent Porimol Palma.

## Saving lives, helping the vulnerable vital

UN resident coordinator tells The Daily Star

TDS: What challenges are being posed by the coronavirus pandemic globally?

Mia Seppo: This is an unprecedented crisis in our modern world which both high income and low-income countries are facing simultaneously, and they are competing for the same supplies. At this point, the foremost challenge is trying to control the pandemic nationally and globally. To do so, it is priority to ensure humanitarian access and opening of corridors for safe and timely movement of goods and personnel. This is vital for saving lives and reducing the negative social and economic impacts of the pandemic.

TDS: What are the specific challenges for Bangladesh?

Mia Seppo: Bangladesh is a country with a very high population density which creates favourable conditions for the spread of Covid-19. Therefore, we welcome the government commitment to implement measures to ensure social distancing. We fully understand the consequences that these measures are generating, with deep



impact on the low-income segments of the society. We welcome the efforts by government, civil society groups and volunteers to help the vulnerable groups needing food and protection. During these particularly difficult moments, solidarity is put to a test.

With almost all countries impacted by Covid-19, there is a global shortage related to medical equipment and supplies, making it a challenge to identify and procure necessities. This calls for local solutions. Bangladesh is a nation with a lot of manufacturing and strong private sector capacity that can be mobilised to fill gaps in the production of essential supplies, including hygiene products. Health systems around the world have buckled under the pressure of a peak of Covid-19 cases. The present measures taken by the government offer a window to strengthen the readiness of the health care sector in Bangladesh.

TDS: How do you think Bangladesh government is tackling the pandemic? Do you have any suggestions?

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Police stop vehicles on Airport Road near the Balaka Bhaban yesterday and check to see if people entering deeper into the capital had legitimate reason to be out. The checkpoint caused unnecessary queues since the cops left an hour later withdrawing the checkpoint. The photo was taken around 11:30am. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## ASI arrested for murder, shooting another

Suspect a minister's security detail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

A sub-inspector of police was arrested yesterday on charges of shooting a man dead and injuring another in Gazipur over what officers said were personal issues.

ASI Kishor Kumar, bodyguard of Liberation War Affairs Minister AKM Moazzam Haque, shot the two men, who used to be his friends, in Kutubdia area of Kaliakoir upazila. Shaheedul Islam Shaheed, 35, of Aijana area in Mirzapur, Tangail, died at the scene, said Alamgir Hossain Mazumder, officer-in-charge of Kaliakoir Police Station.

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## Surge in deaths rings alarm

FROM PAGE 1  
Till last night, Italy reported 168,941 confirmed cases with 22,170 deaths, according to worldometer.

Globally, scientists have found eight strains of the coronavirus. Different strains are dominating different regions, Prof Saif said.

He also pointed out that Bangladesh had reported no transmission of the coronavirus after many came from China, where the virus originated.

"There is no scientific evidence, it is just a scientific hunch," he said adding, "Although it is premature to comment without scientific base, we have to take initiatives considering certain issues."

At the daily briefing on the country's coronavirus situation yesterday, Health Minister Zahid Maleque said, "Nearly 80 percent of the Covid-19 patients don't require any treatment. But some people might need oxygen support and medicines."

He said the virus spread to 40 out of the 64 districts and that most of the infected ones contracted the disease from those from Dhaka and Narayanganj, which is now dubbed the epicenter of the coronavirus outbreak in Bangladesh.

On Thursday, the government declared that the entire country was at risk amid the coronavirus outbreak.

The minister said some 2,190 samples were tested in 24 hours till 2:30pm yesterday.

With it, the total number of samples tested in 17 labs across the country reached 19,193. Overall, 9.5 percent of all samples have tested positive. It was 9.2 percent the previous day.

Of the infected cases, the minister said, some 500 received treatment at hospitals, which is 33 percent of the total cases. The rests were receiving treatment at home.

Nine people recovered in the 24 hours, taking the total number of recovery cases to 58, he said.

Expressing dissatisfaction at many still roaming outside, the minister said they were ignoring social distancing, which is crucial in containing the spread of the deadly virus. "This negligence is putting everyone in danger."

He also urged everyone to do corona

test if they showed symptoms of the disease.

"If we try to stay indoors till April 25, we'll succeed [in fighting the virus]."

To win the fight, experts have, however, suggested that the government analyse how the ongoing lockdown has impacted curbing the virus' transmission since the number of deaths and infections is on the rise.

"There should be an evaluation of the effectiveness of the lockdown. Any steps taken by the authorities must have a goal. Otherwise, all measures may turn futile," Prof Saif Ullah said.

**YOUTHS MOST AFFECTED**  
Providing additional information on the countrywide infection, Meerjady Sabrina Flora, director of the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR), said 21-30 was the worst affected age group.

About 21 percent of the total cases are aged between 21 and 30, while 19 percent between 31 and 40, and 15 percent between 41 and 50 years, she said.

Of all cases of infection, 46 percent were reported in Dhaka city, 20 percent in Narayanganj and the rest elsewhere.

Gazipur is another district with growing number of coronavirus cases, followed by Chattogram and Munshiganj, she said.

The highest number of cases in Dhaka has been reported in Mirpur area.

Out of the total patients in Dhaka, 11 percent were from Mirpur. Mohammadpur, Wari and Jatrabari areas had 4 percent patients each, Prof Flora said.

She also said among the total infected, 68 percent were taking treatment at their homes while 32 percent were admitted to different hospitals.

"Not all the 32 percent of the Covid-19 patients, who are receiving treatment at hospitals, required hospitalisation," she said, adding that many had to be admitted to hospitals in face of social pressure.

She emphasised that if a patient was in a stable state, it was best for the person and the health authorities that the individual was given treatment at his home in complete isolation.

## 8 special flights

FROM PAGE 1  
Many Bangladeshis there are suffering from an acute financial crisis as most of the banks and money exchange booths in India are closed due to the lockdown, making transactions from Bangladesh extremely difficult, if not impossible.

About the concerns related to fare, Kamrul of US Bangla Airlines says, "There is no scope of comparing usual airfare to the fare of these special flights. We shall fly empty aircraft to Chennai and Kolkata. Although the seating capacity of every aircraft is 164, we shall have to fly to Dhaka even if we get only 10 or 50 passengers. So, we had to consider these factors before determining the fare."

However, according to Bangladeshis stranded in Chennai and its nearby town Vellore, there are at least 1,000 of them and six flights would not be enough to take them all back to Bangladesh.

There are hundreds of Bangladeshis in Bangalore and Hyderabad, who are also willing to return to Dhaka via Chennai.

Mahtab Hossain, a Bangladeshi stranded in Chennai says, "The airline is giving priority to those who booked tickets earlier but had their flights cancelled due to the lockdown. Chances are little that we shall be able to get the tickets."

Even if they get tickets, they are not certain if they would be able to board the plane.

Due to strict lockdown, all inter-state and intra-state transports are banned in India whereas these passengers will have to travel to the airport on their arrangements.

"It's almost impossible to arrange transport to Chennai from Vellore, Bangalore or Hyderabad unless we get support from Bangladesh High Commission in India," said Kamal, another Bangladeshi stranded in Vellore.

Moreover, many Bangladeshis have been held hostage by the hotel and rest house owners as the latter are reluctant to clear them without full payment of rents.

Md Idris Hasan, a Bangladeshi

stranded in Vellore, said, "Tamil Nadu government ordered the guest house and hotel owners to waive 100 percent of the rents from March 25 to March 31 and 50 percent from April 1 until the end of the lockdown. However, most of the owners are not abiding by this order."

"When we informed the local police station, they told us to talk to the high commission. If we cannot pay the rent, they will not allow us to leave the hotel and we shall not be able to take the flights."

According to a press release issued by Bangladesh High Commission in India on April 15, the high commission is working with the Indian government to solve the transport and house rent issues. The commission has asked all the Bangladeshis to wait and to be patient until further notice.

On April 3, the foreign ministry of Bangladesh issued a statement, saying that nearly 2,500 Bangladeshi citizens, including 1,000 students are currently stranded in India due to the Covid-19 outbreak.

The government is firmly committed to bringing them back quickly, who got stuck in India and other countries, once the situation becomes convenient, said the statement.

Bangladesh brings back 48 from Thailand

Meanwhile, Forty-eight stranded Bangladeshis who went to Thailand for taking treatment, returned to Dhaka yesterday afternoon from Bangkok.

Carrying the Bangladeshi citizens, a special flight of US-Bangla Airlines landed at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport at around 4:20pm, said Kamrul Islam.

Apart from them, the dead body of a Bangladeshi who died at a Bangkok hospital was also brought back in the same flight, Kamrul also said.

All the 48 Bangladeshi citizens were allowed to go to their homes on condition that they will stay in self-quarantine at their houses for 14 days as all of them submitted medical certificates that they were tested negative for Covid-19, said Md Jahirul, a doctor at the health desk of HSA.

## RMG factories not opening

FROM PAGE 1  
factories would not be reopened as per the previous plan.

"It is being observed that there are some misleading information circulating in social media regarding opening of the BGMEA factories," she told The Daily Star in a WhatsApp message.

"The position of BGMEA is very clear on this. We need to be safe first before we operate. If the situation improves, Inshallah, we will when the time is right. But for now, the first and only priority is the health and safety of our workers."

"The BGMEA was planning to open factories subject to Covid-19 situation and after yesterday's official declaration, the BGMEA will wait and observe the situation and plan accordingly," Rubana said.

Earlier, BGMEA and Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA) in a joint statement urged the member factories to shut down the factories to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

However, the BGMEA and the BKMEA in the statement said if any factory wanted to stay open for paying salaries to its workers for the month of March, they must seek permission from the associations and industrial

police.

On the other hand, the government's Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments (DIFE) in a statement on Tuesday said the factories can be kept open if they have work orders from the international retailers and brands, and the factories which are engaged in production of Personal Protective Equipment, masks and goods related to coronavirus prevention.

The DIFE also said the government would take legal actions like filing cases and suspend the renewal of factory licences if any factory owners failed to pay the workers by April 16.

It will send a list of factories which failed to pay the workers within the deadline to the labour and employment ministry on April 20.

Meanwhile, garment workers in Gazipur's Sreepur yesterday took to the streets, demanding their last month's salaries.

The workers of MHC Apparels Ltd blocked the Dhaka-Sreepur highway in the morning. Around its 3,000 workers withdrew the blockade following assurances of payment around noon.

KDM Global Apparels Ltd workers also demonstrated for the same demand, reports our Gazipur correspondent.



**A vegetables vendor on Nazimuddin Road in Old Dhaka wears a full body protection suit and mask as he sells to his customers. He, however, forgot about protecting his left hand. The photo was taken a couple of days ago.**

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Saving lives, helping the vulnerable vital

FROM PAGE 1

**Mia Seppo:** The magnitude of the current health crisis is so severe that even countries with strong health systems are currently overwhelmed and facing enormous challenges in responding to high number of cases. Currently, Bangladesh is facing clusters of cases and high-risk areas have been put in lockdown. Physical distancing measures are important because they can slow the spread of the virus, but they will not stop the pandemic. While in the majority of cases the virus isn't deadly, it's vital to act now to slow its spread and ensure healthcare systems can cope.

Furthermore, physical distancing is a defensive measure. To win, we need to attack the virus with aggressive and targeted tactics -- finding cases, isolating and caring for every confirmed case, and tracing and quarantining every close contact. In summary; to turn the pandemic around, countries need to invest in comprehensive, innovative and localised approaches.

**TDS:** Joblessness or lack of business opportunities have become major worries for Bangladesh. What would be your suggestions in addressing it?

**Mia Seppo:** As the (UN) secretary general said, we must tackle the devastating social and economic dimensions of this crisis, with a focus on those most affected: women, older persons, youth, low-wage workers, small and medium-sized enterprises, the informal sector and vulnerable groups. The recovery from the Covid-19 crisis must lead to a different economy. Everything we do during and after this crisis must be done with a strong focus on building more equal, inclusive and sustainable economies and societies that are more resilient in the face of pandemics, climate change and the many other global challenges we face.

The Bangladesh government was quick to announce extra support, especially food, for those struggling during the holidays. As the crisis is still progressing in Bangladesh, we have to wait for some time for a fuller understanding of the impacts it

will have. For creating jobs, a major short-term impetus could come from ramping up public investment and public works. Importantly, the government and the private sector could strategise to ensure security, safety, adequate finance, transportation and trade logistics so that the closed factories and enterprises can recover and rebuild.

**TDS:** Bangladesh has some 10 million migrant workers spread mostly across the Middle East and Southeast Asia. Many are losing jobs and distressed. How can the UN help in this regard?

**Mia Seppo:** This virus has shown that it does not discriminate, and we are all vulnerable to the effects of it. However, some in our global society are more vulnerable to the economic and social impacts it is having and will have. Covid-19 can be controlled only if there is an inclusive global approach which protects every individual's rights to life and health, including migrants regardless of their migratory status. Migrants and refugees are disproportionately vulnerable to exclusion, stigma and discrimination, particularly when undocumented. The UN has been advocating for governments around the world to do all they can to protect the rights and the health of everyone. Further, it is important that migrants are included in measures that are being introduced to mitigate the economic downturn caused by Covid-19.

**TDS:** UN prepared a plan to support Bangladesh in the fight against Covid-19. Can you please detail it?

**Mia Seppo:** The plan looks at key areas for enhancing government capacity: surveillance and laboratory support, contact tracing and screening, case management and infection prevention control, risk communication and community engagement, logistics and procurement, preserving social cohesion. At this stage, the top priority is scaling up testing capacities, equipping the health care system for a potential influx of severe

and critical Covid-19 cases. This includes sourcing relevant PPE, other medical equipment and supplies, training for health staff, and urgent communications with the general population about Covid-19.

The nature of the global pandemic, global competition over scare resources and the potential far-reaching consequences of the pandemic are reverberating around the world. Now more than ever it's important for all governments, including here in Bangladesh, to utilise all capacity available in the country to address this crisis, something the Bangladesh government has already been working on with support from the UN, civil society and partners.

**TDS:** Isn't it a time of global solidarity in real sense?

**Mia Seppo:** UN Secretary-General António Guterres has recently urged warring parties across the world to lay down their weapons in support of the bigger battle against Covid-19: the common enemy that is now threatening all of humankind. This is a time of and for global solidarity. The virus has shown that it does not discriminate, and we are all vulnerable to its effects. We know that developing countries are much more likely to bear the brunt of health and economic impacts of Covid-19.

Despite the challenges all countries are facing, we've also seen them working together to support each other as best they can whether through supplying much needed equipment and supplies, treatment facilities, or even manpower.

My hope is that when the threat of Covid-19 reduces and we move to recovery, socially, economically and mentally, we will see the difference it made to have a multilateral approach at the global level, unified responses at the country level and communities and individuals coming together. My hope is that we will learn the importance of pulling together. The response to Covid-19 is only as strong as its weakest link, as the weakest health system. Therefore, more than ever, we cannot leave anyone behind.

just to celebrate the occasion."

**BACK IN COX'S BAZAR**

"In Cox's Bazar, we have around 4,000 volunteers and some 2,300 staffers. Around 2,000 are on the frontline," Hasina said of her current undertaking.

Hasina praised the speed at which authorities in Cox's Bazar have been working, especially when it came to inter-agency coordination.

"Physical distancing measures are in place from our side when it comes to those visiting our healthcare or information centres or when food is being distributed, but it is still a challenge to make the community understand and follow all the instructions."

"When I heard our workers were cleaning around 4,400 metres of the drainage systems, I asked how they were doing it while maintaining distance. They sent me pictures. They had even fashioned a scale to measure how far to stand from each other," she said, the pride evident in her voice.

Asked how she responded to being summoned to the Ebola crisis in 2019 and how she feels in the current situation, she said, "With Ebola we knew how it was transmitted. This time, we are not fully sure..."

Asked what being in the thick of things meant, she said, "The thing is, in the line of war, we can only see what's in front. Nothing else matters." Nervousness. Fears. They aren't there. Nothing exists but the here and the now, she said.

"When I look back and realise what I had been through, I ask myself, 'Really?'"

*The full story is on [www.thedailystar.net](http://www.thedailystar.net)*

## Schoolgirl raped in Pabna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Pabna*

A man allegedly raped a schoolgirl in the toilet of Dharbila community health centre in Pabna around noon on Thursday.

Police arrested accused Abdur Rahman, 40, from Dharbila village on Thursday night after the victim's father filed a rape case.

Yesterday, a local court sent the arrestee to jail after police produced him before it.

Mohaiminul Islam, sub-inspector of Pabna Police Station, said the girl was playing near her house which is not far away from the health centre.

He said Rahman took the seven-year-old girl, a first grader at a local school, to the toilet by tempting her with toys around 12:30pm on Thursday.

The accused raped the girl when the health centre was empty, the SI said.

As the victim screamed for help, Rahman fled the spot. Later, the girl's family members rescued her, Mohaiminul added, quoting the case statement.

The SI said the girl would be sent to a local hospital today for medical examinations.

## 7 die

FROM PAGE 1

focal person at the hospital's flu corner.

The boy, who was admitted to KMCH on Thursday night, passed away around noon yesterday, the physician added.

In Rangpur, a 29-year-old man, who returned from Narayanganj 13 days ago, died of coronavirus-like symptoms at his village home in Khashti area of Pirganj upazila.

In Chattogram, an 18-year-old, who had been undergoing treatment at the isolation unit of a local health complex for the last couple of days, passed away at Chattogram Medical College Hospital. A resident of Rangamati's Baghaichhari upazila, the youth was suffering from cold, cough and fever.

In Rangamati, a 21-year-old garment worker, died of coronavirus-like symptoms at his village home in Bangalhalia area of Rajasthali upazila on Thursday night. He worked at a garment factory in Chattogram.

In Bagerhat, a 65-year-old man passed away at Bagerhat Sadar Hospital on Thursday evening. He was receiving treatment at the isolation unit of the hospital for respiratory problems.

In Satkhira, a 22-year-old youth died while offering Johr prayers at a mosque in Arialkhali village around 1:30pm on Thursday, said OC Asaduzzam of Satkhira Sadar Police Station, quoting the youth's family members.

A worker at a brickfield in Dhaka, the youth returned home about two weeks ago. He suffered from vomiting a couple of days ago, said local health officer Dr Mahbubur Rahman, quoting the youth's neighbours.

His death caused panic among the villagers. Samples from his body were collected for Covid-19 test, the physician added.

In Madaripur, the administration enforced lockdown of the district from 10:00pm on Thursday.

The administration in Pirojpur put the district on lockdown on Thursday night.

In Barisal, the medicine unit-3 of Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital was put on lockdown on Thursday after a patient tested positive for Covid-19.

At least 24 health workers, including doctors, nurses and staffers, of the hospital were sent home to quarantine themselves.

Besides, five more coronavirus cases were reported in the district on Thursday, raising the total number of Covid-19 patients to 15.

In Kishoreganj, 11 people, including three doctors, tested positive for coronavirus yesterday.

Our correspondents in Mymensingh, Khulna, Dinajpur, Rangamati, Bagerhat, Satkhira, Faridpur, Pirojpur, and Barishal contributed to this report.

## ASI arrested

FROM PAGE 1

Another victim Moin Uddin, 32, of Kaliakoir is being treated at Enam Medical College Hospital in Savar with two bullet injuries to his stomach, he added.

Minister Mozammel told reporters that he asked the authorities to fire the suspect from his job because he seemed to have committed the crime in cold blood.

Quoting witnesses and the suspect, OC Alamgir said Kumar and the two men used to be friends and often hung out and sometimes took drugs.

Kumar recently started suspecting that Moin was having an affair with his wife, Alamgir said, adding that Kumar and his wife had been fighting over the issue a lot.

On Thursday night Kumar asked both men to come and hang out with him at a quiet place in Kutubdia area.

Around 9:45pm, Kumar arrived at the scene on a motorcycle and started shooting at both men as soon as he saw them, the OC added.

But he fled in a hurry as people in the neighbourhood heard the gunshots and started coming to the scene, the officer said.

It appears that Kumar had planned to kill the men, Alamgir said.

On information, police recovered Shaheed's body and sent Moin to a hospital.

Russel Sheikh, additional superintendent of police in Gazipur, said Kumar was arrested in Ashulia with a pistol and six bullets. He was on leave during the crime.



# TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Black Rhinos, Lake Nakuru, Kenya.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

## RHINO

Last week I wrote about the book *African Silences* by Peter Matthiessen recounting a series of trips he made in Africa in search of birds and wildlife. Along with other animals, the book taught me about the White Rhino.

Among all land mammals in the world, the rhino is second only to the elephant in size. There are five species of rhinos in the world. They are White Rhino, Black Rhino, One-horned Rhino, Javan Rhino and Sumatran Rhino. The White Rhino is the largest, weighing in at around 6000 pounds. (In comparison, the African Elephant weighs up to 15000 pounds.) Rhinos are herbivores, living on grass and leaves. Although large, they are fast and can exceed 30 miles/hour during a charge. They are clad in a thick, protective skin up to 2 inches thick. Man is their only predator; they are killed for their horns used for medicinal purpose. Their name comes from their unique appearance: “Rhinoceros” is derived from a Greek word meaning “nose-horned.”

Matthiessen observes that the White Rhino had two subspecies: Northern White Rhino and Southern White Rhino. The Northern subspecies has become extinct, largely due to wholesale slaughter by humans. For example, in the years following the assassination of Patrice Lumumba in the Congo, Simba rebels slaughtered 90% of the White Rhinos there for the purpose of selling their horns. The proceeds were used to buy more weapons. Subsequent efforts to save the subspecies came to naught.

The Southern White Rhino can be easily seen in South Africa.

The moniker “White” is a misnomer – the animals are not really white. It apparently comes from the word “weit”, an Afrikaner word meaning “wide”, called so because of their wide mouths. English settlers

misheard the name.

The Black Rhino (not really black, but named as a counterpoint to the White Rhino!) is found in Kenya, South Africa, Namibia and Zimbabwe. I saw it in Kenya's Lake Nakuru National park which has the world's largest concentration of them: one hundred and fifty. In the early morning light two rhinos were grazing in a meadow. At one point they faced each other and nuzzled their large horns. It was touching to see the show of affection among these two giants.

The Javan Rhino is the rarest rhino, critically endangered, with around seventy-two left in the wild. They are the smallest of the rhinos but still formidable at 3000-5000 pounds. All surviving members live in Ujong Kulon National Park in Java.

The Sumatran Rhino is also critically endangered. It is estimated that less than a hundred live in the wild.

One rhino differs in appearance than all the others. While the rest have two horns, the Greater One Horned Rhino, living in India and Nepal, sports just one. Its story is in stark contrast to the Northern White Rhino. Once close to extinction, efforts to save it succeeded and today it numbers over three thousand, the majority in Kaziranga and Chitwan parks in India and Nepal respectively.

In Bangladesh, there are records of rhinos from the late 1880s and early 1900s. For example, Sundarban was home to a subspecies of the Javan Rhino. However, this subspecies, *Rhinoceros sondaicus inermis*, has become extinct. At other times Bangladesh also had the Greater One-horned Rhino and the Sumatran Rhino.

facebook.com/ikabirphotographs or follow ihtishamkabar on Instagram.

## 4 held for storing Covid-19 test kits

*They also sold safety gears at high prices, say police*

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police arrested four people from Bangla Motor area in the capital on Thursday night on charges of storing coronavirus testing kits and other equipment used in combating the virus and selling those at hiked prices.

The arrestees are Anwar Hossain, Amit Basak, Shoayeb, and Shuvo.

SM Shamim, senior assistant commissioner of Ramna (zone) police, said they were discharging their duties at Moghbazar when a man approached and complained to them that some traders took Tk 30,000 for 20 masks when the actual price is Tk 3,600.

Shamim said they later conducted a raid at a private institution at Jahura Tower around 9pm on the day and arrested the four along with 275 Covid-19 testing kits, 9,050 normal and 100 N95 masks, 198 personal protective equipment and some other items.

The testing kits should not be in the possession of any individual or private organisation, Shamim said.

In primary interrogation, the arrestees admitted that they stored the items to sell later at hiked prices. A case was filed with Shahbagh Police Station under the Special Powers Act in this regard.

## SPECIAL AMNESTY FOR UNDOCUMENTED WORKERS IN KUWAIT 4,300 Bangladeshis set to return

JAMIL MAHMUD

More than 4,300 undocumented Bangladeshi migrant workers are waiting to be repatriated from Kuwait, after they applied under a special amnesty declared by the Gulf country to reduce migrant population amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

The workers, many of whom live in coronavirus-hit areas of Kuwait, will be repatriated depending on flight clearance from Dhaka, said an official at Bangladesh Embassy in Kuwait on Thursday.

Their expenses -- airfare, food and accommodation -- during repatriation will be borne by Kuwait government, said the Bangladesh mission there.

As per the amnesty, undocumented workers will be able to return home without any fine and will be eligible to re-enter the Gulf country through legal channels in the future.

However, the decision for repatriation has put “pressure” on the Bangladesh government amid the coronavirus crisis and feared economic aftershock.

To ensure institutional quarantine of repatriated citizens, the government is setting up quarantine centres for 4,000 persons in Dhaka and nearby districts.

Among some two lakh Bangladeshis in Kuwait, about 25,000 are estimated to be undocumented.

Kuwait has reported 1,658 positive coronavirus cases and five fatalities till yesterday evening.

Besides Kuwait, some labour-receiving countries recently asked Bangladesh to take back undocumented workers. Foreign Minister Abdul Momen on April 5 told media that four to five countries have reached out to Bangladesh in this regard.

He said although not a lot of countries are making this request, it has put pressure on the government at this critical moment.

Talking with this newspaper, an official at Bangladesh Embassy in Kuwait said after the Bangladeshi workers applied, Kuwait authorities prepared necessary documents for quick repatriation.

Seeking anonymity, he said since Kuwait authorities will bear all expenses, they are ready to send the workers back home within a couple of days.

“It now depends on the time required for flight clearance,” he told this newspaper on Monday.

Kuwait has also asked the Philippines, India, Egypt, and Sri Lanka to take back their undocumented workers under the amnesty, which started on April 1 and will continue throughout the month.

The Philippines has already repatriated more than 600 undocumented workers from Kuwait, according to media reports.

Md Anisuzzaman, acting labour welfare counsellor at Bangladesh Embassy in Kuwait, said Kuwait authorities started receiving applications from Bangladeshi workers on April 11. Many of them are from labour camps in Mahbouda and Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, places that are under a two-week lockdown since April 6, said Anisuzzaman, also head of chancery at the Bangladesh mission.

He said due to the lockdown, Kuwait government has undertaken unprecedented precautionary measures to run the amnesty programme.

Application deadline for Bangladeshi workers ended on April 15. On Thursday, Anisuzzaman said a few more days are required to finish pending work.

## Docked on to uncertainty

*With passengers hard to come by, Buriganga boatmen stare at bleak days*

MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Sadek Ali, a boatman who plies his trade on the Buriganga, took loans from his relatives to send his only son to Brunei two months ago. This, he hoped, would bring his family better days, and finally allow him to retire from after a 20-year long career.

But all his dreams hit a roadblock with the coronavirus pandemic setting in on the world.

“I hoped things would be alright, but everything has stalled everywhere. My son is unable to send me any money. There's no food on the table,” he said, sitting at the capital's Shashanghat area in Shyambazar. “I have no choice but to take up the oar again.”

The loan, worth Tk 2.5 lakh, has become a headache for Sadek. In something of a double whammy, not only does he have to provide for his family again, but also pay back the lenders, who have started pressuring him, as they too are feeling the heat of the shutdown.

And it's not like getting his boat out to the water and putting in some hard labour is going to take care of all of this. As the shutdown continues, passengers are hard to come by, and daily income of boatmen around the area have come down by at least 70 percent, according to some accounts.

Boatman Md Kamal said, “We used to earn Tk 1,000 or above on a regular day. Now, it has come down to Tk 300 or less.”

Kamal has to pay Tk 75 to rent the boat and Tk 85 to local influential persons, he claimed.

Though the number of passengers has reduced drastically, the charge remains the same, he said. He is the sole bread-earner of his family in



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

These boats, which used to carry hundreds of passengers every day, are just gathering dust.

Barishal. He rows his boat to send his two sons to college. “My family is going to starve if I stop rowing,” Kamal said in a grim tone.

Nearby, sexagenarian Siddique Mia could be seen loudly calling for passers-by to get on his boat. “In the last 20 years, I saw hartals and blockades. But this situation is far worse,” he said.

Even during hartals, many people used to come out bearing the risk, he said. “How do I feed my family? Passengers are nowhere to be found and I don't have any other skill,” he added.

Even though road connectivity has improved

over the years and water of the Buriganga turned pitch black from indiscriminate pollution, the appeal of the boat service never diminished.

Before the shutdown, the ghats were crowded with passengers from all walks of life, especially during the morning and evening.

Visiting the Shyambazar Kheyaghat recently, this correspondent found nearly 20 boats anchored, with boatmen shouting, “Opar, opar [other side]” to attract passengers. With perspective, they almost sound like pleas for this difficult period to pass onto the other side.

### VOCATIONAL, MADRASA, ENGLISH VERSION

## No TV classes for 2.8m schoolgoers yet

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

About 2.8 million students of madrasas, technical and vocational institutions, and English version are deprived of television education although their peers in general stream are receiving lessons to recover losses during the shutdown.

Educationalists said if the situation continues, these students will fall behind their peers.

Officials of the Directorate of Technical Education (DTE) and Directorate of Madrasa Education (DME) said they are preparing to air classes through Sangsad Bangladesh Television.

DTE Director Jahangir Alam said TV classes may begin tomorrow.

Directorate of Secondary and

Higher Education (DSHE) started TV education on Sangsad TV on March 29. DSHE officials said a total of about 90 lakh students are currently enrolled in sixth to tenth grades at schools across the country.

Officials at Directorate of Primary Education (DPE) said they started airing classes on April 9 for about 1.63 crore students of 90,000 lakh primary schools and kindergartens.

On March 16, the government shut all educational institutions till March 31, which was eventually extended till April 25.

This means these will remain closed till May 31 for Ramadan and Eid-ul-Fitr, if the government does not cancel or shorten the vacations.

Bangladesh Madrasa Shikkhak Samity general secretary Delwar Hossain said many students asked them about TV lessons.

There are about 13.53 lakh students at Dakhil or secondary level madrasas; 8.16 lakh at 7,196 Ebtedayee or primary level madrasa and 3.5 lakh at independent Ebtedayee madrasas, according to Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics.

DME Deputy Director Jahangir Alam said they are now recording classes for sixth to tenth grades.

Dohar's Joypara Government Technical School and College Principal Haripada Chandra Paul said students are incurring irreparable academic loss.

There are some three lakh SSC (vocational) and Dakhil (vocational) students at some 3,000 institutions, said DTE Director Jahangir.

He said they are planning to air three classes on three trades for vocational students, and would air classes on all trades in order.

Shahan Ara Begum, principal of Ideal School and College, Motijheel, wanted introduction of classes for English version students on TV. “We are working to start online classes for Bangla and English versions' students,” she said.

Education officials say there are some two lakh English version students at schools across the country.

## ‘Don't push them back at sea’

### Fortify Rights urges Malaysia to conduct rescue missions for adrift boats carrying Rohingyas

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Fortify Rights yesterday called on Malaysia not to push back the ships of Rohingyas adrift at sea, and to deploy urgently search and rescue missions for such boats and ensure their safe disembarkation.

The statement comes a day after the Bangladesh Coast Guard rescued 396 Rohingya from a boat that departed Bangladesh for Malaysia two months ago.

Malaysian authorities reportedly forced the boat back out to sea; the refugees were adrift for weeks, and up to 60 died.

Rohingyas told the Myanmar-based right body that at least two other ships were adrift at sea between Bangladesh and Malaysia.

A police official in southern Thailand told Reuters that five boats carrying Rohingyas had been spotted off the coast

of Satun province late on Monday.

It was not possible to independently confirm the remarks.

“Sending an ill-equipped ship of refugees out to sea is unlawful and a death sentence,” said Matthew Smith, chief executive officer of Fortify Rights.

“The Malaysian government should investigate who ordered this Rohingya ship back out to sea and urgently authorize search and rescue missions for any additional boats in distress. Covid-19 is no excuse to send refugees to death at sea.”

The statement said on April 16, Malaysian authorities forced another boat of more than 200 Rohingyas back to sea.

In 2015, Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia had also pushed boats of thousands of Rohingya refugees out to sea.

## 542 foreign nationals leave Dhaka for home

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 542 Canadian and Australian citizens, who were stranded in Bangladesh following outbreak of Covid-19, left Dhaka for their respective countries by separate chartered flights from Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.

Of them, 257 were Canadian citizens and 285 were Australians, sources at the airport said.

A special flight of Qatar Airways left for Toronto at around 10pm on Thursday, said an official of Aviation Security (AVSEC) at Dhaka airport.

Besides, a total of 285 Australian citizens left Dhaka by a chartered flight of Sri Lankan Air at around 9:30pm.

That flight, while coming in, brought back 30 stranded Bangladeshi nationals from Sri Lanka, a spokesperson of Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh said.

The Canadian and Australian High Commissions in Dhaka, with help of the Bangladesh government, chartered the flights for their citizens, mostly expatriate Bangladeshis, who opted to go back home amid the pandemic.

On Tuesday, 214 Canadian citizens first left Dhaka for Toronto by a chartered flight of Qatar Airways.

Earlier, citizens of USA, Japan, Malaysia, Bhutan and various European countries also left Dhaka by chartered flights.

Regular air communication to and from Dhaka has remained suspended with all countries except for China since the middle of March, to contain spread of Covid-19.



PHOTO: SNEETH NASIR

More than a month into the first coronavirus case of the country, people in Sylhet are still coming out to the streets, defying social distancing measures. As they keep plying roads and marketplaces en masse, the possibility of the Covid-19 virus' spread increases dramatically. This photo was taken from Bandar Bazar area.

## April 30 set as ‘final deadline’ for hajj reg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The religious affairs ministry has extended the deadline for registration of intended hajjis till April 30, says a notice.

Due to a lack of response from people wishing to participate in this year's hajj, the ministry earlier extended the deadline for registration thrice.

The ministry said this is the final time they are extending the deadline. The previous deadline was April 16.

Registration began on March 2 and was supposed to end on March 15, before it was extended till March 25.

Earlier, the ministry and Hajj Agencies Association of Bangladesh (HAAB) said pilgrims will get back their money if they fail to perform hajj due to the spread of coronavirus.

Due to the outbreak of Covid-19, hajj aspirants are unsure whether hajj will be held at all this year. Hajj flights are scheduled to start from June 23.

On April 1, the Saudi government urged different countries to delay making hajj plans due to the pandemic.

The Bangladesh government on February 24 approved three hajj packages. Hajjis will have to pay Tk 4.25 lakh for package-1 and Tk 3.60 lakh for package-2 under government management, which are Tk 6,500 and Tk 16,000 more than the corresponding packages of the previous year.

With affordability in mind, the government has also introduced package-3 for the first time, which hajjis can avail at a cost of Tk 3.15 lakh.



# Trump was too slow in virus response: poll

AFP, Washington

Nearly two-thirds of Americans say President Donald Trump was too slow in taking major steps to address the threat to the United States from new coronavirus, a poll published on Thursday said.

According to the Pew Research Center, 65 percent said Trump was tardy in responding when cases of the Covid-19 illness were first reported in other countries.

He initially downplayed the virus and has been keen to end the resulting lockdowns which have crippled the world's largest economy.

The Pew survey was conducted April 7-12 among a sample 4,917 American adults.

It found that 52 percent said Trump's public comments on the coronavirus outbreak are making the situation seem better than it really is.

Thirty-nine percent said he is presenting the situation about as it really is, while eight percent said he is making the situation seem worse than in reality.

Trump has been speaking at length during daily press conferences alongside medical experts.

On Thursday he recommended a gradual reopening of the economy, a day after saying "the data suggests that

nationwide we have passed the peak on new cases."

That declaration came on the same day tracking by Johns Hopkins University showed 2,569 US deaths over a previous 24-hour period, the heaviest daily toll of any country.

The Pew survey found that 73 percent of US adults said the worst is still to come in terms of problems the US is facing from the outbreak.

With state governors also working on plans to ease up on economic restrictions, 66 percent said their greater concern is that states will lift restrictions on public activity too quickly.

About half that number, 32 percent, said a reopening will not happen quickly enough.

The Covid-19 novel coronavirus emerged in China in late December. On January 21 US officials announced the country's first case, and other cases began emerging outside China leading the World Health Organization on January 30 to declare a "public health emergency of international concern."

Trump, who boasted in January that "we have it totally under control," did not declare a government initiative to "slow the spread" until March 16.

## Staying home not an option

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women, are still working at distant places, he said.

Ashonto said they received relief, but for only three families in the village.

"Every day, we are lobbying for more relief daily and returning home barehanded," he added.

Rishikul Union Parishad chairman Shahidul Islam said till April 3, his union received 5.04 tonnes of rice for 504 families, while at least 4,000 families in the union require relief.

"I'm becoming crazy receiving calls [for relief]. I cannot bear it when I see their miseries. I'm donating from my own savings, which is not enough," Shahidul waived.

Meanwhile, many farm labourers, who are currently working outside their unions, have not even heard about relief distribution.

Nazir Orao and his wife Suchorita from the Orao community of Godagari upazila's Kakonhat village are among them.

This correspondent met the couple on March 29 while they, along with 12 other labourers, were loading a mini truck with sheaves of wheat near a field in Paba upazila's Mahandakhali village.

The couple and their seven-year-old son had left their village on March 28 and travelled 15 kilometres to come to Paba upazila for agricultural work.

"We'll stay here for two weeks harvesting, threshing and preparing wheat for sales," Nazir said.

He and Suchorita receive Tk 350 each per day at the end of their work shift, in addition to daily meals and shelter provided by their employer.

"After this job, we'll have enough to survive till the beginning of Boro rice harvest in late April," said Suchorita.

When asked about coronavirus infection risk, Nazir said, "We have no problem with coronavirus, we wear masks and keep distance from each other in the field."

Some farm labourers, harvesting potatoes in Talondo and Pachondor villages in Rajshahi's Tanore upazila, said they came from Porsha and Sapahar upazilas of Naogaon district.

The workers said they could not find agricultural work in their home villages as the Boro rice fields there are only getting irrigated now.

Farm jobs are also becoming scarce, as potato and

wheat harvest season is coming to an end. In addition, people who lost their regular income from other trades are competing for agricultural work.

Hunger drove blacksmith Kalidas Karmakar of Krishnapur village of Tanore upazila to work at a potato field for two days to buy rice. Even then, he had to borrow Tk 500 from relatives.

"I am struggling to feed my eight-member family as my shop, that fetched Tk 600 daily, has been closed for about a week," he said.

"All my savings is gone. I am taking only two meals a day instead of three. But I have to feed the kids thrice," he lamented.

"If I don't get relief soon, I will have to find a farm job again," he said.

Regarding the risk of infection, he said "Maintaining physical distance while working with other labourers is impossible. Still, I have to endure the work to survive."

Kalidash said he begged the Pachondor UP chairman for relief and was denied.

Pachondor UP chairman Abdul Matin told The Daily Star that out of 6,000 ultra-poor families in his union, 4,000 are covered by safety net programmes.

He said till April 4 he received six tonnes of rice for 600 families out of the 2000 ultra-poor, not covered by the social safety net.

"I'm in an awkward situation, who shall I leave out and who shall I feed. Every one of them need relief," Matin said.

He also said because of the pandemic they had to force hundreds of itinerant workers to go home when they came to Pocondor union to find jobs in potato fields.

Paddy farmer Mostafa Kamal, too, claimed that the demand for farm jobs has gone up.

However, he fears that there might be a labour crisis during the Boro rice harvest season in the district by the end of this month, if the coronavirus situation worsens and labour movement becomes further restricted.

In a press conference, the Deputy Commissioner of Rajshahi informed that they identified at least one lakh people including farm labourers who require relief.

Till April 17, the district administration distributed 1,671 tonnes of rice and Tk 62.49 lakh in cash among 1,86,418 people in the city and nine upazila.

given clearance by Bhutto to travel with their families to Dhaka. As a part of his campaign to thwart Bangladesh government's plan to try Pakistani prisoners of war for crimes committed in Bangladesh, Bhutto is now refusing permission to Red Cross to visit the so-called repatriation camps in North-West Frontier Province and near Karachi where 28,000 Bangalees are detained.

### PARLIAMENTARY FORM, UNITARY SET UP

The draft constitution committee today considers the preamble of the proposed constitution of the country. During its five-hour session the committee members submit their opinion on various aspects of the preamble proposed by Committee Chairman Dr Kamal Hossain. They also place their views on the national flag, national anthem and national flower. The meeting also accepts the idea of a unitary state under parliamentary form of government.

### EACH THANA TO HAVE A HOSPITAL

Bangladesh government has taken up a scheme to set up a 25-bed hospital in each of the 412 thanas of the country.

SOURCES: April 19, 1972 issues of *Bangladesh Observer*, *Dainik Bangla* and *Ittefaq*

## South Asia virus cases hit 22,000

FROM PAGE 12

including the cities of New Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Bengaluru, Kolkata and Hyderabad.

But Lav Agarwal, federal health joint secretary leading the fight against the coronavirus, said the rate of increase of infections was slowing because of the lockdown of 1.3 billion people in the world's second-most populous country after China.

Before the shutdown, the number of cases was doubling every three days, but now it was taking 6.2 days to double, Agarwal said, citing government data.

The government has said it will permit farm and industrial activity in parts of the countryside that are least affected by the coronavirus from next week to lessen the pain for millions.

Authorities in the resort islands of the Maldives placed



## Shabnam Huq's 20th death anniv

CITY DESK

Yesterday (April 17) marked the 20th death anniversary of Shabnam Huq, wife of Arham Masudul Huq, chief executive officer of Dhaka Bank Foundation, says a press release.

Relatives, friends and well-wishers are requested to pray for the salvation of the departed soul on the occasion.

## TIB opposes

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in coordination with the local administration.

The TIB statement said its doubts stem from media reports on theft and grabbing of relief goods in different areas and the involvement of political leaders in such crimes.

TIB demanded the committees formed by the ruling party remain within the limits of "cooperating the local administration".

"The country and the countrymen are now going through a severe crisis. Marginalised people are in the worst condition," TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman said.

"Government support should reach all people in need and political consideration or personal liking and disliking should not be a factor.

"The prime minister has given clear directives in this regard... and we want to [be assured that her stance against corruption] will be reflected in the relief distribution activities."

Iftekharuzzaman added, "We are getting news every day of theft and grabbing of relief goods in different parts of the country, and sadly most of those accused of being involved in the incidents have political identities."

In such a reality the new initiative to form relief committees will exacerbate the corruption, he added. Iftekharuzzaman said it has to be ensured that the political relief committees do not turn out to be a platform to lobby for malpractice irregularities.

He urged making and publishing lists of relief recipients, the amount of relief material and distribution dates.

## Take special care

FROM PAGE 12

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, director general of World Health Organization, recently said, "We need to work together to protect older people from the virus."

"They are valued and valuable members of our families and communities, but they're at higher risk of the more serious complications of Covid-19," he said.

The WHO DG also said, "Older people carry the collective wisdom of our societies. Ensure their needs are being met for food, fuel, prescription medication, and human interaction."

Physical distance does not mean social distance, he said.

"We all need to check in regularly on older parents, neighbors, friends, or relatives who live alone or in care homes in whatever ways possible, so they know how much they're loved and valued," Tedros added.

## Mogh Party man

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adding, "We have recovered the body and sending it to Bandarban Sadar Hospital."

Chaw Hai Mong Marma, chairman of Rowangchhari upazila, quoting locals said, "Four criminals with uniform came to Kenaiju Para around 8:00am and shot Mong who died on the spot".

# Prince William admits virus fears for Charles, queen

AFP, London

Britain's Prince William yesterday revealed his concern for his father Prince Charles after he contracted coronavirus -- and his worries for his grandmother Queen Elizabeth II.

Charles, 71, the monarch's eldest son and heir, tested positive for Covid-19 last month but recovered after a week in isolation at his home in Scotland.

"I have to admit, at first I was quite concerned, he fits the profile of somebody, at the age he is at, which is fairly risky," his oldest son Prince William told the BBC.

"But my father has had many chest infections, colds and things like that over the years and so I thought to myself if anybody is going to be able to beat this, it is going to be him."

In the end Charles had only mild symptoms, the 37-year-old said.

The queen, 93, and her husband Prince Philip, 98, have been staying at Windsor Castle near London since the outbreak began.

"Obviously I think very carefully about my grandparents," William added.

"We are doing everything we can to make sure they are isolated away and protected from this but it does worry me."

William and his wife Kate, the duke and duchess of Cambridge, spoke to the BBC as part of their work supporting mental health charities.

They urged people to look after their mental as well as their physical well-being during the lockdown.

## China revises death toll

FROM PAGE 12

it would be "naive" to think China had handled the pandemic well, adding: "There are clearly things that have happened that we don't know about."

Beijing hit back yesterday, insisting there had been no cover-up.

"There has never been any concealment, and we'll never allow any concealment," a foreign ministry spokesman said.

World leaders are grappling with the question of when -- and how -- to reopen society, seeking a life-and-death balance between unfreezing stalled economies and preventing a deadly second coronavirus wave.

While Trump declared Thursday that the time had come for the "next front in our war" with a phased reboot of the US economy, others took the opposite path -- Japan, Britain and Mexico all expanded current restrictions.

Despite the United States suffering a staggering 4,500 deaths in the last 24 hours -- taking the national toll to almost 33,000 -- Trump proclaimed: "We're opening up our country."

The president's approach was a step back from previous hopes for a sudden re-opening however, and state governors were given the freedom to set their own plans to resume business.

Lightly affected states can open "literally tomorrow," said Trump, while others would receive White House "freedom and guidance" to achieve that at their own pace.

In New York state for example -- where more than 11,500 have died -- Governor Andrew Cuomo extended a shutdown order until May 15.

Meanwhile, there were more signs the global economy is imploding.

China yesterday reported its GDP shrank 6.8 percent in the first quarter, the first contraction since quarterly growth data started in the early 1990s.

In the US, another 5.2 million workers lost their jobs, bringing the total number of newly unemployed to a staggering 22 million since mid-March.

John Williams, a top Federal Reserve official, predicted it would take "a year or two" if not longer for the US to recover from what the International Monetary Fund has termed the "Great Lockdown" battering the global economy.

The virus could spark another "lost decade" in Latin America, the IMF warned, while experts cautioned that freezing debt for poor countries will not save many developing world economies.

In Europe, automobile sales shrank 55 percent in March, according to the industry's trade association.

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte threatened a typically muscular approach to lockdown, suggesting a martial law-style crackdown to enforce social distancing.

But some European countries -- such as hard-hit Spain and Italy -- were embarking on a long road back to normality, with Venice residents strolling around quiet canals stripped of their usual throngs of tourists.

Switzerland, Denmark and Finland were among those gradually re-opening shops and schools.

In Germany, select small shops will be allowed to reopen Monday and some children could soon return to school within weeks.

But Britain, which shut down later than continental Europe, extended its lockdown for at least three more weeks.

And in Russia, recorded infections topped 32,000 as the deputy mayor of Moscow warned of difficult weeks" ahead in her city.

## 7 held for selling

FROM PAGE 12

In Mymensingh, upazila administration and police seized 170 kilograms of rice of the government's "Rice at Tk 10 Per Kg" initiative meant for poor people and arrested three persons in Gouripur upazila on Thursday afternoon.

The arrestees were identified as Mahbubur Rahman Shaheen, a dealer in the programme along with two buyers -- Md Rafiq and Mohesh Rajbhor.

Later, Upazila Food Officer Biplob Kumar Sarker lodged a case accusing four persons including the arrestees allegedly for storing and selling, said officer-in-charge of Gouripur Police Station Md Borhan Uddin Khan.

In Gaibandha, police recovered 1.5 metric tonnes of rice of the government's Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) programme from an abandoned house at Sundarganj upazila on Thursday night.

Police arrested two locals in connection with this incident.

The detainees are Md Mokbul Hossain Bapary, 52 and Aynal Mia, 35, of Nijgram village.

"On information, a police team conducted a drive at the Domerhaat Nijgram village and found the rice. Police conducted the drive around 10:00pm yesterday [Thursday] night. A case has been filed against them," said Md Abdullahil Zamal, OC of Sundarganj police station.

In Sunamganj, local administration seized 3.65 metric tons of sugar and 980 litres edible oil of Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) from the storage facility of a trader in Alipur area of Jagannathpur upazila on Thursday night.

## UP chairman beats up farmer

FROM PAGE 12

On April 15, farmer Shahidul filed a case in this regard with Lalpur Police Station accusing chairman Sattar, UP members Reza and Md Rubel.

Md Shahriar, deputy commissioner of the district, said he had written to the local government ministry, urging it to take action in this regard.

SP Liton said a police team arrested the chairman from Pabna's Ishwardi upazila yesterday morning.

Among others, Abul Hasnat, additional SP of Natore Sadar Circle, Haronar- Rashid, additional SP of Baraigram Circle, and Jahangir Alam, OC of Natore Sadar Police Station, were present at the press briefing.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

পরিচালকের কার্যালয়

ঢাকা মেডিকেল কলেজ হাসপাতাল, ঢাকা

স্মারক নং-ঢামেকহা/সমগ্র-১/মেডিকেল যন্ত্রপাতি/২০১৯-২০২০/৩৬৮৩ তারিখঃ ১৬/০৪/২০২০ইং

**২০১৯-২০২০ইং অর্থ বৎসরে আহবানকৃত চিকিৎসা যন্ত্রপাতি**

**সংগ্রহের দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি স্থগিত প্রসঙ্গে**

ঢাকা মেডিকেল কলেজ হাসপাতালে ২০১৯-২০২০ইং অর্থ বছরে চিকিৎসা যন্ত্রপাতি সংগ্রহের জন্য স্মারক নং-ঢামেকহা/সমগ্র-১/মেডিকেল যন্ত্রপাতি/২০১৯-২০২০/২৭৮৮, তারিখঃ ০৮/০৩/২০২০ইং মোতাবেক বিকল্প বাসো ও ইংরেজি সৈনিক পরিচা এনং সিপিটিইউ-তে বিজ্ঞপ্তি প্রকাশের মাধ্যমে উক্ত দরপত্র আহবান করা হয়। দেশে করোনা ভাইরাস (COVID-19) জনিত উত্তর পরিস্থিতির কারণে পরবর্তীতে অত্র কার্যালয়ের স্মারক নং-ঢামেকহা/সমগ্র-১/মেডিকেল যন্ত্রপাতি/২০১৯-২০২০/৩০০৪, তারিখঃ ২৫/০৩/২০২০ইং অনুযায়ী সমগ্র বর্ধিত করে সংশোধনী বিজ্ঞপ্তি দেওয়া হয়। করোনা ভাইরাস (COVID-19) সংক্রমক এর প্রেক্ষিতে উক্ত পরিস্থিতির কারণে উল্লিখিত আহবানকৃত দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি পরবর্তী নির্দেশ না দেওয়া পর্যন্ত স্থগিত করা হলো। এ ব্যাপারে পরবর্তীতে বিজ্ঞপ্তির মাধ্যমে জানানো হবে।

প্রিন্সিপ্যাল জেনারেল এ কে এম নাসির উদ্দিন

পরিচালক

৯৮৫-৭৪৫

ঢাকা মেডিকেল কলেজ হাসপাতাল, ঢাকা

# Smoke blankets Kiev from forest fires in Chernobyl zone

AFP, Kiev

Thick smoke hung over Ukraine's capital Kiev yesterday as forest fires smouldered on in the Chernobyl nuclear zone, while city officials said no radiation spike had been detected.

The acid haze hindered visibility all over the city of three million and the smell of smoke was noticeable even inside homes.

The city yesterday topped the global ranking for high air pollution compiled by IQAir Group, outdoing places in China including Shanghai, as the coronavirus pandemic has led to cleaner air worldwide.

The smog came with strong winds blowing in smoke from dozens of forest fires in surrounding regions, including the nuclear exclusion zone around Chernobyl power plant.

A fire broke out almost two weeks ago close to the reactor that exploded in 1986 in the world's worst nuclear accident.

On Tuesday, Ukrainian authorities said the blaze had been largely extinguished thanks to heavy rain.

But yesterday a thousand firefighters with two planes and three helicopters were still battling a number of small fires in the wooded area some 80 kilometres north of Kiev, the emergency

service said.

Kiev authorities assured residents there was no danger of radiation.

"In Kiev, smoke and air pollution are being observed as a result of fires... but there is no radiation," Kiev Mayor Vitali Klitschko said in a video address.

Officials nevertheless urged locals not to go out without urgent need and to keep their windows shut.

The air pollution hit a city already under lockdown due to the coronavirus epidemic, with 4,662 confirmed cases in Ukraine and 125 deaths.



India bans Zoom for government use

India has banned the use of video-conferencing app Zoom for government remote meetings, the government said Thursday, in the latest warning about the platform's security. The app has become the global go-to service for everything from education to exercise classes as millions stay home because of lockdowns to combat Covid-19's spread. "This advisory states that the platform is not for use by government officers/officials for official purposes," the Home Affairs Ministry said in a statement Thursday, referring to the guidelines it had issued Sunday. "Zoom is not a safe platform," the statement said. The ministry also advised private users on how to avoid issues such as "Zoom bombing" -- when uninvited guests join the video call, often to harass users. India's cyber-security agency warned earlier this year of the app's security vulnerabilities.

'Cloud brightening' to protect Great Barrier Reef

An ambitious "cloud brightening" experiment has been carried out over Australia's Great Barrier Reef in an early-stage trial that scientists hope could become a futuristic way to protect coral from global warming. In an attempt to cool waters around the reef by making clouds reflect more sunlight, researchers said they used a boat-mounted fan similar to a snow cannon to shoot salt crystals into the air. Results from the trial were "really, really encouraging," the project's lead scientist Daniel Harrison from Southern Cross University said yesterday. "All the research is theoretical... so this is an absolute world first to go out and actually try and take seawater and turn it into these cloud condensation nuclei," he told AFP.

Soyuz crew returns to Earth



Two Nasa astronauts and a Russian cosmonaut made a safe return from the International Space Station to a planet roiled by the coronavirus pandemic yesterday. Andrew Morgan, Jessica Meir and Oleg Skripochka touched down in central Kazakhstan at 0516 GMT in the first returning mission since the World Health Organisation declared Covid-19 a global pandemic in March. "TOUCHDOWN! Welcome home, Oleg Skripochka, Andrew Morgan and Jessica Meir!" Russia's Roscosmos space agency said in a tweet yesterday. While the trio's landing site southeast of the Kazakh town of Dzhezkazgan is the same as for previous crews, the pandemic has forced a number of changes to mission-end protocol. Roscosmos said Tuesday that the crew's meeting the trio at the landing site were tested for Covid-19 and will don full-body protective wear.

SOURCE: AFP



A man reacts as he is released from Insein Prison in Yangon yesterday, as part of an annual amnesty to thousands of prisoners to mark its April New Year holiday. More than a quarter of Myanmar's prison population is being released, the president's office announced yesterday, after calls grew to ease pressure on overcrowded jails with coronavirus fears gripping the country.

PHOTO: AFP

EU facing 'moment of truth'

Says Macron, warns the bloc will splinter if unable to unify in its virus response

CNN ONLINE

Emmanuel Macron has said that the European Union faces a "moment of truth" as it reckons with the devastating financial fallout of the coronavirus pandemic, warning that "the populists will win" and the bloc will splinter if it is unable to unify in its response.

The French President said the EU's economic approach will determine whether it is "a political project or a market project only," in an interview with the Financial Times published yesterday. The EU's member states have been engaged in a standoff over how to tackle the financial hit of the Covid-19 outbreak.

"If we can't do this today, I tell you the populists will win," he added, predicting a wave of Euroskepticism in the countries hit hardest by the pandemic if the EU does not support them. "Today, tomorrow, the day after, in Italy, in Spain, perhaps in France and elsewhere."

"It's obvious because people will say, 'What is this great journey that [the EU] are offering? These people won't protect you in a crisis, nor in



its aftermath, they have no solidarity with you," he said.

"When immigrants arrive in your country, they tell you to keep them. When you have an epidemic, they tell you to deal with it. Oh, they're really nice," Macron added, paraphrasing populist arguments.

His threat echoed that of Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte, who has previously warned that a failure to loosen the EU's purse strings would mean "the end of Europe."

The French leader said there was "no choice" but to set up a fund that "could issue common debt with a common guarantee" to finance member states according to their needs rather than the size of their economies. This is an idea that Germany and the Netherlands have so far rejected.

"There are notions of solidarity at stake," Macron said. "The economy depends on it."

Last week, member states agreed on a €500 billion (\$547 billion) package of funds to help countries struggling pay for public services, keep business afloat and help people who have lost their jobs as a result of the crisis.

But there was no concrete agreement on how an additional rescue fund would be generated. Italy has been arguing in favour of so-called "coronabonds," which would raise money against shared European debt by creating an attractive asset for investors and would come without strings, but that idea has had pushback from other major economies in the bloc.

IMF approves \$1.4b in aid to Pakistan

AFP, Washington

The IMF on Thursday approved nearly \$1.4 billion in emergency aid to Pakistan to help it weather the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

Pakistan has recorded just over 100 deaths but experts have voiced fear that the country of 215 million could see a rapid and devastating increase due to its shortage of medical infrastructure and crowded cities.

The IMF said it was providing the \$1.386 billion under a so-called rapid financing instrument, which addresses emergencies and does not subject a country to a full-fledged reform program that undergoes review.



An aerial view shows the P4 laboratory at the Wuhan Institute of Virology in Wuhan in China's central Hubei province, yesterday. The P4 epidemiological laboratory is among a handful of labs around the world cleared to handle Class 4 pathogens.

PHOTO: AFP

Japan offers \$930 to every resident

AFP, Tokyo

Japan will offer a cash payment of 100,000 yen (\$930) to every resident, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe announced yesterday, as measures to contain the coronavirus decimate the world's third-top economy.

"We are moving quickly to deliver cash to all people," Abe said in a televised news conference to explain his decision to expand a state of emergency nationwide.

An initial plan to provide three times that amount to households, which have seen incomes slashed because of the coronavirus, was ditched and Abe apologised for the confusion.

Japan has seen relatively few cases and deaths compared to hotspots in Europe and the United States but a recent spike in Tokyo -- which logged a daily record 201 new cases yesterday -- has sparked concern.

Abe initially declared a state of emergency in seven regions of the country but expanded this on Thursday to include the entire country.

The state of emergency hands regional governors the power to demand people stay indoors but stops far short of restrictions seen elsewhere as there is no punishment for transgression.

Abe said authorities would reassess the situation on May 6 at the end of the public holiday.



Myanmar carrying out air strikes in Rakhine state: UN

At least 32 people killed

REUTERS, Geneva

A surge in fighting between the Myanmar military and insurgents has killed at least 32 people, mostly women and children, in the restive Rakhine and Chin states, the UN human rights office said yesterday, adding the military had destroyed homes and schools.

The Arakan Army, an insurgent group seeking greater autonomy for the region, has been battling government troops for more than a year.

"Myanmar's military has been carrying out almost daily airstrikes and shelling in populated areas resulting in at least 32 deaths and 71 injuries since 23 March, the majority women and children, and they have also been destroying and burning schools and homes," UN human rights office spokesman Rupert Colville told a Geneva news briefing.

In response to a question, he said it was "very difficult to get precise information from Rakhine on whether the reported casualties are the result of targeting or were caught in the crossfire between the Arakan Army and Myanmar army".

Myanmar military spokesmen could not immediately be reached for comment on the report. The army has dismissed some of the accusations of civilian casualties as fabricated. Shelling in Rakhine state's Kyaukseik village on Monday killed eight people, two local officials and a resident told Reuters, but the army said reports that civilians in the village had been shelled were "fabricated".

Countries including the United States and Britain have called for an end to fighting in Rakhine, not least to help protect vulnerable communities from the coronavirus pandemic. Myanmar has reported 85 cases of COVID-19 and four deaths.

Hacking activity surges globally

REUTERS, San Francisco

Hacking activity against corporations in the United States and other countries more than doubled by some measures last month as digital thieves took advantage of security weakened by pandemic work-from-home policies, researchers said.

Corporate security teams have a harder time protecting data when it is dispersed on home computers with widely varying setups and on company machines connecting remotely, experts said. Even those remote workers using virtual private networks (VPNs), which establish secure tunnels for digital traffic, are adding to the problem, officials and researchers said.

Software and security company VMware Carbon Black said this week that ransomware attacks it monitored jumped 148% in March from the previous month, as governments worldwide curbed movement to slow the novel coronavirus, which has killed more than 130,000.

"There is a digitally historic event occurring in the background of this pandemic, and that is there is a cybercrime pandemic that is occurring," said VMware cybersecurity strategist Tom Kellerman.

"It's just easier, frankly, to hack a remote user than it is someone sitting inside their corporate environment. VPNs are not bullet-proof, they're not the be-all, end-all."

Using data from US-based Team Cymru, which has sensors with access to millions of networks, researchers at Finland's Arctic Security found that the number of networks experiencing malicious activity was more than double in March in the United States and many European countries compared with January, soon after the virus was first reported in China.

The biggest jump in volume came as computers responded to scans when they should not have. Such scans often look for vulnerable software that would enable deeper attacks.

ECONOMIC DOWNTURN CAUSED BY CORONAVIRUS

Hundreds of thousands of children could die: UN

REUTERS, United Nations

Hundreds of thousands of children could die this year due to the global economic downturn sparked by the coronavirus pandemic and tens of millions more could fall into extreme poverty as a result of the crisis, the United Nations warned on Thursday.

The world body also said in a risk report that nearly 369 million children across 143 countries who normally rely on school meals for a reliable source of daily nutrition have now been forced to look elsewhere.

"We must act now on each of these threats to our children," U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said. "Leaders must do everything in their power to cushion the impact of the pandemic. What started as a public health emergency has snowballed into a formidable test for the global promise to leave no one behind."

The new coronavirus, which caused the respiratory illness COVID-19, first emerged in the Chinese city of Wuhan late last year. So far it has infected more than 2 million people - killing some 138,000 - in 213 countries and territories, according to a Reuters tally.

Compared with adults, children infected with the coronavirus are less likely to have symptoms and more likely to have a mild illness, US and Chinese studies have found.

But the UN report warned that "economic hardship experienced by families as a result of the global economic downturn could result in an hundreds of thousands of additional child deaths in 2020, reversing the last 2 to 3 years of progress in reducing infant mortality within a single year."

With businesses shut down and more than a billion people told to stay home to avoid spreading the virus, the International Monetary Fund has predicted the world would this year suffer its steepest downturn since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

The United Nations said 42 million to 66 million children could fall into extreme poverty as a result of the coronavirus crisis this year, adding to the estimated 386 million children already in extreme poverty in 2019.

The UN report on children also said 188 countries have imposed countrywide school closures, affecting more than 1.5 billion children.

"The potential losses that may accrue in learning for today's young generation, and for the development of their human capital, are hard to fathom," it said. "More than two-thirds of countries have introduced a national distance learning platform, but among low-income countries the share is only 30 percent."



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# “I enjoyed every bit of my time working in Bohubrihi” – Abul Hayat

Acclaimed actor, director and scriptwriter Abul Hayat has won many prestigious awards throughout his career, including the Ekushey Padak and National Film Award. He started his journey as an actor with theatre, before making his way into television and films. He has earned praise for his performances in films like Aguner Poroshmoni (1995), Daruchini Dwip (2008) and Fagun Hawai (2019), among others. With Bohubrihi, one of his most popular television shows returning to Bangladesh Television (BTV), the actor, who is practicing self-isolation these days, shares his memories from the sets of the show and more with The Daily Star.

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

**Bohubrihi**, one of the most beloved shows of all time, has returned to television. Tell us a little about your experience of being a part of the show. I enjoyed every bit of my time working in *Bohubrihi*, from reading the script to shooting the show in Gazipur. It was my first time playing the role of a stern and strict head of a family. All the other characters in the story were just shaken by his presence. The audience really appreciated me in that role.

**How are you spending your time at home?**

I spend most of my time reading. Currently, I am reading Syed Shamsul Haque's *Tin Poishar Jochna*. I am also working on a new script for a theatrical production. Watching movies and serials, and a bit of exercise every now and then are also a part of my routine. We should all abide by the rules set by

the government and stay indoors. It is the only way to be safe right now.

**You started your career as a theatre artiste. Do you still enjoy acting on stage?**

Theatre brings me immense joy and satisfaction. On stage, we have to get everything right in one take, in front of a live audience. Subsequently, it challenges me as an artiste. *Dewan Gazir Kissa*, which was staged two years ago, was my last theatrical project. However, I hope to return to the stage soon, after the crisis is under control.

**Do you have any message for your fans?**

Stay home and stay safe. Enjoy movies, spend time with your family and engage yourself in activities that make you happy. Instead of complaining and being depressed, we should all be proud to play a role in the nation's safety.

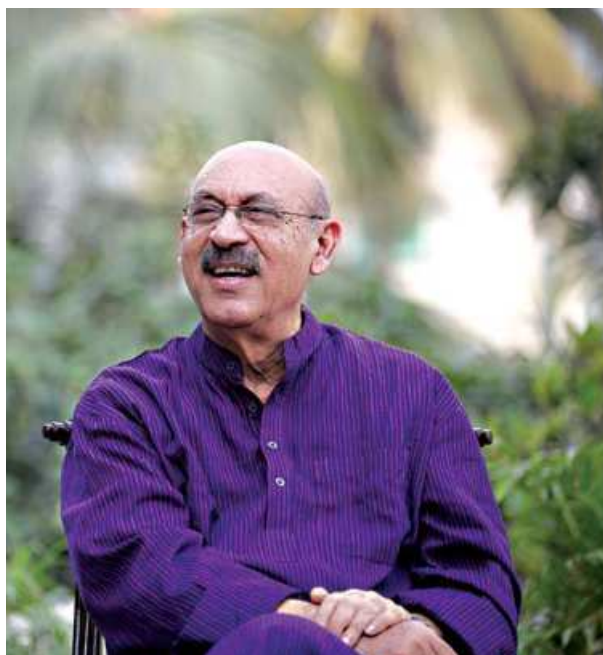


PHOTO: SHEKH MEHEDI MORSHED



PHOTO: SHEKH MEHEDI MORSHED

## “They came forward and touched my feet!” – Mosharraf Karim

SHARMIN JOYA

Noted actor Mosharraf Karim has been ruling the television industry for more than a decade and has carved a space for himself in films as well. He has garnered legions of fans with his brilliant performances and versatile roles over the years. In a recent chat, the actor shared some of his most memorable encounters with his fans.

I was shooting for a television project at an open space in Munshiganj. The crew had built a barrier around the set with a rope, to keep the public away. Somehow, three women went over the barrier and entered our set. Two of them were young school students. They came forward and touched my feet! Then, the other lady, who was probably the mother of the two girls, touched my feet too! I was speechless and embarrassed.

Another passionate fan, Imran from

Barisal, came to meet me while I was travelling in a ship during the shoot of *Komola Rocket*. He was in the steamer, while our team was in the first-class reserved section. He demanded to meet me, and I didn't know what was going on outside. Someone came into my cabin to inform me. I went outside immediately and saw that the young boy had a rope around his neck! He had tied the other half of the rope to the steamer's railing. Thankfully, I was eventually able to calm him down. The next time I went to Barisal, he came over to meet me, and even bought some home-cooked dishes for me!

Abhijit Chowdhury, a fan from Kolkata, just came to Bangladesh to meet me. I am in touch with him even today. As an artiste, I am tremendously grateful to all my fans for their support over the years.



## ‘Sisimpur’ completes 15 years

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Halum, Tuktuki, Ikri and Shiku from *Sisimpur*, the Bangladeshi version of Sesame Street, are some of the most popular characters among children across the country. The show celebrated their 15th anniversary recently.

With a mission to make learning more interactive and fun for children, *Sisimpur* was launched in 2005. The acclaimed pre-school programme is funded by the US Government through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Steered by the motto 'Prithibita Dekhchhi, Protidin Shikhchhi' (observing the world, learning everyday), *Sisimpur* aims to provide primary education for children aged between 3 and 8.

*Sisimpur* is currently airing their 12th

season. Initially, it aired on Bangladesh Television. Over the years, *Sisimpur* has been telecast on different channels, including Channel i, Desh TV and Channel Nine. Currently, the show is running on both Duroto TV and Bangladesh Television.

*Sisimpur* is produced under the supervision of Sesame Workshop USA. Financed by the Government of Bangladesh and USAID, under the supervision of Ministry of Women and Children Affairs and in collaboration with Bangladesh Shishu Academy, the *Sisimpur* outreach project has reached 3,340 schools in all 64 districts of the country, since 2010. Sesame Workshop Bangladesh, produces *Sisimpur* with an aim to promote intellectual, social, emotional and physical learning activities for children.

PRIYANKA CHOWDHURY

Acclaimed Manipuri dancer Samina Husain Prema has been keeping the public entertained and motivated through virtual performances, as the nation copes with the coronavirus pandemic.

For Prema, unusual circumstances have always worked as a catalyst for creativity. In her recent videos, Prema performed with her six-year-old daughter. The duo received much appreciation for their performance on the song, *Ek Shathe Dure Thaki*, sponsored by Grameen Phone, in association with Grey Dhaka. With powerful lyrics by Syed Gousul Alam Shaon, the song definitely strikes a chord with the audience. Sharmin Sultana Sumi, the lead vocalist of Chirkutt composed the song, while Pavel Areen, the drummer and sound producer of Chirkutt, has produced, mixed and mastered the music. Anik Ahammed is the assistant mix engineer of the project.

“My daughter Rai loves the song. She was really excited when we decided to turn our drawing room into our stage. She is very observant, and her expressions were quite natural in the performance,” says a proud Prema.

The duo's performance was recently aired on Ekattor TV. Prema also participated in a fund-raising live show, organised by 'Sangskritikarmibrindya'. She has submitted a video for UNESCO's virtual art project, which will be released soon. “I intend to focus on positivity and work on more dance routines at this time,” she says.

The artiste is also keeping in touch with

her students over the phone. “I have asked my students to keep practicing and performing. For Pohela Boishakh, they made videos of their performances at home,” explains Prema. “Creativity can provide solace and strength during these difficult times.” She also started conducting online classes recently.

Prema further discussed the importance of physical exercise. “While exercise is beneficial for everyone, it is a must for dancers. I was one of the 25 Bangladeshi dancers who performed at the March 17 celebrations with

the Akram Khan Company. They emphasise a great deal on preparing the body for dance,” says Prema. “Out of the 6 hours of practice, we spent 4 hours on physical exercise and 2 hours on the choreography. As we stay at home in these trying times, I have started practicing yoga with my daughter and I have asked my students to do the same.” Prema also noted that it is important to seek out the right information and educate children about preventive measures against the coronavirus effectively.



PHOTO: COURTESY

# Behind the lights, camera and action

## Production crew members open up about their challenges

RASHEEK TABASSUM MONDIRA

In a shooting unit for a film or television project, there are crew members whose contribution and hard work are fundamental to the production's success. Starting from workers in the transport unit to production managers who supervise everything on the sets, the crew members are the actual champions behind the scenes. They reach the shooting spots before everyone else and are often, the last ones to leave. Yet, more often than not, they are left without any recognition.

Production crew and staff members are afraid of losing their jobs and income, despite plans to address loss of income in the country, after the coronavirus pandemic brought nations across the globe essentially to a standstill. *The Daily Star* recently reached out to some production crew members of the showbiz world, to find out more about their lives and how they are responding to the global crisis.

“As we get paid on a day-to-day basis, we don't have a monthly salary. Yet, we don't always get paid on spot,” shared Hashem,



PHOTO: SHEKH MEHEDI MORSHED

a gaffer, the lead technician of a production crew who is responsible for setting up all the lights for filming. “Sometimes, we don't receive our deserved payment even after months have passed.” Hashem has been working in production since 2006.

Most of these shift workers come from low-income families. They live from hand to mouth and are struggling to make ends meet.

They shared that their employment system needs to be more organised and fair.

When a crew member passed away in a road accident during the Eid holidays last year, other staff members protested and demanded justice for him, along with some notable actors. Yet, in the end, their efforts were of no use and the deceased worker was soon forgotten.

“All we want is for people to give us the recognition that we deserve,” said Rakib, an aspiring gaffer who has been working in a lighting crew since 2010. “As the shootings of all films and television projects have been postponed indefinitely, we hope that people will be willing to support us in this time of crisis.”

Similarly, Robi, a second unit staff member, added, “All our hard work goes behind the success of a production. But compared to others, we barely receive the proper recognition and praise.” Robi hopes to pursue his higher studies abroad.

Ali, a struggling production manager who has been in the business for the last fourteen years, is the only breadwinner in his family. “I often fail to send my mother the monthly money as we don't always get paid on time,” he said.

Salahuddin, a make-up artiste who started working when he was in primary school, reflected on his struggles. “Most of the time, I only get to work for ten days in a month and I have to support my family with that money,” he shared. The only earning member in a family of five, Salahuddin

is passionate about his job, despite the hardships that come with it.

“Most people are reluctant to give chances to newcomers in this business, even if they are highly capable and skilled at what they do,” said Rubel, a freelance cameraman.

Chisty, another cameraman who works on YouTube content and television shows, had a more positive outlook. “This line of work offers a certain kind of independence as I do not have to follow a monotonous, daily routine,” he said. However, Chisty added that people in the industry often take advantage of the production workers for their own benefit.

“The price of gas is rising regularly, but the rent of our transport services has not increased,” shared Ruhul, a car owner in the transport unit of a shooting crew. “I expect all of us in the industry to work together in harmony during these trying times.”

Although several production houses and associations are providing financial support to crew members in these difficult and unprecedented circumstances, it is vital to come up with proper payment packages for these essential workers, for their livelihood and security.





## Too conservative to die? Karen Smith, American national, believes Covid-22 is liberal propaganda

Journalist with Liberal Bias

Karen Smith (46) from Florida [also known as the Noakhali of America] was planning a bbq party last weekend. I reached out to her over Zoom after her neighbour, Alavi Ahmed (21), tipped me off.

My friend Alavi and his family immigrated to the US, and have been living in the house beside Karen's for three years. Neither party is very happy about it.

At first, Karen seemed apprehensive about speaking to a brown person, but she agreed after I informed her that her picture will appear in the newspaper alongside the important messages she has for the world.

"Hey I have nothing against y'all but there's always a terrible smell of curry coming from our neighbours' house at all times. You can't stand within a 100-metre radius of that house," Karen said, nose scrunched in disgust.

"No offence," Karen said, a fake smile plastered on her face.

"None taken," I said in a fake reply. But racism is the least of Karen's many virtues.

"Look I'm sure you will ask why I am planning a party while there's some virus going around," Karen said, expressing deep annoyance.

"So what, does my life just stop here?"

No way," she said, "I think this is a liberal conspiracy to get everyone to vaccinate. They're spreading panic for no reason. The vaccines are the real villains, not viruses. Virus, bacteria, disease -- they're all completely natural. The human body is more than capable of battling these using natural remedies such as crystals, sage and cleansing tea."

"Anyway, me and my friends from the

neighbourhood will perform a ritual by burning sage under the supermoon after our party. This will ward off the evil aura this virus is bringing. My son

Georgie [15] said it's 'killing his vibe'," she added.

"Of course, my son has not been vaccinated so his natural immune system grew stronger and stronger. It's the vaccines that insert harmful chemicals, which later cause horrible diseases of the mind, such as sympathising with communism. I've heard they can also inject chips with those vaccines to spy on you!" Karen continued her monologue while I tried to sneak a look into her house.

She appeared to be sitting on a couch in her living room. A "live, laugh, love" sign was visible behind her. There were some healing crystals and a copy of US Weekly on a table beside the couch.

"But this virus is killing people all over the world, and it doesn't even have a vaccine yet. That's why social distancing is crucial to prevent it," I interject, mistakenly hoping that I can talk sense into her.

"Yes viruses only kill poor people in poor countries. Remember that kibolla virus? These things only happen in Africa," Karen told me.

"No offence," she added, again with a fake smile, "I don't think it can get to us. Me and my husband regularly do yoga and my kids take Gwyneth Paltrow's health supplements. Leave us alone with our bbq party, now."

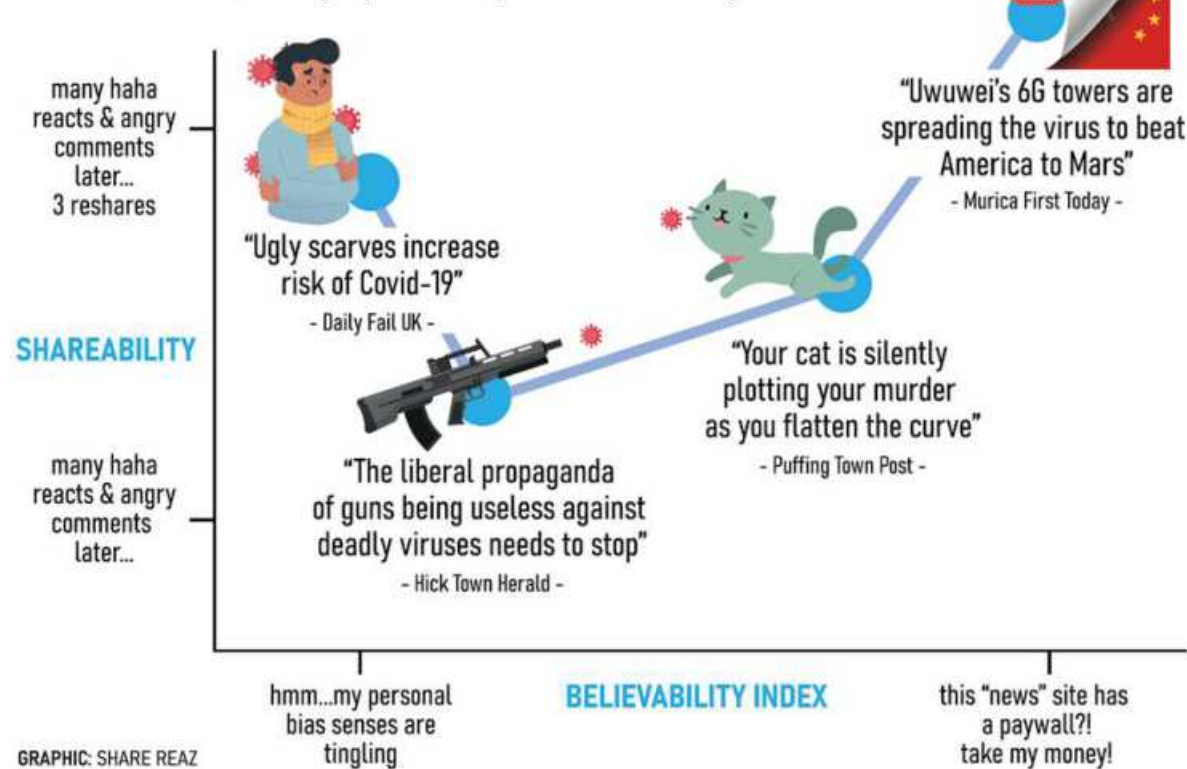
And so she hung up before I could take a final look at her chin -- she'd been holding her phone at an exact 37 degrees from her face, also known as the "boomer angle".

I had initiated this conversation to educate Karen, but she ended up educating me. She's figured out the one cure: and it's white privilege.



### The shareability of fake news during crises

In a convenient, fake graphic that you should totally share



## #RealTalk: Young girl insults countrymen's inflated sense of patriotism

Protestors bay for blood; demand lockdown on all kinds of speech

OSAMA RAHMAN

*A young girl yesterday insulted the overblown sense of patriotism of charged-up-by-March folx all across the country by daring to ask a Caucasian man if he knew where Bangladesh was located.*

During an impromptu interview with a, let's be honest, very B-list Hollywood star, the young girl started the conversation by accurately asking the American star if he had heard of Bangladesh or was confusing it with its neighbouring country.

A clip of the interview ignited a firestorm on social media, where most people hang out now since the quarantine was imposed.

"How dare she insult me? Now this Hollywood star will think we are so stupid. We cannot allow foreigners to think badly of us," Pundit Alam, a commentator on FaceCrook, said.

"She should be burned at

the stake," another reactionary commentator said.

Meanwhile, filled with bloodlust as per the usual with these people, hundreds gathered at at Shaheenbagh demanding an end to all unsupervised speech that Bangladeshis can have with foreigners, especially those that tan easily.

"We must not be allowed to speak to foreigners without being given talking points. Not everyone is like me, an eloquent speaker who can translate to other nationals how amazing we Bangladeshis really are. Not everyone can have intellectually stimulating conversations like I can," Atel Biswas said, adding that he

would never ever be starstruck either.

"No. That is a ludicrous suggestion. Why would anyone be starstruck? Our deshi girls should have some shame and they should just not talk to foreigners at all. They can call me instead," Atel said.

Ever since the lock down, people across the country have become quick to take slight. Earlier, they were really mad because some comedian made it to some list made by an organisation seeking validation from a younger demographic. Before that, they were outraged after sitting through some guy's lewd dance for 30 or so minutes, even though no one had really asked them to.

## When things went wild

A look into the lives of wildlife conservationists, a dying profession, and one man's attempt to change it all again

STAR WILDLIFE CONVERSATION-IST

*It has been nearly 43 years now. Forty-three years since the wild returned to the city. It took an unprecedented viral event to bring to life the dreams of many a wildlife conservationist. It was the year 2022 when Covid-22 was declared a pandemic and data, at least until it was kept, showed huge loss of lives.*

So much so that data analysts at one point stopped keeping count, eventually erasing the job field of data analysis altogether. Covid-22 did not just cause massive loss of lives, it took away jobs, brought back wildlife to the cities (which is really not where they belong) and in turn nullified the jobs of wildlife conservationists as well.

As their jobs slowly phased out, many took to teaching 'the history of wildlife conservation'. That was considered the traditional choice. But not for billionaire child Adum Trom who, this year, decided to jumpstart his political career by re-introducing the need for conservationists and get the votes of the sizeable number of those who were out of work. How would he do it?

To answer this and many such pressing questions, this correspondent got in touch with him to hear some of his more radical political ideas for the upcoming election year.

"I believe the only way we can turn matters back in favour of humans is by obliterating the wild. It is easy. I will slowly start

by reopening factories, but I will also have to make sure I get a large number of people willing to work for bare-minimum wages.

"I will make sure I erase this

If we can bring back capitalism, forests will suffer again, so will the ocean and wildlife will be rare and wildlife conservationists will have only me to thank."



concept of eco-socialism, socialism, etc. that Thornberg introduced, you know? She made factories evil. Well, I have news for her. Factories feed people. They fed our ancestors. We need capitalism back again.

Adum's ideas are radical, to say the least, but history has shown that the strangest of leaders have been in positions of power at pivotal moments. Case in point: the year 2020.





The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR  
LATE S. M. ALI

DHAKA SATURDAY APRIL 18, 2020, BAISHAKH 5, 1427 BS

## The entire country is now at risk

### Simultaneous measures needed

WITH the highest number of deaths (15) in 24 hours on April 17, public health experts have warned that the country is heading towards the fourth stage of coronavirus transmission when the virus spreads quickly. The government has declared that the entire country is at risk with the virus spreading to at least 40 districts of the country. There is no doubt that we have been very late in our response to the pandemic despite seeing it all being played out in developed countries and going through stages of denial, improper handling of quarantine measures for returnees from epicentres abroad, miscommunication with the public (by declaring a holiday instead of lockdown), allowing people to go the villages, not being able to stop hordes of garment workers coming back to the city to get their dues, not conducting adequate testing, not preparing the hospitals and staff—the list goes on. These have been critical mistakes with critical consequences. But now that we are at this stage where infection rates are increasing, along with casualties, we must take drastic measures to prevent the spread as much as possible.

Although testing has increased, experts say that it is still too low to give the real picture. We therefore must have more testing, especially of those individuals showing symptoms. Unless we isolate Covid-19 patients and treat them, the infection will spread very rapidly. Contact tracing and testing must therefore be ramped up.

Along with proper testing (to avoid false results), hospital capacity and resources have to be significantly enhanced. Doctors and healthcare workers must be given the proper protective gear and safety protocol facilities. Already, a doctor has died and many other healthcare workers are infected. These frontline workers must be given all the support they need so that they can do their job without endangering themselves and their families. The government has announced that certain hotels have been designated to accommodate doctors and other health professionals, but this has not been implemented yet due to lack of coordination. Unless these issues are resolved, the already fragile healthcare system will completely collapse.

Despite the government announced lockdowns for the entire country, there are still places where people are not maintaining social distancing. The reality of no work and no pay is forcing many to break the lockdown as the fear of starvation far outweighs the fear of coronavirus. In order for the lockdowns to be successful, the government must make sure that the food and financial relief it has initiated through rescue packages must reach all low income and vulnerable groups. Meanwhile, vigorous hygiene awareness campaigns must continue.

## Ensure food for ethnic communities

### Govt and welfare organisations must specifically target them

A recent report published in this daily sheds light on the dire situation faced by a large population consisting of multiple ethnic minorities spread across the country, who remain at risk of being ignored from receiving aid, mainly food relief, during this pandemic. Poverty is not the only worry for these already marginalised communities, as they are also faced with exclusion during such vulnerable times.

While the various stimulus packages introduced by the government as measures to absorb economic shocks are reassuring, it should be taken into consideration that of the nearly 40 lakh people belonging to diverse ethnic communities, many could not access the relief programmes during the ongoing lockdown. Around 15 lakh people belonging to different ethnic minority groups are facing food crisis in Rajshahi and Rangpur. The Hajong and Banai communities in Nalitabari, Dhobaura, Durgapur, Kolmakanda, Maddyanagar and Taherpur are said to be suffering a similar fate. Access to food and relief remains a big challenge for indigenous people in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, and for tea workers in Sylhet, along with many other marginalised communities such as the Bede, Hijra and Dalit.

In the current crisis, the woes of these people have intensified. If such conditions persist, many may go hungry. We recommend that the government, along with the concerned organisations, should immediately chalk out the logistics to provide resources in a coordinated and concentrated manner in order to ensure food security for the minorities at large and help to mitigate their suffering.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

### Grateful to the media outlets

During such critical times, accurate information becomes an utmost necessity. And the few daily newspapers operating now are doing just that with sincerity so that the citizens can remain informed and updated. I personally want to thank the media outlets who are carrying out their responsibilities despite the many difficulties. I realise how difficult it must be for the staff to carry out their daily obligations during a lockdown so that we can get the news of what is happening around us.

I also comprehend that due to the lack of advertisement, many newspapers are faced with the threat of ending their operations. As a regular reader of this daily, I salute their stance and urge them to continue, even if it requires reducing the number of pages to mitigate costs. People only talk about law enforcement, health officials and the likes, as frontline heroes. But I think there are many more professions too. I want to express my gratitude towards all those newspapers that are fulfilling the demands of the many readers across the nation in this time of crisis.

Nur-E-Jannat Nusa, by email

# The masked heroes in Covid's metamorphoses



double lives: during the day they could be aristocratic noblemen or dashing socialites, and at night, they could put on their vigilante masks and raid the neighbourhood in search of culprits and criminals. Notwithstanding the bounty on his head, the masked Zorro could torment the tyrannical lords of the American southwest and carve his initial Z on his defeated foes. Phantom would move through the jungle on his stallion with wings of the wind to ensure that the world could remain a better place without evildoers and pirates. The masks of our superheroes would give us comfort.

It was a time, when we could divide the good from the evil with a straight line drawn by our HB pencil and a transparent scale. The next generation of heroes stopped being simple do-gooders, and seemed less focused on turning the world into a better place. In their efforts to resist oppressive forces, often they ended up becoming mirror images of evil itself. The man behind the Guy Fawkes mask who quotes Shakespeare in *V for Vendetta* is a product of human experimentation—a bio weapon involving St. Mary's virus that killed 100,000 people in the UK—and no better than the bloodthirsty anarchy in futuristic Britain that he wants to upend. Beneath the masks, there are men (women too) whose lives are far from lucrative. They are often disturbed loners with sociopathic behaviours. Beneath their masked smiles, they have the pain

*It is at this time of danger, when humanity is threatened, the mask of civility often wears off; the raw selves come out. That is the primal location of all our animal stories. Between the shifts of the skin and the mask, changes are noticed—the change that can make man an animal.*



rights violations. Moreover, given the dire shortage of healthcare workers in Bangladesh, even if they were to voluntarily embrace martyrdom, it would be disastrous for us in the long run. Bangladesh Doctors Foundation announced earlier that around 100 healthcare workers, including 54 doctors, have already been infected with coronavirus in the country. We need healthcare workers alive and well. We need them in numbers.

Article 32 of the Constitution of Bangladesh guarantees for every citizen the right to life, which has been widely interpreted to include the right to health. This right, which forms the constitutional basis for our right to be tested and treated for Covid-19, also forms the basis on which a healthcare worker can refuse to treat Covid-19 patients if he or she is not given adequate personal protective equipment (PPE).

The right to health has been recognised in a number of international instruments including the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which most countries, including Bangladesh, have adopted. Under the above instrument, everyone has the right to “the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.” Governments are obligated to take effective steps for the “prevention, treatment and control of epidemic, endemic, occupational and other diseases.”

Though our Constitution does not specifically guarantee the right to health as a fundamental right, the same has been held to form part of the right to life

and loneliness of a circus clown. Yet their asocial behaviours strike a raw nerve in all of us. Their radical, albeit anarchist, attitudes resonate with many of us whose version of truth is no longer rendered in a 2D black-and-white sketch. Truth today is either trapped in a kaleidoscope or consumable in its fifty shades of grey.

Hence the most popular series on Netflix now is *Money Heist*, where a nerdy academic teaches his students the power of precision with which great heists can be mastered. Dacoity, not honesty, is being popularised by a professor as a virtue. Isn't it ironic that this current generation, cushioned in the comfort of capitalism, sings “bella ciao” or fantasises of rebellion? Yet they study to become docile bureaucrats or programmable corporate bosses. Such contradictions mask reality. They promise changes,



PHOTO: COLLECTED

metamorphoses, without bringing any change. It's like running miles on a treadmill without actually going anywhere.

These are protests. But these are protests in which, “the best lack conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity” (WB Yeats, *The Second Coming*). Around the world, iconic images of Salvador Dali masks, shot to fame by *Money Heist*, find new currency in protests and rebellions. But do these masks mean anything? It is as futile as showing the V-sign whenever you are asked to pose for the camera. Then again, the mask is a sign of empowerment. It promises anonymity with which one can be a part of something bigger outside of oneself. It is an avatar to experience, experiment and explicate something new.

Popular media knows it all too well. They toy with this concept of masking. They plot the details in such a way that

allow us to become a part of the group of rag-tag misfits who are assembled to enact a great heist (*Ocean's 11*, *Fast and Furious*), a foray into the system (*The Matrix*, *Inception*), a symbolic resistance against fascist regimes and faux democracies, or a secretive unleashing of hidden desires or survival instincts (*The Mask*).

The famous ending of *V for Vendetta* where Evey tells Finch that “He [V] was all of us,” goes on to show how we are all harbouring the masked resentment of V. The revolution can take place because there is a desire in our unconscious, over which we have been trained to put a lid. The mask reverses the process. The anonymity frees us from those human protocols. The deep-delved desire to dislodge the establishment is symbolised by those masks of protest featuring Dali or Guy Fawkes. They find their voices in

movements, from Occupy Paris to free Hong Kong. They are worn by ordinary men and women who want to remain unrecognisable.

Do heroes need masks? Now that we are all wearing masks to both shield us from and fight against an invisible enemy, can we consider ourselves heroes in this war on disease? Our social distancing is keeping others safe. We are called on to make sacrifices: do we qualify for the fancied role of a masked hero?

As I write this, I am resisting the urge to write yet another armchair piece on Covid-19. My anxious musings are intercepted by two items: one of my doctor friends has posted on Facebook—“we are all wearing masks, yet some of our masks are unmasked [free translation].” He is hinting at the anomaly of the system that he is facing as a doctor. They were asked to intervene in the onslaught of disease with faulty face

masks, hastily made in a garments factory that has no inkling about sanitisation. Why? There was a masked desire of someone who saw a business opportunity in the time of Covid-19. The doctors were told by their administrative superiors to be at the frontline without any protective gear. Many doctors had to buy their own safety devices; that too was not available.

What is even more painful is the fact that the reporting authorities of these doctors are civil bureaucrats who have neither sympathy nor professional know-how. Hence, the first batch of PPE was distributed among the admin officers. A PPE wearing admin official cannot replace a doctor who has professional training in medicine. Just like wearing a mask of Dali does not make every citizen in Madrid “a Professor”. One realisation—and there is no short supply of those during this crisis—involves the fact that the fate of the physicians should not be under someone who cultures a firm belief that some cadres are more equal than others.

The other news that sent a chill down my spine is the second lead of Friday's *The Daily Star*: health workers are being ostracised by their landlords or neighbours. People are scared. We all are. Everybody is a potential vector, a virus carrier. But because landlords have a bit of power, they think that they can ask their tenants to stay out of their property. What is power without empathy? What power is this that sidelines the health workers and other essential front-line fighters (e.g. police) who are the real heroes of our time?

In England, they are painting thank-you notes on pavements to show gratitude for doctors and nurses. Here we are: ostracising them. The extreme case of rejection is seen in the way Dr Monir died in Sylhet. The insensitivity with which his service was compensated is inhumane. How cruel can the system be, in which the doctor does not get an ambulance? Yet how comfortable we are behind our masks as we notice all these graphic details of comic proportion unfolding before us.

The civil servants have power. They rule behind their official masks. The landlords have power. They can issue decrees at whim. Of course we all need to be safe. We need to be safe because we want humanity to continue and survive. It is at this time of danger, when humanity is threatened, the mask of civility often wears off; the raw selves come out. That is the primal location of all our animal stories. Between the shifts of the skin and the mask, changes are noticed—the change that can make man an animal. That is when metamorphosis takes place.

Covid-19 is becoming quite an author of metamorphoses.

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# At war with no ammo: Constitutional rights of healthcare workers



rights violations. Moreover, given the dire shortage of healthcare workers in Bangladesh, even if they were to voluntarily embrace martyrdom, it would be disastrous for us in the long run. Bangladesh Doctors Foundation announced earlier that around 100 healthcare workers, including 54 doctors, have already been infected with coronavirus in the country. We need healthcare workers alive and well. We need them in numbers.

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through judicial pronouncements, both here and abroad. Furthermore, Article 15 of our Constitution states that it shall be a fundamental responsibility of the State to secure for its citizens the provision of basic necessities of life including food, clothing, shelter, education and medical care. Additionally, Article 18 states that the State shall regard the raising of the level of nutrition and the improvement of public health as among its primary duties. These are fundamental to the interpretation of our Constitution and must be applied by the State in formulating laws.

The Supreme Court of India, following a petition filed by a doctor, directed India's Health Ministry to ensure availability of PPE for doctors, nurses, and all medical and paramedical professionals. The court also directed the Government to explore all alternatives for augmenting domestic production of PPE, to explore the different modes of production, permit movement of raw material, and consider restricting export.

Medicine is indubitably a humanitarian profession. Some argue that by freely entering into the profession, healthcare workers have implicitly agreed to accept the risks. Medical Societies support this somewhat idealistic viewpoint. Others point towards ethical obligations on doctors contained in lofty ethics manuals. For example, the Ethics Manuals of the American College of Physicians states that “the ethical imperative for physicians to provide care” overrides “the risk to the treating physician, even during pandemic”. The American Medical Association asserts that “individual physicians have an obligation to provide urgent medical care during disasters,” emphasising that this duty persists “even in the face of greater than usual risks to physicians’ own safety, health, or life.” As for our very own Bangladesh Medical and Dental Council's Code of Ethics, while it does not contain a similarly worded ethical obligation, our doctors have to make the following declaration under the Code: the health of my patient will be my first consideration.

So, questions arise as to whether there is a direct conflict between the constitutional right to life and health of a healthcare worker and his or her ethical obligation to provide care even during a pandemic.

The imminent and extreme risk to which our healthcare workers are going to be exposed in the coming days cannot be equated with the usual risks associated with the profession. The risk of transmission, as we all know, is very high. Add to that, the dire shortage of PPE and testing kits. And then there is the mental toll a pandemic takes on healthcare

*Even if our doctors have an ethical obligation to provide care during a pandemic, surely that obligation does not override the imminent and extreme risk to not only the treating doctor or nurse, but also their families. Otherwise, we are just trading one life for another.*

workers from the knowledge of imminent risk of infection without PPE, from being overworked and from being separated from their families for fear of infecting them.

Even if our doctors have an ethical obligation to provide care during a pandemic, surely that obligation does not override the imminent and extreme risk to not only the treating doctor or nurse, but also their families. Otherwise, we are just trading one life for another.

In view of the above, coercing our healthcare workers to treat Covid-19 patients without PPE is tantamount to violating their right to life and health. From a constitutional rights perspective, hospitals and clinics, or for that matter the Government, cannot coerce them to give treatment under such circumstances. It is a constitutional obligation of the Government to uphold their right to life and health by responding to the dire shortage of PPE in a robust fashion and doing so quickly.

Given that this is a problem shared by almost every other nation affected by Covid-19, we may learn from the strategies adopted in other countries to optimise the supply of PPE. These include creation of local supply chains to manufacture PPE in bulk, incentivising local industry to ramp up production, prohibition of export of PPE, increase of import of PPE and raw materials for PPE. At the hospital level, it is time to get creative and shore up hospitals' stock of PPE by, say, delaying all elective surgeries and non-essential medical and surgical procedures.

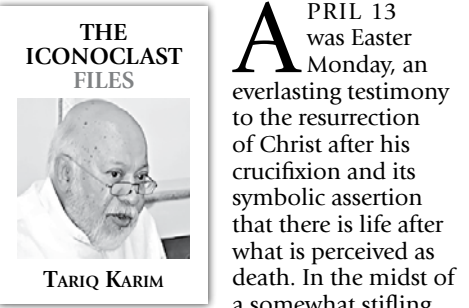
If we expect our doctors and nurses to ultimately honour their professional obligation to care for Covid-19 patients, we, as a society, must also honour our obligation to protect them through measures like social distancing and the Government must honour its obligation to provide PPE. The Government should also consider setting up social protection programmes for the families of workers who die or become ill as a result of their work. Care must be taken to ensure that such programmes also include informal workers, who represent a large part of the caregiving sector.

Let us not name and shame our doctors and nurses. Let us not point a gun to their heads. It is important for them to know that we care what happens to them; that we are not trading their lives for ours. After all, no human life is more valuable than another.

Barrister Rashna Imam, an Oxford Scholar, is an Advocate of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh and the Managing Partner of Akhtar Imam & Associates.



# Coping with coronavirus and preparing for a life after it



**THE ICONOCLAST FILES**

**TARIQ KARIM**

in fear of the ubiquitously merciless and relentlessly marauding novel coronavirus, somehow the day and its symbolism was comfortingly reassuring.

Yesterday, the IEDCR also officially admitted that we had transitioned to Stage Four of the pandemic. The government has stepped up efforts to contain the spread of the virus as best as humanly possible. The Prime Minister has stepped up to the plate and announced a slew of measures, not only to bring the health services to a modicum of preparedness as the disease steadily marches on, but to put into place social safety nets and measures to offset the unexpected economic fallout, with grim consequences particularly for our huge informal economy; for our masses of daily wage-workers unexpectedly without jobs because most infrastructure activities have ground to a halt; for industrial workers, suddenly laid off with their factories closed because of the lockdown and necessity for physical distancing; for the farmers and workers in the agri-sector where crops and produce have been harvested or are ready for harvesting but cannot be transported to their markets. These are all wise and well-thought out measures, announced none too soon.

How long will this lockdown last? Well, we have been in a sort of “lockdown” that has not quite been a total lockdown. We have been on an extended “public holiday” (a gross misnomer that gave the illusion that people could afford to ignore social distancing from each other, with unhappy, even deadly consequences) since the second half of

March, extended twice to date until April 25. It has been by now almost universally demonstrated that until we find a vaccine (that could take 18 months at least), the only effective way of stopping the advance of this virus is by effectively sealing off, progressively, all avenues and carriers spreading from a confined area or locality. As we have just entered the fourth stage of the pandemic spread, I suspect that now we shall have no option but to extend this quarantining measure and be far stricter—perhaps even with draconian measures—in enforcing it. This is a challenging task, because how do homeless people stay quarantined at “home”? How, or where, do daily wage earners without wages earn money to buy daily essentials to survive? How do the hungry go out, and where, to forage, beg, or somehow get something, anything, to eat?

History teaches us that a pandemic like this, the last being the so-called Spanish Flu, comes in waves. We must expect and be prepared for a second wave that could be more virulent than the first if we let our guards down. Just as you cannot forestall the successive wave and dynamics of a mega-tsunami, you cannot wish the second wave away. So, there are, and will be, complex and difficult questions for the government. The answers to all those would require carefully weighed in, politically mature and sagaciously balanced decisions.

In my humble view, and I hope to God I am woefully wrong, we appear to be still worryingly unprepared, as much for the disease as for the socioeconomic fallouts that will very likely impact politics as well. The real test will come in the ability to implement wisely the policies that have been announced. I am neither an economist by training, nor a policymaker now by vocation—just an ordinary but concerned citizen, ignorant of much, not privy to many things. I have no desire to try and be Monday-morning quarterback here. But I dare venture, from my hole of ignorance and well of idleness, to share a few thoughts, hesitantly venture a few suggestions, for whatever they are worth. At the very least, they will help me get a few things off my chest!

These are extraordinary times and call for extraordinary measures. Without a shot being fired or a missile launched by any state against any other, the entire world today is assuredly engaged in a global war more massive and widely embracing than either of the previous two World Wars. Let us not mince words: we are, all of us, fighting World War III, now, today. Our common enemy is this novel coronavirus, which has displayed the ability to jump from bat to mammal to humans, mutated with each jump to adapt and multiply in its new host. It has hopped across regions, oceans and continents, mutating into several varieties (three to date), adapting to each new host environment. It has been several steps ahead of our human efforts and capabilities (to date) to out-think us and out-match our fire power.

Perhaps governments will now, necessarily, have to be cruel to be kind to the peoples they govern. They may have to call in the armed forces in massive support of civilian administration, and delegate oversight and enforcement of curtailed movement within strictly defined parameters; requisition all available stocks of food grain in government and private godowns (the latter at fair compensation to millers); arrange setting up of TCB/ration shops (reminiscent of war time eras earlier) and oversee distribution of essential food grains, edible oil, sugar and salt, and even milk, eggs and daily farm and orchard produce, at fixed prices and in rationed quantities per head. Eggs, fresh milk and other perishable produce should be purchased directly from producers at fixed prices in the first place, harnessing the massive logistical capacity of the armed forces to augment the paramilitary and civil administration capacity, requisitioning trucks and buses from the private sector (again at fairly determined compensation), so that farmers and producers have steady incomes and incentives to keep producing. There must be continuous patrolling of all neighbourhoods, because these are also times when desperate or unscrupulous elements may try to take advantage of the situation.

Industrialists and manufactures may be coopted and enlisted, and commissioned into this “wartime effort”, to retool their lines of production to produce essential, life-saving equipment like oxygenating respirators, PPE required by health care personnel and hospitals, lifesaving drugs and such experimental prophylactic drugs as may be currently in use to fight the disease. In normal times, their production could be scaled down, but they could still remain an auxiliary line of export and sale to domestic, regional and global markets. There have been numerous reported cases of people entrusted (and they

enable them to keep their workers on the pay-roll (at reduced wages if necessary, but at incomes deemed necessary for their survival). It is important that a contract be worked out with all factory owners that they too must bear a fair size of the state’s burden, with extraordinary taxes levied for a specified time. In other words, government must govern, judiciously, wisely, for the greater good of all, eschewing the interests of vested-interest groups, in order to enable all to survive, for society to endure and heal, and for social order to remain intact and be resurrected again. Government must at the same time endeavor to protect and reshape contractual obligations between buyer and seller in the global marketplace—which may appear daunting at first sight, but the vulnerability of all countries and governments to the socioeconomic impacts of this pandemic are by now quite starkly evident and felt everywhere. We all have to help and enable each other to survive, whether within the domestic and national sphere, or between peoples in the region, across regions or across the globe.

Restoration of human values, societal discipline and healthy respect for civic responsibilities, privileging them over the current metrics of profit and loss that have been so all-pervasive, needs to be reasserted once more. We need to inculcate an abiding awareness among citizens—through revisiting educational curricula at all levels—of their individual and collective responsibility to society and the ecosystem in which we live, comprising both the natural habitat as well as the manmade industrial add-ons that flow incessantly from man’s ingenuity and ability to create. The new order that we start shaping now must be founded on our acknowledging and respecting that ecological equilibrium needs to be maintained for all its components—humans, other species, flora, fauna and pathogens—to coexist and flourish, and symbiotically nurture each other. The new order shall rise from the ashes of the old.

Tariq Karim is a retired ambassador and currently Senior Fellow at the Independent University.

**SOFIA KARIM**

I do not know Kajol. But at a time when coronavirus has casts its web over the world, his story has found its way into my art through the obscurest of routes: a *shingara thonga* made by my seven year old daughter.

Last month, sitting at home with her in London, I read the story of Kajol’s case in the news. It troubled me deeply: On March 10, the day after police filed a case against him under the notorious Digital Security Act, journalist Shafiqul Islam Kajol left his office but never arrived home. CCTV footage released by Amnesty International shows unknown men moving about Kajol’s motorbike whilst he is in his office. They appear to tamper with it. Within three hours of Kajol’s last CCTV sighting, as he leaves the office on this motorbike, police filed a second case against him under the same Digital Security Act. Where is Kajol?

I kept turning his story around in my mind. I wondered about his family. How would Covid-19 impact Kajol’s case? The virus would surely steal attention away from it. Starve it of oxygen as it starves the lungs.

Lockdown malaise was setting in and my daughter was restless—self isolation is a bizarre concept for a seven year old. I was several months into organising a joint artists’ protest at Tate Modern museum in London. Artists, writers, poets and thinkers from across the world were creating *samosa* packets (*shingara thonga*) for “Turbine Bagh”, a demonstration against fascism in India. For a period of one day, the cathedral like space of the Turbine Hall at Tate Modern, one of the world’s most prominent art spaces, would be

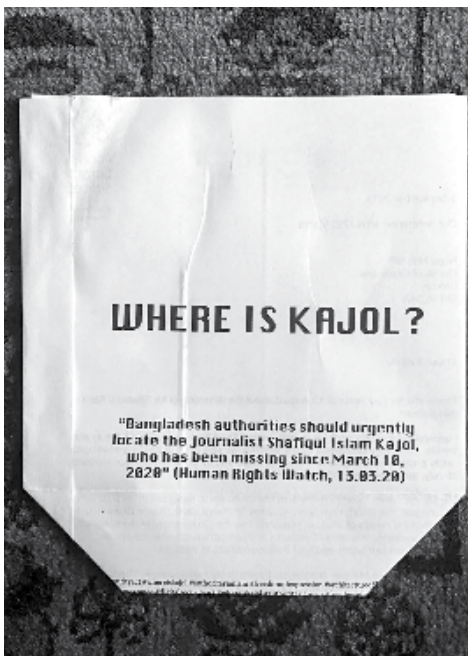
our Shaheen Bagh, our garden.

It was in that vast, humming engine room that I had staged a protest for my jailed uncle, the photographer Shahidul Alam in 2018. We laid his “Crossfire” series of photographs on extrajudicial killings in Bangladesh across the museum floor. Now, for Turbine Bagh, we would display our *shingara thonga* within a large rice circle, around which we would sing protest songs and read poems in solidarity with the mass resistance in India.

Why *shingara thonga* as a symbol for nonviolent resistance? The thread of the story winds back to Dhaka, February 2018 and a Dhanmondi street corner—before Kajol, before corona, before Free Shahidul, or Shaheen Bagh. For it was here that I bought a handful of *shingara* for my mother and I to share, and noticed that the packet was made from lists of court hearings; cases between citizens and the state. Entranced by this packet, I began to collect more. Constructed from throwaway papers—letters, corporate emails, official documents, kids’ homework, poems, news, and court lists—collectively they painted an insightful portrait of a country.

Would my mama’s case ever appear on a *shingara thonga*? When in August 2018 he was jailed after reporting on student protests, I began making my own, charting the stories of the Free Shahidul campaign that had spread across the globe. And somehow a *samosa* packet movement was born.

Was there a way to support Kajol through Turbine Bagh? As Covid-19 extended its grip on the globe, mass gatherings were banned and museums closed. We knew our physical event at Tate Modern would be postponed, but it didn’t matter. Turbine Bagh had become



Shingara Thonga created by Sofia Karim as part of the Turbine Bagh project.

PHOTO: SOFIA KARIM

a movement, a living thing. Grassroots in spirit, embracing emerging artists from India and beyond, it had also gathered support from figures including Sharon Stone, Anish Kapoor, Zehra Dogan, Arundhati Roy, Akram Khan, Vijay Prashad and Amitav Ghosh. Now it ran on its own momentum.

“Let’s make a Turbine Bagh *shingara thonga* for Kajol,” I proposed to my daughter. She jumped into action.

Children are perhaps my favourite allies. The hardening of attitude so prevalent in adults, is rare in them. Their courage has a distinct potency, as if it comes from the supernatural realm (the same place their fears come from).

So we made our “Where is Kajol?” *shingara thonga*, and put images of it onto social media. I did not foresee that Kajol’s son would stumble upon the post but when he did, my daughter was both happy and unsurprised. She’d never doubted that an action would lead to a result. It is adults who are the cynics. It is adults who will tell you that resistance is futile.

Even my daughter can sense that there is nothing futile about resistance. Because resistance is a measure of dignity. It is nothing to do with profit or loss. Those who resist dignify those they fight for. And in doing so, they dignify humankind.

After seeing the *shingara thonga* post, many artists on the Turbine Bagh platform, from India and beyond, emailed the government of Bangladesh about Kajol. During a global pandemic, they took the time to support an unknown family from another country.

The fact that (to my knowledge) not a single person has yet received a response from the Bangladesh authorities, is telling. That is a measure of shame and immense cowardice.

The letter Polok Monorom has written to his father Kajol, published in *The Daily Star*, is a haunting thing. The desperation of the family’s situation, the chilling sense of being watched, and the terrifying paralysis of lockdown impeding the search for one’s father, are shocking.

But what is more astonishing is Polok’s strength. It takes courage from the

supernatural realm to fight the monster that he fights. He enters the labyrinth of paranoia alone, armed with weapons of love, a son’s infinite resolve to rescue his father and the belief that he is still alive and will return.

Polok survives on hope. But it is also up to us to make that hope real. If everyone reading this spoke out, or took four minutes to send an email as the Turbine Bagh artists did, perhaps Kajol could return to his family. Had we spoken out each and every time prior, things would never have gotten to this stage. Silence nourishes well the poisonous flower of abuse.

Some might know Kajol’s fate. They might know his condition, keeping it from his family as a means to torment. To treat another human being this way is to have lost control, be it on a personal or a state level. There is opportunity for redemption still and it is in Kajol’s captors’ hands. We ask that they, and anyone reading these words heed Polok Monorom’s appeal: “Everyday I hear my father’s footsteps and wait to catch a glimpse of his voice, maybe you’re also wondering about my father. We can find my father with your help. Even from afar, I know you want what’s best, which is my father’s return... Let’s come together from near and far, in times of corona, with strength in our hearts to live and die. With love and prayers, Monorom Polok, April 9, 2020, Dhaka, Bangladesh.”

Sofia Karim is an architect and visual artist based in London, UK.

If you wish to write to the government of Bangladesh about Kajol, some guidance is provided by Amnesty International via the following link, or of course, you can write words of your own. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa13/2065/2020/en/>

QUOTABLE  
Quote

**NELSON MANDELA**  
(1918-2013)  
President of South Africa.

*I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear.*

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

**ACROSS**

1 Canary homes

6 Hayride need

11 Love to pieces

12 Make amends

13 Concise

14 Gander's mate

15 TV's Danson

16 Turned over

18 Stretch of years

19 Chapel sight

20 Porker place

21 Field workers

23 Fancy dink

25 Road gus

27 Farm butter

28 Produce

30 Cell feature

33 Sedan or SUV

34 Espionage org.

36 Gym unit

37 Rampage

39 Bar rocks

40 In the area

41 Relay stick

43 In the area

44 Oscar or Tony

45 Superman's adoptive family

46 Watches over

**DOWN**

1 Chair wheel

2 Stick

3 Post-lunch greeting

4 Mess up

5 Party prep

6 Go into combat

7 Heaps

8 Helper of parable

9 Starts

10 Poor

17 Coat rack part

22 Slump

24 Chemist's place

26 Speaks from memory

28 Shiny trifle

29 Uncle, in Acapulco

31 Athlete's dream

32 Shells out

33 Liberty Bell feature

35 Chance to swing

38 Sign of disuse

42 Stunned wonder

WRITE FOR US. SEND US YOUR OPINION PIECES TO [dsopinion@gmail.com](mailto:dsopinion@gmail.com).

YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

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BETLE BAILEY

BY MORT WALKER

BABY BLUES

BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT





POETRY

# Three Spring Songs in Translations

BY FAKRUL ALAM

আহা, আজি এ বসন্তে এত ফুল ফুটে,  
এত বাঁশি বাজে, এত পাখি গায় ॥  
সখীর হৃদয় কুসুমকোমল -  
কার অনাদরে আজি ঝরে যায় !  
কেন কাছে আস', কেন মিছে হাস',  
কাছে যে আসিত সে তো আসিতে না চায় ॥  
সুখে আছে যারা সুখে থাক্ তারা,  
সুখের বসন্ত সুখে হোক সারা -  
দুখিনী নারীর নয়নের নীর  
সুখী জনে যেন দেখিতে না পায় ।  
তারা দেখেও দেখে না,  
তারা বুঝেও বুঝে না,  
তারা ফিরেও না চায় ॥

Aha Aji E Boshonte

By Rabindranath Tagore

On this lovely spring day  
So many flowers bloom  
So many birds chirp away  
And so many flutes play!  
The beloved's heart  
Was tender as a flower  
Who was so uncaring  
As to let it wither?  
Why did he come close  
Only to fake smiles?  
Once so very close  
Now would rather stay away!  
But let such contented ones  
Contented stay  
Let their spring be bliss-filled  
And let them feel fulfilled!  
One so cruelly happy  
Won't ever detect misery  
Even in a woman's watery eyes  
Alas, he'll not feel her pain,  
Nor show any sympathy  
Or glance at the woman again!



Boshonto Batashe

By Shah Abdul Karim

In the spring breeze, my friend,  
In spring's intoxicating breeze  
Scents from my dearest's garden  
Keep drifting towards my house.

My dearest's house's garden  
Lights up with colorful flowers then  
Their beautiful scents enchant me  
And bee-like, my mind starts humming.

In a corner of the grove  
Of my dearest's house  
I hear a flute playing—  
A tune totally captivating.



It's a tune so overpowering  
Its sheer beauty entrances me  
Till totally overcome, Abdul Karim  
Keeps looking her way dotingly!

Fakrul Alam is a Bangladeshi academic, critic and translator. Currently, he is UGC Professor, Department of English, University of Dhaka.

Raangie Diye Jao

By Rabindranath Tagore

Brighten up everything as you go—do—before you go away  
Light up everything with your signature tunes and secret hues.  
With your youthful smile and your purple tones,  
With your wan tear-filled tunes too!  
Let your colors touch the innermost me, impacting on all that I do  
Let them light the evening lamp's wick and keep me awake at night.  
Arouse me before you go away once again,  
Stir my blood with the moves you make as you sway!  
Just as stars awaken in the cradle of the dark night  
Just as streams flow from stony caverns  
Just as clouds rumble from the heart of clouds  
Just as rhythms spring from the center of the universal dance  
Sway me too as you go—do—before you go your way  
Driving all tears and obstacles away!



FICTION

# Reminiscence

AFSARA KHAN

Afreen is in the third grade. She is shy, quiet and keeps to herself. Being the shortest one in class, she has to stand in the front of the line everyday at the morning assembly. She often gets bullied by classmates for her below-average height. The fact that she's extremely skinny too doesn't help.

She always sits at the back of the class and has one or two friends she talks to, but none that she would consider a good friend. Afreen's social anxiety sometimes makes her arms and legs shake. Whenever the teacher calls out her name, her heart beats so fast she fears it might jump out through her mouth one day.

She avoids interacting with teachers and hates it when it's her turn to read something from the text book in front of her class. Even though she struggles with concentrating on what the teacher is saying, she does pretty well in school. *It's really hard to concentrate on things when you have so much going on in your head*, she thinks to herself.

In English class, sitting in a corner at the back, she looks out last night and starts thinking about last night. The teacher's voice slowly fades away and her mother's high-pitched shriek floods in.

"HOW DARE YOU TALK TO ME LIKE THAT?"

"I WILL TALK HOWEVER I WANT," her father yells back.

*Oh no, not again. Why can't they just be normal? Maybe this is normal and all families are like this. Am I the one who's weird?*

Going to school is a bittersweet experience for Afreen. She hates it, but doesn't want to stay at home either. She loathes having to wake up so early in the morning, getting dressed, packing bags, sitting through boring classes, getting bullied by the other kids and most of all, waiting for her mother to come pick her up after school.

She is the last one to leave school everyday; something always comes up, according to her mother. The excuses range from the housemaids leaving late, to her mother just simply falling asleep. Having to stay back all alone

in an empty school and staring at the road in hopes of her mother finally coming to pick her up is one of the worst experiences for Afreen. All the teachers and staff come up to her and ask why her mother is late and Afreen has to make up new answers everyday. Although these things bother her a lot, in order to avoid confrontation she never talks about them.

What she likes about school is that it gives her an escape, somewhere to

run off to, a place where no one is breathing down her neck all the time. She gets to hang out with her friends here, laugh at each other's jokes, and most importantly, being here takes her mind off home. Here she doesn't feel like she is walking on eggshells all the time.

Even though she tries her best to stay busy, sometimes the voices manage to crawl into the back of her brain. *Maybe she deserved it, maybe she was getting*

*punished for sins she didn't know she committed.*

She shakes the thoughts out her head and looks up at the round, white clock hanging above the white board. Another school day is coming to an end. The class hadn't quite ended but everyone already started packing their bags.

*What's the hurry, why are they so excited about going home? Why am I not excited?*

Soon after, the final bell rings and everyone rushes out of the room to stand in line. Afreen doesn't rush, there was no point. She would be the last to leave anyway. She places her heavy school bag on her shoulders, stands at the back of the line and slowly follows everyone towards the noisy playground.

Car horns bellowing, parents calling out to their children, teachers yelling at the kids to stay in line and the *buas* running around with umbrellas helping children reach their guardians in the scorching heat.

Afreen is tired and hungry. She sits in the waiting room, the place where they make the children sit when everyone else goes home and the school is empty, silent. After waiting for more than an hour, she hears the school's small metal gate creak open. Her mother walks in.

It's three in the afternoon on a hot summer day, the sun is right above head. Afreen watches her mother's figure slowly get bigger as she walks across the concrete playing field towards the waiting room. One of the *buas* come up to her and announce, "Your mom's here."

Thank god.

Afreen pulls her heavy backpack onto her tiny shoulders again and walks to her mother. She doesn't ask for an explanation for being late again, she's just glad she can finally get out of the boiling heat. All Afreen looks forward to now is having lunch while watching her favorite TV show.

By the time they reach home, Afreen's stomach has started growling so loud that one could hear it if they were quiet enough. She goes to her

room to put her heavy backpack down and asks her mother for lunch. To her dismay, her mother replies that lunch is not yet ready since she had to rush to school to go get Afreen. She reassures a disappointed Afreen that food will be ready by the time Afreen finishes taking a shower.

Great. More excuses.

It is already pretty late, almost 4:30 in the afternoon. Afreen takes a shower and heads to the kitchen.

"Oh you're done showering already? A few more minutes."

The hunger had faded and she was starting to feel drowsy now. She had to wake up very early to go to school that day and was exhausted. It was getting increasingly difficult to keep her eyes open so she heads towards her bed and falls into a deep sleep as soon as she lays down.

Afreen dreams of a grey world. Everything a different shade of grey. Scary faces pop up and shoot her threatening looks. She is all alone. Helpless. Almost all her dreams are like this. She sometimes dreams of falling off cliffs or drowning in water.

Afreen slowly starts to wake up. Still half asleep, she can sense that she has been sleeping for quite sometime and it is probably night-time by now. She can hear two voices coming from somewhere close by. The voices are arguing, getting louder. Afreen is now awake and has realized the voices belong to her parents who are fighting again in the next room.

She had thought of getting up from bed to get dinner since she had already skipped lunch but that doesn't seem like a great idea anymore now that the fighting is getting worse. She stares at the door separating her and her parents' room and decides that she'll just try to go back to sleep and pretend she didn't hear anything. She doesn't want to get pulled into their fight like the last time. Everything seems scary and confusing, but keeping quiet seems to be the only option to the none year-old Afreen.

Afsara Khan is a student of North South University.





## NORMAN HUNTER DIES FROM COVID-19

Leeds United great Norman Hunter has died aged 76 after contracting coronavirus, his former club announced Friday. "Norman was taken to hospital last week after being diagnosed with COVID-19 and despite continuing to battle and the best efforts of NHS (National Health Service) staff, he sadly lost his fight earlier this morning," the club said in a statement. The club said it was "devastated" at the news. A famously tough-tackling centre-half, England international Hunter made more than 700 appearances for Yorkshire club Leeds during their most successful era of the late 1960s through to the mid-1970s under manager Don Revie.

-- AFP



With the whole nation under an unofficial lockdown, there is little opportunity for youngsters to enjoy recreational activities outdoors. Hence some cricket enthusiasts took to the roof of a building in Kodomtoli area in Chattogram on Thursday and with makeshift arrangements, indulged in their favourite pastime.

PHOTO: RAJIB RATHAN

# A trip down memory lane

ATHAR ALI KHAN



The world has come to a standstill and it is only normal for many of us sitting at home to feel completely helpless in the present situation. But what each of us can do is observe, appreciate and acknowledge the significant moments of our past. I would like to take the readers on a trip down memory lane -- to the moments that stand out in my mind as the biggest turning point in our cricketing history.

Cricket has never been and never will be an individual's game. Priority must and should always be placed on the combination of players, a chemistry that is not entirely possible to explain. Sport, and cricket in particular, is unique in that way. It is part science -- in the facts and statistics -- while part of it is art due to the indescribable emotions we feel when someone plays a shot to win our hearts, or misses one to break it.

It was heartbreaking to see Masarafe Bin Mortaza resigning from captaincy but this also gave us the opportunity to reflect on his contributions. Mashrafe's ability to change the complexion of the Bangladesh national team by uniting the playing eleven was commendable.

When I interviewed Mashrafe a few weeks ago, after his decision to resign as captain of the ODI team, I was reminded of the dusk of the career of another Bangladesh captain -- Habibul Bashar. The



Bangladesh players celebrate the dismissal of an India batsman during the historic 2007 World Cup fixture at Port of Spain.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

2007 World Cup was some of his last playing days but I know that he played a crucial role in bringing the team together with his years of experience.

March 17, 2007 was a memorable and unforgettable day at Port of Spain where Bangladesh created the biggest upset by defeating red-hot favourites India by five wickets in the World Cup and that too against a line-up full of legends of the game in Saurav Ganguly, Rahul Dravid, Sachin Tendulkar, Virender Sehwag, Yuvraj Singh, Harbajan Singh plus the future global star MS Dhoni. Looking back, the moment that stands out for me was the sight of Tamim Iqbal going down the wicket against Zaheer Khan to hit a six into the second tier of the stands.

I could hear my disbelief reflected

on my fellow commentator's voice, as he too was shocked by Tamim's bravado and could merely utter, "Oh my, what has he done!" I can only imagine what that shot meant for the confidence of the dressing room.

As it happens, even though Bangladesh qualified for the next round, since it was a completely unexpected outcome, the production company tried and failed to extend my contract. Hence, I found myself on the same flight as the Indian team, their bags packed much earlier than they had hoped, going home. Upon seeing me, Dravid had asked: "Athar, what are you doing here? Your team has gone through."

As cheers and applause erupted, it felt as though Tamim, a young

and fresh-faced flamboyant opener from Bangladesh, through his no-fear attitude added a burst of fuel to a flame in Bangladesh's cricket history that had been flickering, but had surely been ignited in 2005 when Bangladesh beat Australia for the very first time in an ODI.

When we beat Australia in 2005, history was made. I remember the tour as special because as a selector, along with Faruque [Ahmed] and [GM Nausher] Prince, I had taken a leap of faith in the inclusion of Mushfiqur Rahim. Some may say it was a premature decision, but when he started scoring so heavily in trying conditions while on tour in England, we saw a spark in him that we knew the Bangladesh team could not miss out on.

In terms of being taken seriously as a cricketing nation, 2015 will be at the forefront of people's minds when they think of Bangladesh. It was the glorious year in which we won three series at home, back-to-back, against India, Pakistan and South Africa.

It is important to learn from our past mistakes but also to draw inspiration and strength from the moments in which we have overcome challenges.

It is needless for me to say that we all have a role to play in making this earth a better place. As I pray for this virus to disappear quickly from the earth, I also hope that we will be ready and equipped to embrace a future that holds amazing experiences for all of us, akin to those of our 'Tigers' once again taking the field by storm.

# Rubel pleads for selflessness

RAMIN TALUKDER

During this time of crisis when the whole world is fighting the spread of coronavirus, the roles played by the country's footballers and cricketers have earned a lot of praise. Starting from premier all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan to footballer Jamal Bhuyian -- all the players have come forward and made their contributions. Their contributions ranged from monetary help to awareness posts through Facebook and social media. Even a few well-off players came forward and stood by their less-fortunate fellow athletes and such an example was recently set by Bangladesh ODI skipper Tamim Iqbal when he took the responsibility of providing expenditure to the family members of the fastest teenage sprinter Samiul Islam.

However, among all these athletes who came forward in this crisis, Bangladesh pacer Rubel Hossain's activities grabbed most public attention. Rubel has been posting awareness messages on social media since COVID-19 was first detected in the country. Aside from making monetary donations, the pacer also donated infrared thermometers in his hometown Bagerhat. For Rubel, who has also voiced his outrage against wrong doers publicly, cricket has now become secondary as his prime concern has been the nation's condition and its people's plight during this pandemic.

According to Rubel, two things need to be addressed more than anything now. Firstly, the need to provide food for the needy and next to that is the need to stay safe and conscious to help curb the spread of the virus.

"Bangladesh is currently going through a horrible situation. What should I say; I guess there is no other option than staying safe and conscious. We need to stay at home and also help the needy ones as much as we can," opined Rubel during an interview over phone with The Daily Star.

Drawing up on the example of his hometown Bagerhat, the pacer further mentioned, "We do not have many COVID-19 cases in our locality. But the main problem here is that there are numerous people who are living below the poverty line. And the ratio of such people is higher in the area I live. I own three buildings here and I have already asked the tenants to not worry about the rent till the situation is contained. I am trying my best to help the

people around me. I am also using social media to make people aware as a number of people follow us on Facebook."

Some unwanted things are also troubling Rubel. The pacer is left worried and with immense grief as the ones who should have come forward in taking care of the less fortunate ones more than anyone else in the country are now the ones who are stealing essential commodities that came in as relief for the needy people.

"I do not know what to say about the ones who are stealing essential commodities like rice, lentil and oil. Instead of helping others they are stealing government allocated reliefs. I just do not know what to say about them. I think these sort of heinous activities have only made our heads bow down in shame," sighed Rubel.

A nationwide lockdown has already been imposed due to the coronavirus. And hence, the income source for many people has also been halted. Rubel believes if steps

The whole country is suffering, especially the needy ones. The needy ones are unsure which will take their lives first, coronavirus or hunger? This thought might lead them to think differently which they usually do in such cases.

are not taken against such heinous acts, the situation will only worsen.

"The whole country is suffering, especially the needy ones. The needy ones are unsure which will take their lives first, coronavirus or hunger? This thought might lead them to think differently which they usually do in such cases," Rubel said, issuing a warning to the nation.

However, even after all that is happening, Rubel is still keeping his faith on the leaders of the country. Even he urged his countrymen to do the same and have faith.

"We need to have faith in the administration, doctors, nurses and military personnel as they are the ones who are fighting from the frontline. They are the ones who are taking the virus head on. Whereas we have very little to do here," concluded Rubel.



## ‘Chances of IPL in SL very low’

AGENCIES



After Sri Lankan Cricket Board has reportedly offered to play host for 2020 IPL season, BCCI has refused to commit either way saying it neither accepts nor rejects "the proposal" which was yet to officially come to the Board adding that the chances were rather low.

A top BCCI official, who is also IPL governing council member, told Republic TV that the chances of Sri Lanka hosting IPL was in fact very low.

"Officially the request has not come to us so the question of considering or rejecting it does not arise. Once it comes officially we may or may not consider it. But frankly speaking, the chances are low. The availability of foreign players and logistical matters are big issues," the top official told Republic TV on a telephonic conversation on condition of anonymity.

Apparently, the SLC has written to BCCI offering to host the IPL, a fact denied by BCCI official. "We are not aware of any such letter of proposal. I am hearing it from you only. In case it comes we will not outrightly reject it. We will discuss the merits and demerits of it and accordingly take a decision. It's too premature to commit either way. But if you ask me personally, I would say the chances are rather slim," he observed.

SLC president Shammi Silva had, on Thursday, spoke about his country's willingness to host the tournament.

"It looks like Sri Lanka will be clear of the coronavirus before India," Silva had told Reuters in Colombo.

"If so, we can host the tournament here. We will be writing to the Indian cricket board soon," he added.

## ‘Humour is most important right now’

PTI, Auckland



Known for his tongue-in-cheek take on life and cricket, New Zealand all-rounder Jimmy Neesham feels focussing on the funny side of things helps him cope with difficult situations like the COVID-19 pandemic currently sweeping through the world.

The coronavirus outbreak, which started in the Chinese city of Wuhan, has brought the entire world to a standstill. The deadly contagion has infected more than 20 lakh people while causing over one lakh deaths across the globe.

Asked about the role humour plays in handling difficulties, the Black Caps pacer, who keeps his fans entertained with witty one-liners on his social media accounts, said it is vital when the going gets tough.

"I think it's probably right out there, the most important one. The sport we play and the career I have had, there's plenty of downs and you've got to see the bright, funny side of it otherwise you'll just go into a dark hole," Neesham said on 'Inside my bubble' podcast.

"I'm certainly used to tough situations and this is another one. All things pass eventually and we should keep smiling and laughing and we'll all be in a better place



JIMMY NEESHAM

and good to go once we come out the other side," he added.

Last month, New Zealand's ODI away series against Australia was called off after the first match and the visiting team was sent home owing to the fast-spreading virus.

Talking about the chain of events leading to the series being called off, the 29-year-old said, "We played on Friday and on Saturday we were called for a meeting at two and by three we were on the bus to the airport. It was pretty quick and we were lucky to have reached home."

## No Test captaincy for De Kock

AFP, Johannesburg

Former Test skipper Graeme Smith was on Friday confirmed as South Africa's director of cricket -- and revealed that Quinton de Kock would not be elevated to the Test captaincy.

Jacques Faul, acting chief executive of Cricket South Africa, said Smith had been appointed for a two-year term, expiring at the end of March 2022. Smith was appointed in an acting capacity last December.

"It's not going to be Quinton," Smith said, citing De Kock's responsibility as the country's limited-overs captain as well as being wicketkeeper and a key batsman.

"Quinton will be our white-ball captain but from a workload and mental capacity aspect we want to keep him fresh. From personal experience I know that captaining all three formats is challenging and we don't want to overburden him."

## Champions League final on Aug 29?

REUTERS, Undated



European soccer's governing body (UEFA) is working on a proposal that could see the remainder of the Champions League condensed into a week-long mini-tournament with the final taking place on Aug. 29 in Istanbul, the BBC has reported.

Football, as with most sports around the world, has been brought to a standstill by the COVID-19 pandemic, with all major European leagues suspended and the Champions League stalled in the middle of its round of 16.

UEFA wants the Europa League final to be held in Gdansk on Aug. 26 and the Champions League final played three days later, the report said.

UEFA is considering two options, one of which is to hold the Champions League quarter-finals and semi-finals across two legs in July and August. This would only be possible if domestic leagues restarted in June.

The second option is to play the remaining Champions League ties as one-off fixtures after the end of the domestic seasons and could see the remainder of the competition played out over the course of a week.

Both options would be discussed at UEFA's Executive Committee meeting next Thursday, the report added.

The Champions League final was originally scheduled to take place in Istanbul on May 30 and the Europa League final was due to be held in Gdansk three days earlier.

In the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, the world governing body, FIFA, and regional bodies such as the UEFA, AFC and CONMEBOL have postponed international and club fixtures at least up to June, with the Euro 2020 and Copa America postponed by a year.





# Staying home not an option

Farm workers in Rajshahi forced to venture out for work as little relief material reached them

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

Inadequate relief distribution is compelling farm labourers in Rajshahi, mostly from indigenous communities, to travel outside their villages and unions to look for agricultural work.

As a result, they are not able to follow the health advisory to stay home and maintain social distance to stem the spread of coronavirus.

Through local representatives, the government started to provide food support from March 27 to low-income groups outside social safety nets to help them pull through the virus-induced shutdown.

But many poor families among the farm labourers in Rajshahi are yet to receive any relief.

Talking over phone on April 3, Ashonto Bakla, a representative of the indigenous Orao community of Chhatinipara under Rishikul union of Godagari upazila, said most members of the 150 Orao families in his community went to work at potato fields in Tanore, Paba and Mohonpur upazilas.

While many of them returned towards the beginning of April, some 40 members of the community, mostly

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Boatloads of watermelons arrive in the capital's Badamtoli Ghat from different districts across the country yesterday. The summer fruit used to have heavy demand and a large one would sell for Tk 300 or even more. But now, due to the coronavirus outbreak, demand has dropped. Traders were seen trying to sell large ones for Tk 180, but no one was buying.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## FOR ASKING FOR AID UP chairman beats up farmer, gets arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

Police yesterday arrested Abdus Sattar, chairman of Arjunpur Baramahati union parishad, for allegedly assaulting a farmer who called the hotline for relief in Natore's Lalpur upazila.

Superintendent of Natore police Liton Kumar Saha announced the arrest of Sattar at a press briefing in his office.

The farmer, Shahidul Islam of Angaripara village, had fallen upon hard times during the coronavirus outbreak and the ensuing countrywide shutdown, and so called the hotline 333 for relief on April 10.

Angered by the incident, Sattar called him to the union parishad on April 12, took him to a room and beat him up, said Lalpur Upazila Nirbahi Officer Ummul Bani Dutty.

The incident went viral and the Lalpur UNO issued a show-cause notice on April 13.

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## 7 held for selling, hoarding relief materials

STAR REPORT

Law enforcers yesterday arrested seven people on charges of illegally storing and selling over nine tonnes of rice, 3.65 tonnes of sugar and 980 litres of edible oil meant for poor people in different districts.

They were arrested in four districts in possession of the goods supplied under several government programmes.

In the wake of widespread allegations over theft of rice and other food items meant for the poor, law enforcers and civil administration have continued drives to recover the relief goods.

Since March 30, law enforcers have recovered over 306 tonnes of rice, 4.5 tonnes of sugar, 7,460 litres of edible oil and 25 sacks of chickpea. Besides, 56 persons were arrested in different districts in this connection, according to reports.

In Barishal, a mobile court seized over 7.68 metric tonnes of rice of the government's Food for Work (Kabikha) programmes from a wholesale shop at Uttarpar Bazar of Banaripara municipality yesterday.

The mobile court jailed AKM Yusuf Ali, vice-president of Banaripara upazila unit Awami League, on charge of storing and selling the rice.

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

### Bangladesh enters Commonwealth



A Bhutanese government delegation led by the Bhutanese Foreign Minister Dawa Tsering calls on Bangabandhu on April 17, 1972 at his official residence.

April 18, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

#### COMMONWEALTH MEMBERSHIP FOR BANGLADESH

Bangladesh is today admitted to the Commonwealth as its 32nd member. The announcement of the membership is made by the Commonwealth Secretary General Arnold Smith. Bangladesh Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad welcomes the announcement and says that the decision of the Commonwealth is an acceptance of the reality of Bangladesh by the world's first community of nations. He further says that Bangladesh will maintain good and friendly relations

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## TIB opposes 'partisan relief committees'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Transparency International Bangladesh yesterday expressed concerns over the ruling Awami League's announcement that partisan "relief committees" would be formed to help officials distribute relief goods among the poor.

Although all kinds of participation irrespective of political affiliations is necessary to mitigate the crisis, there are reasons to doubt whether the "relief committees" would play a positive role, said a statement issued by the graft watchdog.

BSS reports, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday asked the grassroots AL leaders and activists to form relief distribution committees following the instructions of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and to join the relief distribution process

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## STAY HOME, STAY WELL

### Take special care of the elderly

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Elderly people require special attention in the days of coronavirus as they are the most vulnerable, said experts.

Talking to The Daily Star, physician Tanveer Ahmed suggested some special measures should be taken for the elderly people.

Elderly people suffer from different old age complications, thus, take medicine regularly. It would be wise to keep their regular medications and other supplies well stocked, he said.

They should wash their hands frequently and if possible stay alone in a room that has attached bathroom, he added.

They should not expose to others at this time and stay away from children to protect themselves from infection, he further added.

To stay safe, family members should not share food, water bottles, utensils and other personal items with each other, the doctor said.

He suggested that elderly people should postpone their regular medical check-ups and non-essential doctor visits unless it is very serious.

Other than the elderly people, none should go out of home during the shutdown. If needed, home delivery services should be availed for groceries and other essentials, he said.

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## Mogh Party man shot dead in Bandarban

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

A member Arakan Liberation Party, locally known as Mogh Party, was shot dead at remote Kenaiju Para in Rowangchhari upazila of Bandarban yesterday morning.

The dead is Mong Sai Hla, 30, of remote Thanchi upazila, said Touhid Kabir, officer-in-charge of Rowangchhari Police Station.

Mong was a member of Mogh Party, said the OC,

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#### PRAYER TIMING APRIL 18

Fazr Juma Asr Maghrib Esha  
AZAN 4:35 12:30 4:45 6:24 7:45  
JAMAAT 5:10 1:15 5:00 6:28 8:15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

## South Asia virus cases hit 22,000

The Maldives locks down capital

REUTERS, New Delhi/Male

The number of people infected with the coronavirus crossed 22,000 in densely populated South Asia yesterday driven by a rise in cases in India as the tiny Indian Ocean island nation of Maldives locked down its capital.

Health officials have warned that the region, home to a fifth of the world's population, could be the new frontline against the disease because of millions living in packed slums and fragile public health systems.

India's caseload rose to 13,387, a jump of nearly 700 over the previous day, despite a harsh lockdown now in its fourth week and which will last at least until early May.

Authorities have identified a fifth of India's hundreds of districts as red zones with the highest number of cases,

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A large number of people shop at a kitchen market in the capital's Matikata yesterday. Such poor physical distancing practices run the risk of coronavirus infection.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## China revises death toll

Adds 1,290 deaths not mentioned before; US plans reopening of economy in phases

AFP, Wuhan

The Chinese city at the origin of the coronavirus outbreak revised up its death toll by 50 percent yesterday, as global criticism mounted over China's handling of the deadly pandemic.

Since emerging from Wuhan late last year, the coronavirus has embarked on a deadly march across the planet, killing more than 145,000 people and wrecking the global economy as more than half of humanity -- 4.5 billion people -- is trapped indoors.

While President Donald Trump announced a phased reopening of the United States, the economic devastation was clear to see in China, where gross domestic product slumped into reverse for the first time since records began.

Several countries across Europe are starting to slowly ease back weeks-old restrictions after deaths and infections showed signs of stabilising, and the German health minister said Thursday his country's outbreak was "under control".

In China, Wuhan's city government added 1,290 deaths to its toll, bringing the total to 3,869 after many dead were "mistakenly reported" or missed entirely, adding to growing global doubts over China's transparency.

Leaders in France and Britain joined Trump's broadsides against China, as two US media outlets reported suspicions the virus accidentally slipped out of a sensitive Wuhan laboratory that studied bats.

President Emmanuel Macron told the Financial Times

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