

# 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

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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

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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

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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

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In Mymensingh, upazila administration and police seized 170 kilogrammes 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

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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-ঢামেকাহ/সজাহ-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-ঢামেকাহ/সজাহ-১/মেডিকেল যন্ত্রপাতি/২০১৯-২০২০/২৭৮৮, তারিখঃ ০৮/০৩/২০২০ইং মোতাবেক বিকল্প বাসো ও ইংরেজি সৈনিক পরিমাণ এবং সিপিটিউ-তে বিজ্ঞপ্তি প্রকাশের মাধ্যমে উক্ত দরপত্র আহবান করা হয়। দেশে করোনা ভাইরাস (COVID-19) জনিত উত্তর পরিস্থিতির কারণে পরবর্তীতে অত্র কার্যালয়ের স্মারক নং-ঢামেকাহ/সজাহ-১/মেডিকেল যন্ত্রপাতি/২০১৯-২০২০/৩৩০৪, তারিখঃ ২৫/০৩/২০২০ইং অনুযায়ী সমগ্র বর্ধিত করে সরোশধী 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.