



# The Daily Star



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**BANGLADESH UPDATE** **390** New cases in 24hrs **3,772** Total cases **120** Deaths **92** Recoveries **GLOBAL UPDATE** **180,784** Deaths **2,603,147** Total cases

PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

## Session jams loom large

*Ill-equipped, most of them yet to offer online classes amid coronavirus shutdown; uneven access to internet for students another hurdle*

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

In light of rising concerns over the Covid-19 outbreak, public universities had earlier shut down in-person classes. But most of them are yet to offer students alternative online education.

Top administrative officials gave several reasons for not introducing online education -- including a lack of facilities at the institutions and uneven internet access for all students, many of whom are now in their village homes.

Academics warned that if the shutdown of universities is prolonged, there is a strong possibility that session jams will increase significantly.

However, at several universities, faculty members on their own or with support from the university authorities have started online classes. Almost all teachers of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology (SUST), for example, are taking online classes.

Once normalcy returns, university authorities say, they will take extra classes, curtail summer vacation and public holidays, to make up students' losses.

University Grants Commission Chairman Prof Kazi Shahidullah said it is understood that public universities cannot introduce online education as not all students have access to the internet or the devices to connect to it.

"All of them [students] don't have a laptop, desktop, or a smartphone. So, not everybody can be covered."

UNIVERSITIES ILL-EQUIPPED

"We are not a digitised university. We do not even have email addresses

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Dinghys packed with people going across the Shitalakkhya in Bandar area of Narayanganj, currently a hotspot of Covid-19 outbreak. Clearly, the message of social distancing is lost on the people who are not only risking their health but also that of others around. The photos were taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Shutdown to extend until May 5

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has decided in principle to extend the ongoing shutdown of all public and private offices till May 5 to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus in the country.

"You can say [the ongoing] holiday is going to be extended till May 5. However, it's not final until the gazette is issued," Public Administration Secretary Shaikh Yusuf Harun told The Daily Star last night.

Asked about when the gazette will be issued, Harun said, "It's quite impossible [to issue it] today. [It would be issued] tomorrow."

A ministry official, wishing anonymity, said the government in principle decided to extend the shutdown until May 5 but it was taking time as some conditions of the leave would be changed.

If extended, this would be fourth time the government extending shutdown after it first

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## 'I can't even cry, need to stay strong'

*A Bangladeshi-American nurse describes her struggles*

PORIMOL PALMA



Fulkumari Rozario

At this critical time when people are advised to stay at home, health workers are oath-bound to be on the frontline away from their families most of the time.

Amid constant fears of contracting the virus, they have to keep performing their duties to save lives. But how do they feel? How do they manage their emotion, family life?

"I feel like crying when I see my patients panicking and crying for help ... but I can't cry. I need to be strong," said Fulkumari Rozario, a Bangladeshi-American nurse at the state-run Elmhurst Hospital in Queens of New York, the epicentre of Covid-19 pandemic in the US.

The US has so far seen nearly 800,000 Covid-19 cases, the highest by any country in the world. As of yesterday, more than

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## A staggering 85pc cases in Dhaka

*Experts say comparatively more tests, lax restrictions are key reasons behind the grim figure in this division*

MOUDDUD AHMED SUJAN

Dhaka remains the worst affected division in the country with over 85 percent of all confirmed cases of the coronavirus.

The authorities yesterday reported 390 new cases of Covid-19 and 246 of them are from Dhaka division where there are a total of 2,756 confirmed cases.

Among other divisions, Chattogram shares 4.42 percent, Mymensingh 3.93 percent, Barisal 2.1 percent, Rangpur 1.77 percent, Rajshahi 0.74 percent, Sylhet 0.59 percent and Khulna 0.71 percent of the total detected cases.

The country now has a total of 3,772 detected cases, Prof Nasima Sultana, additional director general of Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), said in a briefing yesterday.

In Dhaka division, higher number of tests and ineffective restrictions are the key reasons why more cases are being detected.

People of the 14 districts in Dhaka division are likely to acquire "natural herd immunity", a form of indirect protection from an infectious disease that occurs when at least 60 percentage of a population becomes immune to a germ, experts said.

According to Global Alliance for Vaccination and Immunization, herd immunity can be challenging to induce through unchecked infection as there would be a very high rate of serious illness and death, with health systems overwhelmed well beyond their surge capacity, even in high-income countries.

"Testing activities are more concentrated in Dhaka. Besides, the

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## Gonoshasthaya can give govt test kits on Saturday

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

At a time when there is a global shortage of Covid-19 test kits and allegations by a number of European countries against some Chinese companies of exporting faulty kits, Gonoshasthaya Kendra is approaching its deadline to hand over its home-grown kits to the government.

"Work on production of our testing kit is going on. We can hand over the kits to the government for approval on April 25," said Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury, founder and trustee of Gonoshasthaya Kendra.

Gonoshasthaya Kendra will today collect blood samples from Covid-19 patients as the Directorate General of Health Services approved its application yesterday.

"We are sure about the accuracy of our kits. As per the government instructions, we want to be even more certain of its accuracy by testing blood samples of the positive cases," Dr Zafrullah told The Daily Star yesterday.

"Once we can produce kits on a large scale, we can export these to five to six countries after meeting our own

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## Silent carriers cause for alarm

*Experts fear asymptomatic cases may be on rise, advise mass testing; elderly persons may die of cardiac arrest in such cases*

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Dilruba Begum began feeling unwell on April 20 night. When she told this to her family, they checked her blood pressure and found it to be normal.

The 60-year-old woman from the capital's Khilgaon area, who had diabetes and hypertension, at one stage, asked to be taken to a hospital.

"We could not manage an ambulance but we managed a car and rushed her to Dhaka Medical College Hospital," said Zakir Hossain, her son.

"There, soon after an ECG was performed, she died," he said adding that the doctors informed the family that she died of a cardiac arrest.

Although Dilruba had no symptoms of Covid-19, due to her age the doctors suggested that a sample from her body be sent for coronavirus test.

"My mother tested positive. But she did not have any symptoms and she did not even go out of the house since the beginning of the shutdown," Zakir said.

Public health experts said this was a case of asymptomatic coronavirus. In such cases, it is impossible to know who around you may be a carrier of the disease. Since the highly contagious virus has spread to the community level, many infected people may not exhibit any symptoms, they said.

They also fear that the number of asymptomatic cases may be on the rise as coronavirus transmission is expanding further across the country.

So far, the coronavirus cases detected in the country have been symptomatic. The authorities were yet to find asymptomatic ones.

"There are asymptomatic cases and these are common across the world. When community transmission happens, this can occur," ASM Alamgir,

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## BANGABANDHU KILLER 'India gives Mosleuddin to Bangladesh'

NDTV ONLINE

For the second time in 30 days, Indian Intelligence agencies reportedly handed over to Bangladesh a key conspirator convicted in the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman -- the founder of Bangladesh. In February, New Delhi had handed over an absconding assassin to Dhaka.

Mujibur Rahman, who is popularly known as Bangabandhu, was the father of Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. He and most members of his family were brutally gunned down in their home in Dhaka on August 15, 1975.

On April 12, Bangladesh executed the first fugitive, Abdul Majid, 73, who used to be a captain in the Army.

According to reports, a second conspirator, Risaldar Mosleuddin, was handed over Monday evening to Bangladesh at an undisclosed land border crossing.

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An old man sitting on the footpath waiting for someone to appear on the otherwise deserted Moulana Bhasani Road in the capital and give him something to eat. The underprivileged and vulnerable groups have been hit the hardest by the coronavirus pandemic. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

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## US health experts fear second wave

*Trump vows to sign order today to curb immigration 'to protect American workers'*

AFP, Washington

President Donald Trump yesterday vowed to sign an order partially blocking immigration to the United States, as health experts warned a second US coronavirus wave could be even more destructive.

Trump said his action was being taken "to protect American workers" after 22 million people lost their jobs in the United States alone in the devastating economic backlash sparked by unprecedented measures taken to halt the spread of the virus.

And the United Nations warned that the world is facing a "humanitarian catastrophe" with millions on the brink of starvation.

Nations around the world have been scrambling to fight the pandemic -- which has killed over 178,000 people and infected more than 2.5 million worldwide -- while desperately seeking ways to limit the colossal damage inflicted on the global economy.

Worst-hit region Europe saw its death toll climb to another grim milestone of 110,000, with Spain reporting a slight increase for a second day running in the number of people who succumbed to the disease.

But Germany, which this week cautiously began allowing shops to reopen, offered another glimpse of hope when it approved the launch of trials on human volunteers for a vaccine.

The trial, which was only the fourth to have been authorised worldwide, was a "significant step" in making a vaccine "available as soon as possible", regulator the Paul Ehrlich Institut said.



# Fight climate change like coronavirus

Urges UN on 50th anniversary of Earth Day

AFP, Geneva

The world should fight climate change with the same determination it is showing in the battle against the new coronavirus, the United Nations said yesterday.

The UN's World Meteorological Organization said it was time to flatten the curve on climate change as well, with its impact on the planet "reaching a crescendo" in the past five years -- the hottest on record.

The trend is expected to continue, the WMO said yesterday, as it marked the 50th anniversary of Earth Day -- an annual event to demonstrate support for environmental protection.

Carbon dioxide levels at one key global observing station are about 26 percent higher than in 1970, while the average global temperature has increased by 0.86 degrees Celsius in that time, the WMO said.

Temperatures are also 1.1 Celsius warmer than the pre-industrial era, it added.

The agency said the COVID-19 crisis was exacerbating the socioeconomic impacts of climate change -- for example, making it harder to keep people safe from tropical cyclones.

However, the WMO's climate monitoring programme has recorded a reduction in key pollutants and improvements in air quality as a result of the industrial downturn during the

pandemic.

"We estimate that there is going to be a six percent drop of the carbon emissions this year because of the lack of emissions of transportation and from industrial energy production," WMO Secretary-General Petteri Taalas said.

But he said the drop would only be temporary and "in the most likely case we will go back to normal next year", adding that failure to tackle climate change could threaten people's wellbeing, ecosystems and economies "for centuries" to come.

"We need to flatten both the pandemic and climate change curves," he said.

"We need to show the same determination and unity against climate change as against COVID-19," calling for action not only in the short-term "but for many generations ahead".

- 'Immediate threat' -

Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg echoed the sentiment during a talk in Stockholm, stressing the need to handle "two crises at once".

She said climate change "is an immediate threat, even if it may not be as immediate as the coronavirus it will still impact ourselves and especially other people in other parts of the world".



People desperate for food try to get hold of a pack of relief materials kept inside a bus which was heading to another area. The photo was taken in Shonir Akhra area of the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Session jams loom large

FROM PAGE 1

of all students. Moreover, many of our students do not have internet access as they are now in their village homes," Dhaka University Pro-Vice Chancellor Prof Muhammad Samad told The Daily Star.

"If we start it [online education], those who have no internet could feel left out," he added.

Pro-VC Samad said the DU is considering holding classes on public holidays and weekends once it reopens, and if possible it will shorten the summer vacation in June.

All the 46 public universities have been closed since March 24 and the government has now extended the closure till May 5, in a bid to stem the further spread of Covid-19.

"Our residential students are now far away from us and we cannot say whether they have internet access or not. Besides, our education is practical and laboratory-based -- we cannot give instruction online. This is a big hurdle," said Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) Registrar Prof SM Mahbubur Rahman.

The registrar of Comilla University, Abu Taher Bhuiyan, and registrar (in-charge) of Islamic University, Kushtia, Abdul Latif, said their universities were

not equipped to take online classes.

"Most departments are not digitally equipped," said Abdul Latif. **LACK OF INTERNET CONNECTION, DEVICES**

Educators said many students, especially those living in rural areas, lack the steady internet connection or the devices to be able to learn remotely.

Because of this, authorities of Chittagong University, Rajshahi University, and Jahangirnagar University said, they are not capable of taking online classes.

"Internet service is not available in many villages. If we go for online classes, most of the students will miss it due to no internet access," said CU VC Prof Shireen Akhter. Barisal University VC Prof Sadequ Arefin said they have no plan to start online classes. "Many of our students are from poor families, they do not have access to internet or laptops," he said.

The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics' Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2019 found only 37.6 percent of households in the country has access to the internet by any device from home. It also found only 5.6 percent of households have a computer or tablet.

Telecom insiders said there is 30

percent smartphone penetration in Bangladesh. There are a total 10 crore SIM cards -- of these, around four crore are unique users.

**EXCEPTION, NOT THE RULE**

So far, of the public universities, only SUIT in Sylhet has started online classes through the Zoom app, in the last week of March.

"We eliminated academic session jam after years of hard work and don't want to fall in the problem again," said VC Prof Farid Uddin Ahmed.

At the beginning, around half the teachers started taking online classes, but this number increased day by day. The VC hopes that in a few more days, all teachers will start taking online classes.

"Till regular life resumes, this online class method will help us face this situation and continue academic activities."

While at first, many students complained about problems with access, no one is raising the issue any more, he added.

[Our correspondents in Sylhet, Cumilla, Kushtia, Barishal, Jahangirnagar University, and Rajshahi University, have contributed to this report]

## World on brink

FROM PAGE 12

Even before the pandemic hit, parts of East Africa and South Asia were already facing severe food shortages caused by drought and the worst locust infestations for decades.

"We could be facing multiple famines of biblical proportions within a short few months," he said. "The truth is we do not have time on our side."

The worst-case scenario could see famine in some three dozen countries, Beasley said.

The impact of lost tourism revenues, falling remittances and travel and other restrictions linked to the coronavirus pandemic are expected to leave some 130 million people acutely hungry this year, adding to around 135 million already in that category.

"COVID-19 is potentially catastrophic for millions who are already hanging by a thread," said Arif Husain, chief economist and director of research, assessment and monitoring at WFP.

"It is a hammer blow for millions more who can only eat if they earn a wage," he said in a statement. "Lockdowns and global economic recession have already decimated their nest eggs. It only takes one more shock - like Covid-19 - to push them over the edge. We must collectively act now to mitigate the impact of this global catastrophe."

WFP expects to need \$10-\$12 billion to fund its assistance programmes this year compared to a record \$8.3 billion raised last year, Husain added. It plans to pre-position food stocks over the coming months in anticipation of growing needs.

Meanwhile, a World Bank

report yesterday said pandemic-hit developing nations' economies would suffer another blow as remittances are expected to plunge by about 20 percent globally this year.

"Remittances are a vital source of income for developing countries," World Bank Group President David Malpass said in a statement. "The ongoing economic recession caused by COVID-19 is taking a severe toll on the ability to send money home and makes it all the more vital that we shorten the time to recovery for advanced economies."

In some countries, payments from workers abroad amount to a quarter or even one-third of GDP, including South Sudan, Haiti, Nepal, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Montenegro and Tonga.

As the WFP warned of potential famine, Group of 20 agriculture ministers pledged to ensure "sufficient" global food supplies for "the poorest, the most vulnerable, and displaced people."

But the global markets, on which the severity of the crisis will depend, remain under intense pressure because of the pandemic. Extraordinary stimulus measures worth trillions of dollars gave some boost to stock markets, but have failed to lift the overall mood on trading floors.

Like with the food crisis warning from the WFP, the biggest impact of the loss of jobs and the overall economic downturn is being felt by the most disadvantaged.

They include the millions of migrant workers from South Asia and elsewhere that toil in the Middle East to send money back home to their families.

their convictions and sentences. The HC acquitted Shaniram.

Later on, Hasan, Badal, Minu and Parvin appealed to the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court against the HC verdict. Shahidul filed a jail appeal.

On August 2 in 2016, the Appellate Division granted the appeals of Hasan, Badal, Minu and Parvin and dismissed Shahidul's appeal.

On March 5, 2017, the apex court rejected Shahidul's petition for review of the verdict. He sought presidential mercy, which was turned down by the president. He was executed on November 29. Shazneen is the daughter of Latifur Rahman, chairman of Transcom Group, and Shahnaz Rahman.

## Shazneen's

FROM PAGE 12

hanged at Kashimpur High Security Prison in Gazipur in 2017.

A Special Tribunal for Prevention of Women and Children Repression delivered the verdict in September 2003, sentencing six accused to death for the rape and murder.

They are domestic help Shahidul, a contractor renovating the house Syed Sajjad Mainuddin Hasan and his assistant Badal, housemaids Estema Khatun Minu and her sister Parvin and carpenter Shaniram Mandal.

After the lower court verdict, the death reference reached the High Court for confirmation of the sentence. At the same time, the accused appealed to the HC against

## Silent carriers cause for alarm

FROM PAGE 1

According to Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 25 percent of the infected people might not have symptoms.

As of yesterday, 120 people died and 3,772 people were detected with coronavirus, according to Directorate General of Health Services.

But many experts believe that the number is much higher as the country has yet to ensure testing at a massive scale.

Dr Jahidur Rahman, virologist and assistant professor of Shahid Suhrawardy Medical College, said, "Around 40-50 percent of Covid-19 patients may be asymptomatic as various journals are saying. This is really alarming as asymptomatic coronavirus can spread fast and cause death."

He said that along with other reasons, this was also another big reason that Italy was badly hit by the virus.

"The sooner the people are tested, the better it will be for the society," he said.

## 'I can't even cry, need to stay strong'

FROM PAGE 1

10,000 people died in New York, and of them, at least 170 were of Bangladeshi origin.

New York is home to nearly four lakh Bangladeshis most of whom live in Queens, one of five boroughs of the city.

Fulkumari, who moved to New York from Bangladesh seven years ago, has been dealing with Covid-19 patients since early March at the 545-bed public hospital, which is now overburdened by such patients.

"Initially, I was afraid of how to handle these patients. But in a couple of days, I got used to it. It became clear to me that I am the one who has to take care of them," the 51-year-old nurse told this correspondent on April 20.

She has to watch over the patients with utmost care and extreme caution. She has to put on personal protective equipment (PPE) and also help the patients wear it.

"I have often seen patients breaking down, panicking and crying. In such cases, I give them moral support and courage, saying there is nothing to fear and that they will be okay."

She helps the patients with exercise, and routinely notify the doctors of their health status.

"I also educate them about what to do and what not to do," said Fulkumari who did her BSC from Dhaka Nursing College and post-graduation from the National Institute of Preventive & Social Medicine in Dhaka.

## A staggering 85pc cases in Dhaka

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lockdown is not working and transmission continuing," Prof Nazrul Islam, noted virologist and former vice chancellor of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, told The Daily Star.

"It appears that the outbreak in the city is heading towards its peak," he said, adding that the future may be grim, and eventually people would gain herd immunity.

Prof Ridwanur Rahman, medicine and infectious diseases specialist, said, "With the current number of daily tests, it is not possible to get the real picture."

He suggested introducing widespread tests across the country within two weeks to detect and isolate all hidden cases. "During this period, no one will be allowed to move anywhere."

Transmission in Dhaka remains

## US health experts fear second wave

FROM PAGE 1

**BRINK OF STARVATION**

But with months to go before a viable vaccine can be rolled out, more than half of humanity remains under some form of lockdown.

Singapore extended its confinement for a month to June 1, as the Asian city-state which managed to keep its outbreak in check early on is hit by the onslaught of second wave of infections.

The director of the US Centers for Disease Control also warned Americans to prepare for a more ferocious second wave.

"There's a possibility that the assault

She mentioned that most of those who died from the virus in New York were aged between 60 and 80, and had complications including heart diseases and diabetes.

Another factor was that they went to hospital at the last stage of infection. Most of those who sought medical help at the early stage of infection recovered, she said.

Fulkumari recalled that a Bangladeshi couple at Bronx, where she lives, died of Covid-19 recently, and the state has taken the responsibility of their two children.

"This is so sad," said Fulkumari, a mother of two, hoping such a tragedy doesn't befall anyone.

She said she strictly maintains physical distancing and hygiene practices both at her workplace and home because any mistake at this trying time could have serious consequences.

"My husband and children didn't want me to continue my job. But I said I couldn't do that. I took a vow to serve people when they are sick. It's my holy duty."

She even told her family members that if they wanted, she could stay away from home until the pandemic is over. Eventually, her family members submitted to her determination.

"I maintain physical distance at every stage -- all the way from the hospital to my apartment."

Fulkumari said she leaves her uniform at the hospital where it is

disinfected every day. She disinfects herself before leaving the hospital for home.

On the way back home, she keeps physical distancing while travelling by public bus. It takes her one and a half hours to reach home.

"Minutes before I reach my apartment, I call my husband and ask him to keep all the doors open so that I don't need to touch any of the door knobs."

"Outside my apartment, there is a plastic box where I leave my jacket, shoes and bag. Then I directly go to the bathroom."

She then washes her used clothes, takes a shower, and puts on fresh clothes.

"I don't go near any of my children or husband. My younger child, a 12-year boy, often wants me to hug him, but I refuse."

"I sleep in a separate room," Fulkumari said.

Asked how she feels about this physical distancing, she said, "We know that things will get back to normal once the pandemic is over. I just don't want to bring troubles by making any mistake at this difficult time."

Asked if she has any advice for the health workers in Bangladesh, she said, "I would say they must not avoid their responsibilities, but the authorities have to ensure their safety. They must be provided with PPEs."

"Who will take care of the patients if the frontline fighters are not protected?"

## Gonoshasthaya

FROM PAGE 1

demands," he said, urging the government to ensure speedy testing of the kits by the Directorate General of Drug Administration.

A team of Gonoshasthaya-RNA Biotech, a sister concern of Gonoshasthaya Kendra, developed the kits called Rapid Dot Blot, which can detect coronavirus infection in 15 minutes. It was facing trouble in importing reagents for the kit, but after the government approval, they imported from China and England.

The veteran physician said earlier this month that they collected five blood samples of Covid-19 patients, but the kit production was not possible due to technical glitches at their factory. With the government support, the glitches were fixed.

Gonoshasthaya Kendra again applied to the DGHS for blood samples of Covid-19 patients on April 12, but did not get any response until April 21.

He said he then contacted the Prime Minister's Office. Eventually, they received a response to the letter around 11:00am yesterday.

"We expect the government to help us smoothly go for production of the kit," he said, stressing that more tests are urgent to identify and isolate Covid-19 patients as that would be the most effective way to prevent transmission.

"It's a matter of time that we can go for the mass production of the kit," said Mohib Ullah Khondoker, managing director of the Gonoshasthaya-RNA Biotech Ltd.

## Shutdown

FROM PAGE 1

shutdown after it first announced the closure of all public and private offices from March 26 to April 4. The first announcement was made on March 23.

On April 1, the government extended the shutdown from April 5 to 11 as the situation had not improved and on April 5 it extended the shutdown from April 12 to 14. Later, on April 10 it was extended till April 25.

However, emergency services remained out of the purview of the shutdown.

Utility services such as water, electricity, gas, fire service, telephone and the internet have also remained operational.

Transportation of agricultural products, fertilisers, insecticides, foods, goods, medical equipment, daily essentials and media, kitchen markets, restaurants and drug stores and hospitals remain out of the purview of the shutdown as well.

Amid a sharp rise in the number of Covid-19 cases in the country, a high profile meeting held on Tuesday also decided to extend the shutdown for at least one week.

DGHS yesterday said 10 people died of coronavirus infections in the last 24 hours, taking the death toll to 120. Besides, 390 people tested positive for Covid-19 in the same period. With this, the total number of infected has reached 3,772.

## India gives

FROM PAGE 1

Mosleuddin is believed to be one of the conspirators who shot down Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Both assassins were reportedly living in West Bengal for over two decades. Abdul Majid was picked up from near his home in south Kolkata late February. Mosleuddin was detained in Bongaon, some 70 km away.

Abdul Majid had been passing himself off as a teacher while Mosleuddin ran a small herbal medicine shop. According to easternlinks.com, a news portal that broke the story, Majid revealed Mosleuddin's whereabouts before he was hanged.

Both are among at least a dozen others who were convicted of the assassination of Mujibur Rahman by the Bangladesh Supreme Court in 2009. Five of the convicted men were executed in 2010. At least four convicts are still at large.

The reported intelligence operation to track Mosleuddin was conducted under deep cover by top agencies and even the West Bengal police was unaware of the operation, sources say.

When initial reports about the operation emerged along with photos and videos of the suspect, there was a lot of confusion because some sources claimed the man in the photo - who was allegedly Mosleuddin - had died a few years ago.

According to some reports, Bangladesh used highly sophisticated facial recognition technology to confirm that the man being handed over was indeed the fugitive.

Official confirmation of the operation is awaited both in India and Bangladesh.

## S African president unveils \$26b virus relief plan

AFP, Johannesburg

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa on Tuesday announced a \$26 billion relief package to support the economy and the vulnerable during the coronavirus pandemic.

In a special address to the nation, Ramaphosa announced "a massive social and economic support package of 500 billion rand (\$26.3 billion), which amounts to about 10 percent of our GDP."

standing in line in Bangkok's historic quarter for food donations of rice, noodles, milk and curry packets, Chare Kunwong, a 46-year-old masseur said: "If I wait for the government's aid then I'll be dead first."

Among the hardest hit economically were also millions of migrant workers from South Asia and elsewhere who toil in the Middle East to send money back home to their families.

The pandemic shutdowns mean even their bodies cannot be sent home, and are instead being buried or cremated in the country where they die -- often without any loved ones present.

During the same 24 hours, five Covid-19 patients recovered, taking the total to 92.

Yesterday's announcements came after 3,096 samples were tested across

NOBODY SAYS GOODBYE





Attendants wait outside as patients who were previously in Dhaka Medical College Hospital's burn unit get transferred to the newly constructed Sheikh Hasina National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery. The previous burn unit is being transformed into a facility for Covid-19 patients. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO:  
ANISUR RAHMAN

## Many Bangladeshis in Malaysia facing food crisis

Rights activists urge Dhaka to actively engage with KL to open a distribution channel

PORIMOL PALMA

Dhaka should actively engage Kuala Lumpur to make sure that the Bangladeshi migrants undergoing hardships in Malaysia amid coronavirus pandemic get food through a government distribution channel, said migrant rights activists in Malaysia.

They said some non-profits with support from individual donors have been reaching out to the migrants, who have remained unpaid and run out their savings, to provide food for the last three weeks, but those efforts are inadequate compared to the needs on the ground.

"We are getting emergency calls from various parts of Malaysia that they don't have any savings and need food. The situation is going from bad to worse," said Mohammad Harun Al Rashid, chief coordinator of a non-profit, Bhalobashi Bangladesh, and a rights activist based in Malaysia.

Bangladesh High Commission in Malaysia too has provided some assistance to be distributed to the migrants through Malaysian Trade Union Congress (MTUC), but that's also very minimal, he said.

There are some eight lakh Bangladeshis, including an estimated two lakh undocumented, in Malaysia that has been enforcing movement control order since March 18 due to Covid-19.

Until April 18, at least 5,305 people were infected and 86 of them died. For now, the partial lockdown is until April 28, but it may be further extended with some relaxations, Malaysian media reported quoting officials concerned.

All factories and businesses, except for the emergency ones, have remained closed -- a situation that is hurting migrants the most.

Malaysian nationals have been provided various incentives, including cash. Malaysian authorities asked the employers to pay wages to the workers, including migrants, though they remain in the dormitories and don't work to avoid risks of infection.

However, there are numerous cases that migrants are not being paid wages, said Harun Al Rashid. Those who are undocumented and work on contractual basis are even in more trouble, because they are mostly not being paid now as they remain in dormitories now, he said.

Rashid said some Malaysian organisations, including MTUC, Our Journey, Tenaganita, have been trying to mobilise funds from individual donors, but that has really been inadequate. Even, due to shutdown, it is not possible to get many volunteers who can distribute food to the remote areas all across Malaysia.

Bhalobashi Bangladesh, through an online campaign, early April asked those in food crisis to register. It then got applications of over 50,000 migrants. "Not all of those needing food could register," he told The Daily Star by phone from Johor Bahru recently.

Abu Hayat, an independent researcher based in Kuala Lumpur, said migrants working in some of the remote areas outside Kuala Lumpur and Selangor, especially in Penang and Johor Bahru, are not getting

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

## Withdraw case against 2 editors

*Demands rights watchdog*

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Committee for the Protection of Fundamental Rights yesterday demanded immediate withdrawal of a case filed recently against bdnews24.com Editor-in-Chief Toufique Imrose Khalidi, Jagonews24.com Acting Editor Mohiuddin Sarker and six others under the Digital Security Act.

In a statement, the rights body also demanded that the government refrain from harassing or arresting them in the controversial law.

Mominul Islam Bhasani, president of Baliadangi upazila unit of Swachchasebak League, filed the case on April 17 against the two senior journalists for "deliberately publishing false and defamatory news".

Two Facebook users named Shawan Amin and Rahim Shuvo were also accused in the case filed with Baliadangi Police Station.

In the case statement, Mominul said the authorities recovered 68 sacks of rice, meant to be sold among the low-income people at Tk 10 per kg, in the upazila's Palashbari on April 9.

The next day, Upazila Food Controller Nikhil Chandra Barman filed a case with the same police station accusing six people, including local rice dealer Amirul Islam, his brother Jamirul Islam and wife Kulsum Akhter.

"I have no connection with the accused and they are not my relatives. But the two news portals ran two stories linking me to the misappropriation and claiming that the accused were my relatives... I asked their local correspondents to run a rejoinder, which they did not," Mominul said.

He further said one of his brothers -- Aminul Islam, not Amirul, -- is the chairman of Boro Palashbari Union Parishad.

He said the accused tarnished his image and that of his party and defamed him by spreading false and fabricated information.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

## CJ calls meeting with SC judges to discuss operation of judiciary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain will hold a meeting with Supreme Court judges today to decide about the judiciary, as its functions have remained halted since March 26 due to ongoing coronavirus outbreak.

"The chief justice is observing the overall situation of the judiciary and discussing this issue with Supreme Court judges. Some lawyers have sent few applications to the chief justice for running court functions to a short scale during the ongoing closure. All the issues may be discussed at the meeting tomorrow (today)," Supreme Court Spokesman Md Saifur Rahman told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said the court is a crowded place where judges, lawyers, litigants, journalists and court staff gather during its proceedings.

"If court functions are allowed in this situation, public health will be put at risk. The chief justice is thinking of all relevant aspects," Saifur said.

The justice in the meeting with the Supreme Court judges may decide on the extension of court holiday as the government has extended the closure of the offices till May 5, he added.

The SC spokesman added that some magistrates are working at subordinate courts across the country in line with instruction from the chief justice in order to deal with urgent matters including bail petitions.

Contacted, Attorney General Mahubey Alam told The Daily Star saving lives of people should be the first priority.

Then the court functions may be resumed and later on the loss incurred by lawyers and litigants and its recovery will be handled, he said.

The attorney general also said the lockdown must be strictly maintained in the country like that of Germany in order to conquer the coronavirus.

Supreme Court Bar Association President AM Amin Uddin told this newspaper that the lawyers cannot run their profession and people cannot go to courts to seek justice due to the ongoing closure, a negative impact has been made on the judiciary.

There is nothing much to do in this situation for the recovery of the loss as coronavirus outbreak is a global problem, Advocate Amin Uddin said.

The SCBA president said he requested the chief justice over phone to run the Supreme Court functions at a shorter scope during the ongoing shutdown in order to give some relief to lawyers and justice seekers.

"I hope the chief justice will consider my request," he said.

## Take measures to sell produce of grassroots farmers

*Ministry asks local admin*

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock yesterday directed its district and upazila-level officials to take measures for selling produce of grassroots farmers and entrepreneurs.

The items that are to be sold are eggs, milk, fish and poultry.

The ministry took the decision to meet buyer demands and mitigate the loss entrepreneurs and farmers are incurring because of the ongoing lockdown.

Those involved in this sector have been facing huge losses due to disruption of supply chain amid the coronavirus crisis, said a ministry official.

He said milk and eggs are being collected from grassroots farmers under supervision of district livestock departments, with assistance from district administration in Chattogram, Cumilla and Faridpur. They are selling the items through mobile sales centres at prominent points in the districts at fixed prices after relevant announcements, he added.

He further said authorities have formed mobile milk-testing teams, consisting of veterinary surgeons, sanitary inspectors and compounders to ensure quality.

The initiative is benefiting all stakeholders: farmers, entrepreneurs and buyers, he continued.

After witnessing success of such initiatives in three districts, the ministry decided to expand them to all districts and their upazilas.

## 'We'll come out of it together'

*Maldives foreign minister thanks Bangladesh*

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The Maldives expressed deep gratitude to Bangladesh for supplying much-needed food and medical supplies to address the adverse impacts of the global coronavirus pandemic.

"Thank you PM Sheikh Hasina, FM @AKAbdulMomen, #Bangladesh Govt. & Navy for the generous & timely contribution towards our fight against COVID-19," said Maldives Foreign Minister Abdullah Shahid in a tweet, after some 100 tonnes of food, medicine and medical supplies were handed over to the Maldives authorities yesterday.

"The Navy Ship in our harbour with food & medical supplies is testimony to the strong bond of brotherhood between our two countries."

"In our efforts to provide maximum protection against #covid19 and to provide appropriate healthcare, our hope is that it reach Maldivians, Bangladeshis or any other foreign national equally, with no discrimination. We are in this together and we will come out of it together!" Abdullah Shahid tweeted.

A Bangladesh Navy ship started on April 15 for the Maldives, carrying more than 100 tonnes of food, medicine and medical equipment as assistance.

It arrived in Male on Tuesday and the assistance was handed over yesterday.

Bangladesh High Commissioner to the Maldives, Rear Admiral Mohammad Nazmul Hassan, handed over the supplies as a gift from Bangladesh to the Maldives authorities.

Maldives Foreign Minister Abdullah Shahid, Defense Minister Mariya Ahmed Didi and Foreign Secretary Abdul Ghafoor were present at the handover ceremony in Male, among others.

## Another 339 US citizens leave Dhaka

*4th chartered flight carries mostly expat Bangladeshis*

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 339 US citizens left Dhaka early yesterday as the United States government arranged the fourth chartered flight for those who opted to return amid the coronavirus outbreak.

Carrying the US citizens -- mostly expatriate Bangladeshis -- the special flight of US-based chartered airlines Omni Air left Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport at 12:52am, an official of aviation security at the Dhaka airport told The Daily Star.

The US citizens left Bangladesh as part of the US State Department's worldwide drive to take back home citizens who were abroad during the outbreak.

Earlier, 919 US citizens left Bangladesh in three special flights since March 30.

Bangladesh suspended air communication with all countries except China till April 30, following the outbreak of Covid-19.

## Ctg to get two more labs to test Covid-19

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

Two new laboratories are going to open in Chattogram by next week for testing Covid-19 samples, aiming to increase the testing capacity to 350 from the present capacity of around 150 a day.

The laboratories are at Chattogram Medical College Hospital (CMCH) and Chattogram Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (CVASU).

Deputy Minister for Education Mohibul Hasan Chowdhury is scheduled to inaugurate testing activities in CVASU today, said sources.

Currently, Bangladesh Institute of Tropical and Infectious Diseases (BITID) is the only institution in Chattogram to test Covid-19.

Many collected samples are left untested for four to five weeks at the BITID laboratory as doctors and technicians there are struggling to cope with the pressure of increasing demand.

Just to give an idea, 140 samples were tested in BITID on Tuesday while around 700 were left untested. The institution has to collect samples from at least eight districts of Chattogram division, according to sources involved with the process.

Under these circumstances, adding two more laboratories would bring a much-needed relief for the overburdened staff members at the BITID laboratory and it would also help patients through giving them the test reports in a short time, said Prof Dr Shakil Ahmed, in-charge of BITID laboratory.

The laboratories are set up at the microbiology department of CMCH and the molecular biology department of CVASU.

A PCR machine from the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) came to CMCH on Monday while a technical team has started installing the machine in a newly-built laboratory maintaining protocol, said CMCH Director Brig Gen Humayun Kabir yesterday.

"We expect to start testing by next Saturday," he said, adding, "Initially, we will test 100 samples a day."

Meanwhile, CVASU Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Gautam

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



As people struggle to make a living amid the shutdown, this elderly rickshaw-puller has decided he will not bow down to the virus. He puts on his bright orange protective suit, goggles and mask, and goes out every day amid the coronavirus outbreak, looking for passengers in the deserted city. The photo was taken near the High Court recently.

PHOTO:  
FIROZ AHMED



## Many Bangladeshis

FROM PAGE 3

any help from the non-profits. He said many migrants are calling him, saying they have not received wages for the last two months.

In some cases, he said, he tried to reach out to locals for funds or connected migrants to non-profits providing food.

"What happens in the cases of migrants that they send money immediately after they get salaries. So, they don't have much saving with them," Abu Hayat said.

They even borrow money from relatives in their home countries or friends in Malaysia. Now the situation is such that they can neither bring money from home nor any of their friends in Malaysia, as all of them are in trouble, he added.

"I know a group of some 140 Bangladeshi migrants in Banting area of Selangor who used to buy from a grocery on credit since they haven't received wages, but now the grocery shop has also stopped selling to them on credit. I am trying to connect them to a non-profit," Abu Hayat said.

Harun Al Rashid said considering the fact that a large number of Bangladeshis work in Malaysia, the Bangladesh government needs to communicate and collaborate with Malaysian authorities so that the migrants needing assistance get it through government distribution channels.

"If need be, the Bangladesh government can make a contribution to Malaysian government. It's time for humanitarian diplomacy and solidarity. People, wherever they are, should not suffer for food," he said.



**A police official stops a car in port city's Agrabad area yesterday afternoon to control unnecessary movement. Despite the countrywide shutdown to curb the spread of coronavirus, many continue to violate the guidelines.**

PHOTO: RAJIB RATHAN

## Withdraw

FROM PAGE 3

Committee for the Protection of Fundamental Rights, in its statement, said journalists' contribution to conveying news to people risking their lives in this difficult time is commendable.

Sadly, the newsmen have to face various types of harassment, assault, intimidation and cases under the Digital Security Act if they cover corruption incident.

Yet, the government has assured of taking stringent measures in cases of corruption in humanitarian aid programmes, the statement further said.

The rights body believes that the importance of freedom of thought and expression, and universally recognised freedom of the media, are greatly enhanced during the period of disaster.

So, any control over press freedom during the coronavirus pandemic will weaken the state's efforts to deal with the disaster, it added.

## Ctg to get

FROM PAGE 3

Buddha Das received a letter signed by an additional director general of DGHS on Tuesday requesting him to start Covid-19 testing.

"We've got 500 testing kits from DGHS and the deputy minister for education will inaugurate the testing activities on Thursday and we will start testing on Saturday," said Prof Gautam.

"We will test around 100 samples a day," he said, adding, "We will not collect samples ourselves, but will rather test the ones collected by BITID."

Dr Shakil Ahmed of BITID said, "Our daily collection of samples is around 350 but we can test at best 150 with the existing manpower and logistics," he said.

Patients will be benefited because of the two new laboratories, he added.

Contacted, Dr Hasan Shahriar Kabir, divisional director of DGHS, said the number of testing samples would increase threefold in Chattogram once the laboratories become fully operational.

## Fish farmers in trouble

FROM PAGE 12

"Throughout last week I sold only around 50 maund [1.2 tonnes] of fish in the local market, but early March in just two days, I sold five tonnes of climbing perch," said Raihan, whose fish farm is on 10 acres of land.

He said the demand for fish in cities, where most supplies go, has decrease because many people went back to their villages in fear of coronavirus.

"Because of the dearth of buyers, I cannot harvest fish. Instead, I have to continue to feed them," said Raihan, who invested around Tk 35 lakh, mostly from bank loans, in his farm.

He is worried about not getting a fair price for his produce in future to help recover his loss.

About 3,200 fish farmers and 50 hatchery owners are facing similar plights in Trishal, informed Tofail Ahmed, senior fisheries officer of the upazila.

According to farmers, Mymensingh's fish sector employs some seven lakh people, many of whom may lose their jobs because

of the financial crisis faced by the farm owners.

About 26,000 fish farmers, 250 nursery and 12 hatchery owners in Netrokona are in the same state, said Md Fazlul Kabir, the district fisheries officer.

The supply of fish feed is still normal and the price is as usual. But the price may increase, if the present situation continues, he feared.

District Fisheries Officer Ripon Kumar Paul of Kishoreganj also said around 27,000 fish farmers in the district might count huge losses. But an exact figure is yet to be assessed.

Farmers are also having difficulty finding labourers for fish harvesting because many workers are reluctant to come out and catch fish during the pandemic, Ripon added.

The fisheries officials informed that they are preparing lists of the fish farmers to send to the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock for the financial assistance offered under the stimulus package of Tk 5000-crore declared by the prime minister recently to address the Covid-19 fallout.

## Bangladesh will again

FROM PAGE 12

is eight in the evening. The villagers all of a sudden find the prime minister in their village on a surprise visit. When he left Gono Bhaban at 7:15pm none could guess where Bangabandhu was going.

At Kuria, the villagers are overwhelmed with joy, flock around him and narrate their sorrow and sufferings. They also describe to Bangabandhu how the Pakistan army, coming out not far from Kurmitola Cantonment, had lined up the able-bodied youths of the village and shot them dead. Bangabandhu is visibly moved listening to the villagers. He tells them that Bangladesh will again be Shonar Bangla if people devote their energy to the task of national reconstruction.

### 17,000 AWAMI LEAGUERS KILLED BY PAK ARMY

A preliminary survey conducted by the Bangladesh Awami League reveals that more than 17,000 workers and leaders of the party were killed by the Pakistan army during the nine months of Liberation War in Bangladesh. In every town and village, the occupation army specifically looked for Awami League members. The Awami Leaguers, if found, were killed and if not found their homes were burnt and their relatives victimised.

### NAP WILL BACK BANGABANDHU TO ACHIEVE SOCIALISM

Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani, chief of the Bangladesh National Awami Party, today warns the big powers against any machinations against Bangladesh's independence. Addressing a public meeting at Circuit House Maidan in Khulna he says that the people who won Bangladesh at such a heavy price will not only defend its independence but will establish a society free from exploitation as well. He further says that his party will wholeheartedly support the government under the leadership of Bangabandhu for implementing socialism in the country and to eliminate exploitation.

**50,000 TONNES OF CEMENT FROM INDIA FINALISED** Arrangements for the import of 50,000 tonnes of cement from India under Tk 25 crore commodity aid pledged by India to Bangladesh has been finalised. Shipment of the commodity will begin by the end of this month. There is a scarcity of cement all over the country and traders who stock cement are charging exorbitantly high prices. In this situation the construction work both in the public and private sectors have been greatly hampered.

**SOURCES: April 24, 1972 issues of Bangladesh Observer, Dainik Bangla and Ittefaq**

## Nasa finds earth-like

FROM PAGE 12

undiscovered planet.

In fact, it is the most similar to Earth of any planet discovered by the Kepler space telescope, in terms of its size and estimated temperature. While other exoplanets may be more similar in size or temperature, no world has been discovered that has quite such a combination of those two qualities, as well as lying in the habitable zone.

The planet is 300 light-years from us, just a little larger than our Earth and receives about 75 percent of the light that we get from our own Sun. That means the temperature could be similar, too, allowing for the conditions required for life.

Scientists are concerned, however, that its star is a red dwarf, unlike our own more stable Sun. Such stars are known for throwing out stellar flare-ups that could destroy any potential life before it takes hold on the planet.

Scientists now hope to learn more about the planet, including any information about its atmosphere and to get more specific knowledge of its size and conditions.

"This intriguing, distant world gives us even greater hope that a second Earth lies among the stars, waiting to be found," said Thomas Zurbuchen, associate administrator of Nasa's Science Mission Directorate in Washington.

"The data gathered by missions like Kepler and our Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS) will continue to yield amazing discoveries as the science community refines its abilities to look for promising planets year after year."

## 10-month-old tests positive

FROM PAGE 12

on the day, he added.

The 10-month-old boy is the youngest victim of covid-19 in the region. Earlier, a six-year-old was tested positive, the civil surgeon said.

The baby has been undergoing treatment at Chattogram Medical College Hospital since Saturday. After receiving the result, health officials shifted him to Chattogram General Hospital, he added.

Meanwhile, the healthcare workers were trying to identify from whom or where the baby contracted the virus.

"We have come to know that his father is an expatriate working in a Middle Eastern country, but he did not visit the country recently," said the civil surgeon.

Contacted, Dr Jamal Mostafa, focal person of Covid-19 treatment in Chattogram General Hospital, said they collected samples of the baby's mother.

With that baby, a total of 27 coronavirus patients have been undergoing treatment in Chattogram General Hospital, he said.

## 'Drug dealer' killed

FROM PAGE 12

adding that after the miscreants fled, Ekramul was found lying on the ground with bullet injuries.

He was pronounced dead by doctors when he was taken to Joypurhat Modern Hospital, the ASP said.

The body was sent to a morgue for autopsy, he added.

## 3 arrested for stealing rice

FROM PAGE 12

Against this backdrop, the authorities are carrying out drives against those involved in irregularities.

Law enforcers and administration officials have recovered about 319 tonnes of rice, 5 tonnes of sugar, 8,090 litres of edible oil and 25 sacks of chickpea in different districts since March 30. They also arrested 59 people in this connection, according to media reports.

In Noakhali, a team of the local administration recovered 459 kg rice from several houses in Nobipur union of Senbagh upazila on Tuesday evening. The rice was meant for sale to the poor at Tk 10 a kg under the government's Food-Friendly Programme.

Two AL men were also arrested during the drive, led by Khemalika Chakma, assistant commissioner (land) of the upazila.

The arrestees are Shajahan Khan Saju, general secretary of Nobipur union AL, and Ismail Hossain, member of Senbagh upazila AL.

In Mymensingh, the Rab seized 42 litres of soyabean oil and 67 empty bottles of soyabean oil from two shops in the city's Akua Chukaitola area on Tuesday evening. The edible oil was meant for sale by the state-owned Trading Corporation of Bangladesh at fair price.

Owners of the two shops -- Md Fazlul haque, 49, and Md Helal Uddin, 42, -- were arrested, said Hafizul Islam Babu, senior assistant superintendent of police (ASP) of Rab-14.

The two were handed over to Kotwali

## 6 more die after showing Covid-19

FROM PAGE 12

Foundation as per the guidelines set by the World Health Organization," the civil surgeon said.

At the isolation unit of Bogura's Mohammad Ali Hospital, which is dedicated for coronavirus patients, a 45-year-old man died with Covid-19 symptoms on Tuesday evening.

He had been suffering from fever, cough and shortness of breath since last Friday and died around 5:00pm, an hour after he was taken to the hospital, said Shafique Amin Kajal, residential medical officer of the hospital.

In Satkhira, two people died with Covid-19 like symptoms on Tuesday

morning.

One of them was a night guard in Tala upazila and the other a college teacher in Ashashuni upazila, a correspondent from Satkhira reported.

Samples of the deceased and eight of their family members have been collected and sent to Khulna Medical College Hospital for covid-19 tests, Hussain Shawkat, civil surgeon of the district, said.

A 27-year-old woman died with coronavirus-like symptoms in Jamalpur municipality area on Monday night.

The woman had recently returned home from her workplace in Narayanganj, said Shafiquzzaman, deputy civil surgeon of Jamalpur.

### RFP Ref. No.: LRPS- BAN-2020- 9157746

**Request for Proposal (RFP): Construction, Vertical Extension and renovation of primary and pre-primary classrooms in government primary schools, 2 Upazilla resource centers and 1 Upazilla primary education office at different sub-districts (8) of Cox's Bazar District, Bangladesh under district primary education office (Lot - 1 to 8).**

UNICEF-Bangladesh is inviting interested companies with a strong record and credibility of providing the above required service. To receive the detailed scope of work and procedure to submit the bid response, please email to "supplybangladesh@unicef.org"

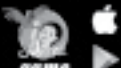
Pre-bid Meeting date: **Monday, 4 May 2020; Time: 11:00 Hrs**

The deadline to submit proposal is **Monday, 18th May 2020; Time: 12:00 Hrs**

**Please note UNICEF does not charge any fee at any stage of solicitation process.**

www.unicef.org/bd

unicef for every child



Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh					
Directorate General of Family Planning					
Mohammadpur Fertility Services & Training Centre and 100 Bedded MCH Hospital					
Aurangzeb Road, Mohammadpur, Dhaka-1207					
Ref No. DGFP/MFSTC/PP-DEV/CCSDP/1145/2019-2020/986			Dated: 21/04/2020		
<b>Invitation for Tenders (Goods) (2019-2020)</b>					
Sealed tenders are hereby invited as per "PPR-2008" from the eligible tenderers as defined in the tender document for the undermentioned goods as per terms and conditions stated below:					
1	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.			
2	Agency	Mohammadpur Fertility Services & Training Centre and 100 Bedded MCH Hospital, DGFP.			
3	Procuring entity name	Director, Mohammadpur Fertility Services & Training Centre and 100 Bedded MCH Hospital, DGFP.			
4	Procuring entity code	N/A.			
5	Procuring entity district	Dhaka.			
6	Invitation for	1. Supply of MSS (lot-1) under package-1. 2. Supply of Consumable Stores (lot-1) under package 2.			
7	Invitation Ref No.	No. 986			
8	Date	21-April-2020.			
9	Procurement method	OTM.			
10	Budget and source of funds	Development Budget (GOB) as per released fund.			
11	Development partner	N/A.			
12	Project/programme code	N/A.			
13	Project/programme name	CCSDP under HPNSP.			
14	Tender package No.	1. DGFP/MFSTC/cocdev/1/2019-2020/ 2. DGFP/MFSTC/cocdev/2/2019-2020/			
15	Tender package name	1. Supply of MSS (lot-1) under package 1. 2. Supply of Consumable Stores (lot-1) under package 2.			
16	Tender publication date	21-April-2020.			
17	Tender last selling date	17-May-2020.			
18	Tender closing date and time	18-May-2020 at 1:00pm.			
19	Tender opening date and time	18-May-2020 at 1:45pm.			
20	Name & addresses of the offices	<b>Selling &amp; receiving tender document:</b> 1. At the Office of the Director, Mohammadpur Fertility Services & Training Centre and 100 Bedded MCH Hospital, Aurangzeb Road, Mohammadpur, Dhaka-1207. 2. At the Office of the Line Director, CCSDP Unit (12th Floor), Directorate General of Family Planning, 6, Kawan Bazar, Dhaka-1215. <b>Opening tender document:</b> 1. At the Office of the Director, Mohammadpur Fertility Services & Training Centre and 100 Bedded MCH Hospital, Aurangzeb Road, Mohammadpur, Dhaka-1207.			
21	Brief eligibility & qualification of tenderer	The tenderer shall have a minimum of 5 (five) years of overall experience in the supply of goods and related services. The tenderer shall have successfully completed minimum 1 (one) number of supply contract of similar goods and related services within last 3 (three) years i.e. years counting backward from the date of publication of IFT in the newspaper and also as described in tender document.			
22	Brief description of goods	1. Supply of MSS (lot-1) under package 1 and 2. Supply of Consumable Stores (lot-1) under package 2 (detailed in tender schedule).			
23	Brief description of related services	1 (one) year warranty of goods as described in tender document.			
24	Price of tender document	Tk 1000/- (Tk one thousand) for each tender (per package) should be paid in Bangladesh Bank through Treasury Challan in Code No. 1-2781-0000-2366 in favour of Director General, DGFP, 6, Kawan Bazar, Dhaka-1215 and online verification copy must be submitted.			
25	Pkg. No.	Identification	Location	Tender security amount (Tk)	Completion time in weeks
1.	DGFP/MFSTC/019-2020/	1. Supply of MSS (lot-1) under package 1	At MFSTC, Mohammadpur, Dhaka	10,000/- (ten thousand) per lot	4 weeks after the signing of the contract
2.	DGFP/MFSTC/019-2020/	2. Supply of Consumable Stores (lot-1) under package 2	At MFSTC, Mohammadpur, Dhaka	10,000/- (ten thousand) per lot	4 weeks after the signing of the contract
26	Name of official inviting tender	Dr. Md. Muniruzzaman Siddiqui.			
27	Designation of official inviting tender	Director.			
28	Address of official inviting tender	Mohammadpur Fertility Services & Training Centre and 100 Bedded MCH Hospital, Aurangzeb Road, Mohammadpur, Dhaka-1207.			
29	Contact details of official inviting tender	Phone: 9113814, 9131381.			
30	The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject any/all tender(s) without assigning any reason whatsoever. If schedule submission and opening is interrupted due to unavoidable circumstances, it will duly be conducted in the next working day. All other terms and conditions will remain same.				
<b>Dr. Md. Muniruzzaman Siddiqui</b>					
Director					
MFSTC					
Ph: 9113814 (Off)					
GD-751					



**CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC**

**LATEST UPDATES**

**MORE THAN 2.5M CASES**

2592,845, infections have now been reported and at least 179,646 people have died, according to an AFP tally at 1800 GMT yesterday based on official sources. The United States has the most deaths of any country with 45,150. Italy is the second hardest-hit country, with 24,648 dead. Spain follows with 21,717, then France with 20,829 and Britain with 18,141.

**US STATE SUES CHINA'S LEADERS**

The US state of Missouri on Tuesday sued China's leadership over the pandemic, seeking damages over what it described as deliberate deception and insufficient action to stop the pandemic. The first-of-a-kind state lawsuit comes amid calls in Congress to punish China and a campaign by President Donald Trump to focus on Beijing's role, amid criticism of his own handling of the crisis.

**TARAWIH AT HOLY MOSQUES**

Saudi king Salman approved performing Tarawih in the two holy mosques and reducing them with the continued suspension of entry of pilgrims, the Presidency of the Two Holy Mosques' Affairs said in a statement yesterday. Saudi Arabia plans to ease curfew hours it imposed on several cities during the month of Ramadan.

**HUMAN TRIAL OF VACCINE IN UK**

Human trials of a potential coronavirus vaccine developed at the University of Oxford are to begin on Thursday, health secretary Matt Hancock has announced. And one member of the Oxford team said that if trials are successful, millions of doses of vaccine could be available for use by the autumn of this year.

**ITALY SIGNALS LONGER LOCKDOWN**

Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte prepared Italians for a longer lockdown Tuesday despite a second successive drop in the number of registered coronavirus cases. Italy is approaching a fateful decision on whether to lift stay-at-home orders and reopen businesses for the first time in nearly two months on May 4.

**SPAIN TO LET CHILDREN TAKE WALKS**

Spain will allow children to go outside for walks from next weekend in a loosening of the country's strict coronavirus lockdown. The change came hours after the government first announced that young children, who are currently banned from leaving home under any circumstances, would be allowed to accompany their parents on essential trips.

**SCARE IN SOUTH ASIA**

About 500 people entered self-isolation in staff quarters of India's presidential palace on Tuesday after a person was tested positive of the virus. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and his wife tested negative for the coronavirus, his spokesman said, after at least 20 palace officials were infected last week. In Pakistan, Prime Minister Imran Khan will undergo testing after it was confirmed that the head of the country's biggest charity organisation, Faisal Edhi, whom he met last week, had contracted COVID-19.

SOURCE: AFP



Aerial view of a cemetery dedicated for coronavirus patients shows workers unloading a coffin from a truck in Manaus, Amazonas state, Brazil, on Tuesday. PHOTO: AFP

**HYDROXYCHLOROQUINE IN TREATING COVID-19**

**Study reports no benefit, shows higher death rate**

AFP, Washington

A malaria drug widely touted as a potential cure for COVID-19 showed no benefit against the disease over standard care -- and was in fact associated with more deaths, the biggest study of its kind showed Tuesday.

The US government funded analysis of how American military veterans fared on hydroxychloroquine was posted on a medical preprint site and has not yet been peer reviewed.

The experiment had several important limitations, but adds to a growing body of doubt over the efficacy of the medicine that counts President Donald Trump and right wing news channel Fox News among its biggest backers.

Researchers looked at the medical records of 368 veterans hospitalized nationwide who either died or were discharged by April 11. Death rates for patients on hydroxychloroquine were 28 percent, compared to 22 percent when it was taken with the anti-biotic azithromycin -- a combination favored by French scientist Didier Raoult, whose study on the subject in March triggered a surge of global interest in the drug.

The death rate for those receiving only standard care was 11 percent. Hydroxychloroquine, with or without azithromycin, was more likely to be prescribed to patients with more severe illness, but the authors found that increased mortality persisted even after they statistically adjusted for higher rates of use.

They have received significant attention during the novel coronavirus pandemic and have been shown in lab settings to block the virus from entering cells and prevent it replicating -- but in the pharmaceutical world, "in vitro" promise often fails to translate into "in vivo" success.

The true answer can only be determined through very large, randomized clinical trials that assign patients to receive either the drug under investigation or a placebo. Several of these are underway, including notably in the United States, Europe, Canada and the United Kingdom.

**Not ventilators, lack of oxygen will kill more**

Experts warn of oxygen shortages in poorer nations

AFP, Paris

As the coronavirus pandemic bears down on vulnerable nations in Africa and South Asia, experts say there are only weeks to help fill chronic shortages of what medicines need to help people breathe.

Not ventilators, but oxygen itself.

Medical oxygen is a core component of the life-saving therapies hospitals are giving patients with severe cases of COVID-19, as the world waits for scientists to find vaccines and treatments.

The pandemic has pushed even the most advanced health systems to their limits, with concerns often focused on the supply of mechanical ventilators at the high-tech end of the breathing assistance spectrum.

But experts fear this has distorted the narrative about what constitutes an effective response, giving the wrong blueprint for nations with under-funded health systems.

"The reality is that oxygen is the only therapy that will save lives in Africa and Asia-Pacific now," said Hamish Graham, a consultant paediatrician and research fellow at Melbourne University Hospital and International Centre for Child Health.

"I fear that undue focus on ventilators without

fixing oxygen systems will kill."

One report in February on thousands of cases in China's epidemic found that nearly 20 percent of patients with COVID-19 required oxygen. Of those, 14 percent needed some form of oxygen therapy, while five percent required mechanical ventilation.

In severe cases of COVID-19, the virus attacks the patient's lungs in the form of pneumonia, causing inflammation that prevents them from absorbing oxygen. This can cause their blood oxygen levels to fall well below normal, a condition known as hypoxaemia that can deprive critical organs of oxygen and "substantially" increase the risk of death, Graham said.

A 2018 report published by Every Breath Counts, a coalition of UN agencies, businesses, donors and aid agencies, said supplies of oxygen were "severely limited" in countries across South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa.

"These health systems in Africa and South Asia could not be more exposed to a pandemic like this one because they haven't been investing in respiratory therapy," Leith Greenslade, the lead coordinator for Every Breath Counts, told AFP.

"This is what terrifies me."

**India halts use of 'faulty' kits**

Moves to procure more kits from Korean firms, says 69 pc patients asymptomatic as report says epidemic could peak by mid-May

NDTV, INDIAN EXPRESS, TNN

Following complaints that the rapid antibody test kits are showing varying levels of accuracy, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has asked all states not to use the serological COVID-19 tests for the next two days, pending field validation by its teams.

"We have been getting complaints that when the serological tests are being done on the blood samples of people who have already tested positive in the RT-PCR test, the accuracy ranges from 6% to 71%. This needs to be investigated," Dr R R Gangakhedkar, head of epidemiology and infectious diseases at ICMR, said.

"This is a first generation test developed in just three-and-a-half months and needs refinement, yet the variations cannot be ignored. We will send personnel from eight institutes to the field to validate the kits. Meanwhile, we have advised the states not to use



the tests for the next two days till we come out with an advisory," he said.

Beijing last week denied that the kits were not up to mark, saying they attach "great importance to the export of medical products".

The rapid test, which uses blood samples instead of swabs, checks for the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV2) by ascertaining whether the person has developed antibodies against it. It takes less than 30 minutes. The swab test or known as the RT-PCR, on the other hand, comprises two steps -- a screening test and a confirmatory test

-- and takes 8-9 hours.

Indian health ministry has reiterated that the RT-PCR is the 'gold standard' for COVID-19 diagnosis. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has said that the rapid test should be used only in research settings and not for the purpose of controlling the epidemic in the field.

With Chinese testing kits having come under the scanner, India is stepping up procurement and production of testing kits from South Korean companies.

Officials on Tuesday said that a South Korean company, SD Biosensor, has agreed to make and supply 5 lakh rapid antibody testing kits

The coronavirus epidemic could peak in India by the middle of May and gradually peter out after that, a modelling exercise by Times Network in partnership with global consulting firm Protiviti, has predicted.



**Trump wishes for Kim's recovery**

AFP, Washington

US President Donald Trump wished North Korea's Kim Jong Un "well" on Tuesday but stopped short of directly commenting on the reclusive leader's health amid reports he was in "grave danger" after undergoing a surgery. "I can only say this: I wish him well," Trump told reporters at the White House, noting the "good relationship" he shares with the North Korean leader.

**2019 was Europe's hottest year ever**

AFP, Paris

Last year was the hottest in history across Europe as temperature records were shattered by a series of extreme heatwaves across the continent, the EU's Copernicus Climate Change Service said yesterday. Overall, temperatures across Europe have been 2C hotter during the last five years than they were in the latter half of the 19th Century, C3S's data showed. 2019 globally was second-hottest only to 2016, a year that experienced an exceptionally strong El Nino warming event.

**Iran launches military satellite**

AFP, Tehran

Iran's Revolutionary Guards announced they had successfully launched the country's first military satellite yesterday, at a time of fresh tensions with US forces in the Gulf. It said the satellite -- dubbed the Nour -- had been launched from the Qassed two-stage launcher from the Markazi desert. The rocket bore the name 'Qassed' which means messenger. Its fuselage also had a Kuranic inscription.



Israeli forces detain the mother of an alleged Palestinian assailant near the Jewish settlement of Maale Adumim in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, yesterday. A Palestinian man was shot dead yesterday after he hit an Israeli police officer with a van at a West Bank checkpoint and then stabbed him with a pair of scissors, police said. PHOTO: REUTERS

**Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh**  
 Directorate General of Family Planning  
 Mohammadpur Fertility Services & Training Centre  
 and 100 Bedded MCH Hospital  
 Aurangzeb Road, Mohammadpur, Dhaka-1207

Ref. No. DGFP/MFSTC/PPP-DEV(MCH)-1144/2019-2020/984 Dated: 21/04/2020

**Invitation for Tenders (Goods) (2019-2020)**

Sealed tenders are hereby invited as per "PPR-2008" from the eligible tenderers as defined in the tender document for the undermentioned goods as per terms and conditions stated below:

1	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.				
2	Agency	Mohammadpur Fertility Services & Training Centre and 100 Bedded MCH Hospital, DGFP.				
3	Procuring entity name	Director, Mohammadpur Fertility Services & Training Centre and 100 Bedded MCH Hospital, DGFP.				
4	Procuring entity code	N/A.				
5	Procuring entity district	Dhaka.				
6	Invitation for	1. Supply of Bedding (lot-1) under package 1. 2. Supply of MSS (lot-1) under package 2. 3. Supply of Consumable Stores (lot-1) under package 3.				
7	Invitation Ref. No.	No. 984				
8	Date	21-April-2020				
9	Procurement method	OTM.				
10	Budget and source of funds	Development Budget (GOB) as per released fund.				
11	Development partner	N/A.				
12	Project/programme code	N/A.				
13	Project/programme name	MC-RAH under HPNSP.				
14	Tender package No.	1. DGFP/MFSTC/mchdev/1/2019-20/ 2. DGFP/MFSTC/mchdev/2/2019-20/ 3. DGFP/MFSTC/mchdev/5/2019-20/				
15	Tender package name	1. Supply of Bedding (lot-1) under package 1. 2. Supply of MSS (lot-1) under package 2. 3. Supply of Consumable Stores (lot-1) under package 3.				
16	Tender publication date	21-April-2020.				
17	Tender last selling date	17-May-2020.				
18	Tender closing date and time	18-May-2020 at 1:00pm.				
19	Tender opening date and time	18-May-2020 at 1:45pm.				
20	Name & addresses of the offices	<b>Selling &amp; receiving tender document:</b> 1. At the Office of the Director, Mohammadpur Fertility Services & Training Centre and 100 Bedded MCH Hospital, Aurangzeb Road, Mohammadpur, Dhaka-1207. 2. At the Office of the Line Director, CCSDP Unit (12th Floor), Directorate General of Family Planning, 6, Kawan Bazar, Dhaka-1215. <b>Opening tender document:</b> 1. At the Office of the Director, Mohammadpur Fertility Services & Training Centre and 100 Bedded MCH Hospital, Aurangzeb Road, Mohammadpur, Dhaka-1207.				
21	Brief eligibility & qualification of tenderer	The tenderer shall have a minimum of 5 (five) years of overall experience in the supply of goods and related services. The tenderer shall have successfully completed minimum 1 (one) number of supply contract of similar goods and related services within last 3 (three) years i.e. years counting backward from the date of publication of IFT in the newspaper and also as described in tender document.				
22	Brief description of goods	1. Supply of Bedding (lot-1) under package 1. 2. Supply of MSS (lot-1) under package 2 and 3. Supply of Consumable Stores (lot-1) under package 3 (detailed in tender schedule).				
23	Brief description of related services	1 (one) year warranty of goods as described in tender document.				
24	Price of tender document	Tk 1000/- (Tk one thousand) for each tender (per package) should be paid in Bangladesh Bank through Treasury Challan in Code No. 1-2781-0000-2366 in favour of Director General, DGFP, 6, Kawan Bazar, Dhaka-1215 and online verification copy must be submitted.				
25	Pkg. No.	Identification	Location	Tender security amount (Tk)	Completion time in weeks	Remarks
1.	DGFP/MFST C/mchdev/1/2 019-2020/	1. Supply of Bedding (lot-1) under package 1	At MFSTC, Mohammadpur, Dhaka	10,000/- (ten thousand) per lot	4 weeks after the signing of the contract	* N.B. Tender security for each lot should be submitted in the form of Bank Draft/Pay Order from any scheduled Bank of Bangladesh in favour of Director, Mohammadpur, Fertility Services & Training Centre, Aurangzeb Road, Mohammadpur, Dhaka-1207
2.	DGFP/MFST C/mchdev/2/ 2019-2020/	2. Supply of MSS (lot-1) under package 2	At MFSTC, Mohammadpur, Dhaka	15,000/- (fifteen thousand) per lot	4 weeks after the signing of the contract	
3.	DGFP/MFST C/mchdev/5/ 2019-20/	3. Supply of Consumable Stores (lot-1) under package 3	At MFSTC, Mohammadpur, Dhaka	10,000/- (ten thousand) per lot	4 weeks after the signing of the contract	
26	Name of official inviting tender	Dr. Md. Muniruzzaman Siddiqui.				
27	Designation of official inviting tender	Director.				
28	Address of official inviting tender	Mohammadpur Fertility Services & Training Centre and 100 Bedded MCH Hospital, Aurangzeb Road, Mohammadpur, Dhaka-1207.				
29	Contact details of official inviting tender	Phone: 9113814, 9131381.				
30	The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject any/all tender(s) without assigning any reason whatsoever. If schedule submission and opening is interrupted due to unavoidable circumstances, it will duly be conducted in the next working day. All other terms and conditions will remain same.					

Dr. Md. Muniruzzaman Siddiqui  
 Director  
 MFSTC  
 Ph: 9113814 (Off)

GD-750



STOCKS		COMMODITIES		ASIAN MARKETS				CURRENCIES			
DSEX	CSCX	Gold	Oil	MUMBAI	TOKYO	SINGAPORE	SHANGHAI	USD	EUR	GBP	CNY
Closed	Closed	\$1,684.80 (per ounce)	\$19.43 (per barrel)	▲ 2.42%	▼ 0.74%	▼ 0.07%	▲ 0.60%	BUY TK 83.95	90.05	102.27	11.69
				1,379.55	19,137.95	2,550.04	2,843.98	SELL TK 84.95	93.85	106.07	12.29

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## TAMING CORONAVIRUS RAMPAGE

# Guideline on the way for garment factory reopening

REFAVET ULLAH MIRDHA

The Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments (DIFE) has been making a guideline for reopening the garment factories, most of which have been asked to shut down by the sector's apex trade body on April 11.

The factories were supposed to reopen on April 26. But given the exponential rise in cases of COVID-19 and the proximity in which the sector's 4 million-odd workers operate, the factories were asked to abandon the plan.

The guideline will mainly instruct the factory managements on how to run the units following health safety measures, Shibnath Roy, inspector general of the DIFE told The Daily Star over the phone.

He has discussed the health issues of the garment workers and the reopening of the factories with the experts of the International Labour Organisation.

While Roy did not say specifically when the factories will reopen, he said the factory managements will have to follow the proposed guidelines.

The DIFE in its all three notices since March 27 said only those factories with work orders from international retailers or are engaged in the production of personal protective equipment and coronavirus prevention-related medicines can run their units by taking adequate health safety measures.

Once the government announces the return of normalcy the factory managements may reopen their units, Roy also said.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, the sector's apex trade body, said the date for restarting the production line will depend solely on the coronavirus situation in the country.

"We are still working with the safety



Garment workers wait for their salary in front of a factory in the Ashulia industrial belt on the outskirts of Dhaka. The photo was taken recently.

protocols and also expecting a clear guideline from government," it said on Tuesday.

Labour leaders though said the issue is a complex one.

On one hand, some buyers are putting pressure on the factory owners for executing their work orders, and on the other hand, the number of infected patients is also increasing in the country every day, said Nazma Akter, president of Sammilito Garment Stramiki Federation.

The decision to reopen the factories is in the state's hand, but the government, factory owners and buyers

should show responsible behaviour towards the workers.

Akter suggested for wider discussion involving owners, union leaders, government higher-ups and the related experts before making any call on the start date.

"It will not be wise to reopen the factories now. Every day the tally is going up," said Amirul Haque Amin, president of the National Garment Workers Federation.

Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of Policy Research Institute, advocated for gradual reopening of the factories, starting from next month.

"We have to open the factories as almost all the affected countries have already opened their economies. We will

be lagging if we do not open the factories soon," he said, citing that competing countries like China, Vietnam, Cambodia and Turkey have already opened up their economies.

However, the health and safety measures should be followed carefully, he said, adding that the factory managements can make preparations for those from now on.

For instance, there can be several exit and entry gates in the factories. The workers will enter through one gate and will exit through another, a move that can prevent overcrowding.

Moreover, regular handwashing and cleaning of floors and washrooms while wearing hand gloves must be enforced, he added.

# Grameenphone can't stop raking in profits

Q1 profit up 25.8pc riding on 4G conversion, efficiency

MUHAMMAD ZAHIDUL ISLAM and AHSAN HABIB

Grameenphone's net profits soared 25.8 per cent year-on-year to Tk 1,070 crore in the first quarter of the year driven by data revenue and cost-efficient programmes despite operating an increasingly challenging environment.

The carrier's profit margin was 29.6 per cent in January to March, the highest in recent times, according to the company's quarterly financial statement, which was published yesterday.

Earnings per share of the country's largest-listed company stood at Tk 7.92, up from Tk 6.92 in the same quarter a year earlier.

Grameenphone reported Tk 3,620 crore in revenue, registering 3.7 per cent year-on-year growth. It earned Tk 850 crore from the data segment, which posted 24.6 per cent growth, according to the report.

A huge 4G conversion took place in the quarter pushing up data revenue growth, said a company official. In the quarter, 23 lakh internet users who were using 3G service converted to 4G.

The operator though continued to face challenges in the quarter, GP said.

The challenge is related to the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission's audit claim of Tk 12,580 crore.

"The restrictions placed on us by our regulator by not issuing NOCs (approvals) lasted until March, which impacted our planned investment in the country," said Yasir Azman, chief executive officer of Grameenphone, in a statement.

Additionally, the company faced scarcity of numbers from the beginning of the quarter that negatively impacted the subscriber base, he said.

"Despite the challenges, our focus remained on market execution and maintaining our network leadership," said Azman, adding that the operator's drive on 4G conversion led to 1.42 crore 4G users at the end of the quarter.

The operator faced several challenges from the BTRC, centring the audit claims and its refusal to give approvals, even for network expansion and maintenance.

Despite the restrictions, the leading operator invested Tk 40 crore for network coverage and added 197 new 4G sites to its network.

"Grameenphone is a well-performing company, so its good performance was expected," said Ershad Hossain, managing director of City Bank Capital.

As the novel coronavirus is spreading, the use of telecom service is also rising.

As a result, the company will perform better in the coming days, he said, adding that had there been no audit-

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# Remittance to nosedive 22pc in 2020: WB

REJAUUL KARIM BYRON and MD FAZLUR RAHMAN

Remittance flow to Bangladesh may plunge by as much as 22 per cent in 2020 because of the fallout of the global coronavirus pandemic, in a major blow to the economy, said the World Bank yesterday.

Money sent by the migrant workers is projected to fall to \$14 billion this year, said the multilateral lender in its Migration and Development Brief.

Remittance is Bangladesh's second-largest source of foreign earnings after the garment industry.

The inflows from the migrant workers, which rose 21.49 per cent to \$11.05 billion in the first seven months of the fiscal year on the back of the 2 per cent cash incentive, had kept the growth momentum until January this year.

But the momentum came crashing in the following months as the impact of the deadly bug started to become evident. In March, remittance fell 12 per cent year-on-year to \$1.28 billion, the lowest in 15 months.

Coronavirus, which originated in China in December last year, has affected both international and internal migration in South Asia.

As the early phases of the crisis unfolded, many international migrants, especially from the Gulf countries, returned to countries such as India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, the WB said.

Gulf countries, which include Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Kuwait, are home to 75 per cent of about 1 crore Bangladeshis living abroad.

Since the middle of February, about

2 lakh migrant workers returned home, with most arriving from Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Malaysia, according to Shariful Islam Hasan, head of BRAC's migration programme.

Remittances to South Asia are projected to decline 22 per cent to \$109 billion in 2020, following the growth of 6.1 per cent in 2019.

Falling oil prices will affect remittance outflows from the GCC countries and Malaysia and the coronavirus-induced economic slowdown from the US, the UK and the EU to South Asia.

Apart from the GCC countries, a major

chunk of Bangladesh's migrant workers lives and work in Malaysia and Singapore, while the US and the UK are respectively home to 5 lakh and 10 lakh expatriate professionals.

"The ongoing economic recession caused by COVID-19 is taking a severe toll on the ability to send money home and makes it all the more vital that we shorten the time to recovery for advanced economies," said World Bank Group President David Malpass in a press release.

The coronavirus-related global slowdown and travel restrictions will also

affect migratory movements, and this is likely to keep remittances subdued even in 2021, the brief said.

In the past, remittances have been counter-cyclical, where workers send more money home in times of crisis and hardship back home. This time, however, the pandemic has affected all countries, creating additional uncertainties.

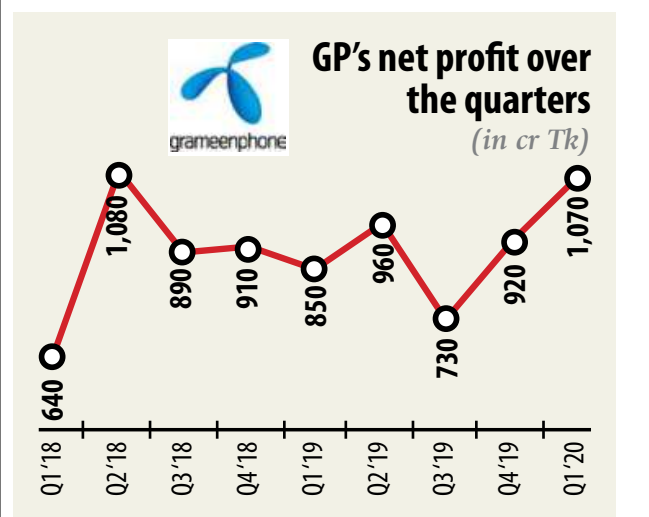
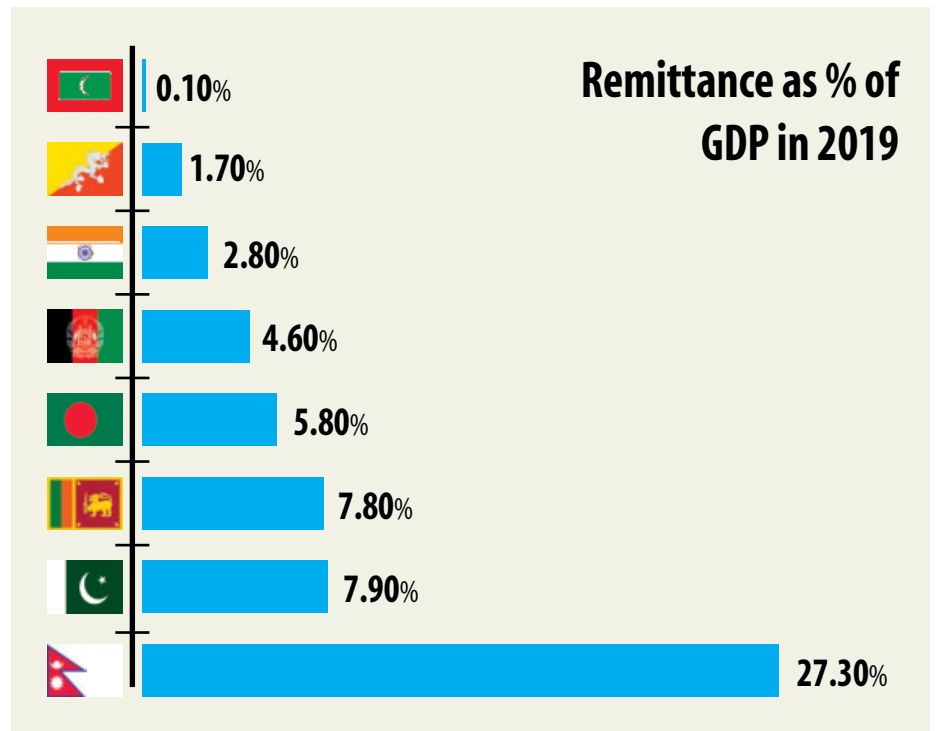
"Effective social protection systems are crucial to safeguarding the poor and vulnerable during this crisis in both developing countries as well as advanced countries. In host countries, social protection interventions should also support migrant populations," said Michal Rutkowski, global director of the social protection and jobs global practice at the WB.

So far, the WB said, government policy responses to the coronavirus crisis have largely excluded migrants and their families back home.

But there is a strong case for including migrants in the near-term health strategies of all countries, given the externalities associated with the health status of an entire population in the face of a highly contagious pandemic.

"Quick actions that make it easier to send and receive remittances can provide much-needed support to the lives of migrants and their families," said Dilip Ratha, lead author of the Brief.

Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal has urged the Asian Development Bank to provide another \$150 million, which would be used to create jobs for the local Bangladeshis and migrant workers who have lost jobs as well as rehabilitate the micro, cottage, small and medium entrepreneurs.



related disputes with the government, its share prices could be Tk 500.

"GP's competitors are still far behind." The company's share was traded at Tk 238 on March 25, the last trading day before the country was placed on lockdown. The market has not opened since.

"Good performance of a stock is a good sign for the market and its higher profits will positively impact the market," Hossain added.

The profit growth of the company is impressive despite losing about 6 lakh subscribers during the quarter due to the government's restrictions on the issuance of new connections, said Md Moniruzzaman, managing director of IDLC Investments.

The company witnessed negative growth in voice revenue but managed to grow data revenue and had an improvement in operating efficiency, which contributed to the bottom line remarkably.

The company's income is yet to take a hit from the payment of Tk 1,000 crore to the government against the audit claim as per court order, he said.

However, the challenges remain on whether it will be able to get in the government's good books and settle unresolved court cases quickly.

The telecom company has the potential to grow faster but it has to pay huge attention to its dispute with the government rather than to its competitors, said a stockbroker preferring anonymity.

The government should emphasise on ensuring that the operator provides better services at competitive rates, he added.

Grameenphone's total number of active connections stands at 7.53 crore, 4.04 crore of which are using the internet.

Its users consume 2,225 megabytes of data every month on an average, up from 1,418 MB a year ago.



## TAMING CORONAVIRUS RAMPAGE

# CHT fruit growers given short end of the stick

JAGARAN CHAKMA

If you have had a pineapple recently, there's a pretty good chance it came from the Chittagong Hill Tracts. That's because the three districts account for some 60 per cent of the juicy fruit consumed in the country.

The same goes for bananas. A wide array of seasonal fruits including papaya, mango, jackfruit, litchi and watermelon have been the choice for mass-scale cultivation in Rangamati, Bandarban and Khagrachhari for the past decade.

And, thanks to the use of organic fertilisers, there is now a consensus that the fruits from the region have an amplified taste.

The harvest of pineapple and watermelon have already started while in the coming months plucking would start for mango, jackfruit and litchi. April, May and June are the busiest of times for harvests and sales.

The Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) expects farmers to maintain bumper productions as in previous years for the presence of favourable weather.

With their main markets being ever-growing cities like Dhaka, Chattogram, Sylhet and Narayanganj, there was supposed to be no issues of farmers unable to get just prices.

Yet that is exactly what is happening, now exacerbated by the global coronavirus pandemic.

That is because, when it comes to the trade of the fruits there is still a reliance on an old practice of middlemen.

These traders go out to the cultivators some time before harvests and settle on a price with the farmers for all of their produce. They take the produce to the cities to sell off to smaller traders.

This practice limits offers available to farmers while urbanites continue to dole out high prices, meaning a substantial chunk of the value of the fruits is being pocketed somewhere along the way.

Take the case of Ananta Chakma.

Though he had a good harvest cultivating pineapples on around five acres of land in Chowdhurychhara village under Naniarchar upazila of Rangamati, he believes he would just be able to recover his production cost.

He said the middlemen always offer rock bottom prices citing low demand and now



Pineapple growers in the Chittagong Hill Tracts are not getting fair prices due to a thin presence of customers in the local markets. The photo was taken recently from Banarupa Samata Ghat in Rangamati. ANVIL CHAKMA

were blaming the countrywide shutdown centring the novel coronavirus pandemic.

He expects to make sales of about Tk 5 lakh this year.

"I could have earned at least Tk 6 lakh to Tk 7 lakh," Chakma said.

Another good example came from Basanti Talukder who cultivated bananas on 2.5 acres land in Perachhara village.

The joy of a bumper harvest has been dampened by a lack of buyers. She is even unsure of whether she would be able to sell the bulk of her produce.

Talukder said this time around there were even not enough hands available to get the bananas to the market as people were avoiding social contact to prevent the spread of the virus.

The Daily Star got in touch with one of

the middlemen who preferred not to be named.

He said truck rental costs had gone up by Tk 10,000 while police were extorting traders at loading points.

Accurate and comprehensive data on harvests are hard to come by for all three districts.

The DEA expects more than 2 lakh tonnes of mango to come from the three districts while another 2.5 lakh tonnes of jackfruit, 75,000 tonnes of litchi and 10 lakh tonnes of bananas.

More than 60,000 tonnes of pineapples and at least 1,000 tonnes of watermelon have been produced in Rangamati this year. In Khagrachhari, at least 25,000 tonnes of pineapples have been cultivated.

That farmers are not getting just prices from middlemen has been acknowledged

by Paban Chakma, deputy director of the DAE in Rangamati.

The DAE was providing support though police and the civil administration so that businesspeople could take their consignments to Dhaka and Chattogram smoothly.

According to Md Martuz Ali, deputy director of the DEA in Khagrachhari, the supply chain management was still properly functioning as the local administration was providing support as per directives of Prime Minister's Office.

"We are providing support directly to farmers to ensure good harvests and prices," he said.

However, he admitted that farmers in some cases might not be getting prices they had been expecting for the shutdown.

## Inmates can get funds through bKash, Nagad

MUHAMMAD ZAHIDUL ISLAM

Prisoners will now receive funds from their friends and family members through mobile financial service providers Nagad and bKash following a government move aimed at facilitating money transfer amid the countrywide lockdown.

"Since family members can't visit inmates during the crisis, we decided on this move," AKM Mostafa Kamal Pasha, inspector general of prisons, told The Daily Star over the phone.

There are 68 prisons across the country, where about 87,000 detainees currently reside.

Due to the ongoing lockdown aimed at curbing the spread of the novel coronavirus, visitation rights for inmates have been temporarily halted.

The Prisoner's Cash fund, which receives money in cash, has historically been used by detainees to pay for various services while imprisoned. This includes making phone calls and buying foods at canteens.

Although there are other viable channels, the government decided to restrict the transfer of funds to prisoners to the two services as a wider range of options would create chaos.

Nagad was chosen as it is a government initiative while bKash has been selected considering its wide presence. bKash boasts more than four crore accounts and Nagad about two crore.

The government directive, however, outlined a few conditions for the transfer of funds to prisoners.

Inmates will not be permitted to receive more than Tk 2,000 per month and the money even can't be sent in one go. This means friends or family members can only transfer a maximum Tk 1,000 at any given time within a month.

The senders will bear the cash-out charges.

After funds are transferred, the sender will have to inform the prison authorities about the transaction via a text message detailing the receiver's name, his or her father's name and home address.

The specified amount will be deposited in the Prisoner's Cash book for later use.

The home ministry also clarified how many accounts can be opened by the authorities in a prison.

If the number of detainees is within 500, one merchant account with each of the two MFS providers can be opened.

If the number of prisoners is between 501 and 1,000, two accounts can be allowed to open. Three accounts can be opened when the number ranges between 1,001 and 3,000.

If there are more than 3,000 prisoners, the authorities can open five accounts with each MFS provider.

"This is a digitalisation move that will ensure more facilities at prisons as well as for the authorities," said Tanvir Ahmed Mishuk, managing director of Nagad.

Officials from Nagad earlier urged the government to implement more MFS services considering the coronavirus pandemic.

On March 24, Nagad introduced a new service for inmates to connect with their loved ones through telephones.

"These services certainly ensure better facilities for prisoners and we will look into how they can be implemented," Pasha said.

**MFS SEES GREATER USE AMONG EXPATS**

Compared with the first three months of the year, there was a 150 per cent rise in April in the number of Bangladeshi expatriates using online money transfer services, according to a press release from bKash.

Since the start of January until April 18, Bangladeshi expatriates sent home about Tk 138 crore in remittance through bKash and this value is increasing daily, the MFS provider said.

The bulk of the amount came from Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, the Middle East, Europe and the UK.



# The development priorities now changed all on a sudden



RUSHIDAN ISLAM RAHMAN

To contain the spread of the lethal coronavirus, the government has put in place some inevitable measures like social distancing and countrywide shutdown though these may result in a downturn in economic growth.

In Bangladesh, there is no choice between saving lives and livelihoods. If these steps are not taken, the virus will spread so fast that the production activities will be disrupted.

But the most disastrous effect of lockdown is that it means loss of livelihoods of the poorest groups who face the threat of food deficit and hunger.

The government and the non-governmental organisations are taking measures to ensure the availability of food among these groups, but there is a need for vigilance around the implementation process.

The following discussion focuses on issues that are relevant not only at this moment but in the coming year or even longer.

These issues include concerns about GDP growth, how to maintain livelihoods of the poor and their employment and also the need to recognise that there are other groups for whom employment is needed.

Estimates of low GDP growth this fiscal year are coming from various quarters but the usual questions about the reasons for the downturn in the economic growth may not be relevant.

Since the growth in the first three quarters was as expected, the decline in GDP growth is obviously due to coronavirus and cannot be attributed to specific policies of the recent past.

Therefore, a debate on the extent of deceleration may not be the most urgent policy question. A comparison of growth figures among the Asian neighbours is also not as useful as has been in the past.

At this moment, a comparison must combine the growth deceleration figures with the damage done by coronavirus in terms of the share of the population infected and share of deaths.

If Bangladesh is successful in containing the infections and eliminating the other sufferings, especially food shortage and hunger, then the low GDP growth may not be a discredit.

Rather an attempt to reverse the growth

But during the next one year, the rice exporting countries will be cautious about export, and given the current uncertainty, every country will try to minimise risks related to food availability.

Bangladesh must also try to maintain food supply, especially food grain production. It is heartening that instruction has come from the top leadership to increase food production and to use all land to grow more food.



The countrywide shutdown since March 26 to flatten the spread on coronavirus has left the poor and the vulnerable, like the little girl pictured above, battling hunger. The photo was taken on Monday at the capital's Kamalapur area. ANISUR RAHMAN

scenario at the cost of faster spread of the virus and resulting deaths may not be acceptable. Of course, one needs to consider pragmatic steps to accelerate growth as and when the curve flattens.

Ensuring food security requires attention to issues beyond immediate actions to mitigate hunger. Access to adequate food by all walks of people will require adequate availability in the coming months or year at the aggregate level.

Bangladesh has been almost self-reliant in food for the last few years. In years of good harvest, the share of imported rice declines and the reverse in case of any abnormal decline in production.

Now proper implementation and monitoring are needed as accelerated agricultural growth can contribute to higher GDP growth over the next two years.

Although the upcoming boro harvest is expected to be normal, special arrangements must be made to ensure that labour is available for the harvest and post-harvest activities. Sufficient aman acreage has to be ensured as well.

If coronavirus spreads, agricultural production may continue uninterrupted, even amid social distancing.

The loss of livelihoods of the poorest is only a part of the total loss of employment and related sufferings. Many of those

who are above that level have lost their temporary jobs.

In industrial and services sectors, a bigger share of jobs is of informal and temporary nature. A large share of them have possibly lost jobs and many others will not receive salaries for the days not worked due to the shutdown.

The other categories suffering from a lack of employment are those who have entered the labour market in 2020.

Before they have secured a job, the doors of the job market have been closed and those who completed education in 2019 now have no prospect of a job. Many would have taken up overseas jobs but that route too is closed.

Whenever the economy returns to normalcy, employment creation for these groups will be a priority. While making plans for job creation, the government cannot work with past experience.

During the last decade or so, the total entrants to new labour force were in the range of 1.8 to 2 million per year of which 0.4 to 1.0 million availed overseas employment each year.

Therefore, the balance was the net addition to the domestic labour force. When the economy is back to the normal track, the net domestic labour force seeking employment will be the entire addition in a year, which is about 1.9 million-plus a backlog of new entrants of 2020.

Not the entire supply can be absorbed in a year, but definite guidelines and strategies must be adopted during those years.

Low-income households faced with a shortage of food and essentials may reduce their expenditure on education. Aggressive skill training plans for various groups may supplement the general education to take care of this problem.

The other important change to be initiated is a better healthcare system, both in terms of quality and regional dispersion within the country.

When the deadly virus will be ultimately defeated, the experience of this period is expected to open up new opportunities and the nation must be prepared to utilise these opportunities.

The writer is the executive chairperson of the Centre for Development and Employment Research

## NBR bids for faster port clearance

SOHEL PARVEZ

The revenue board yesterday directed its customs stations to facilitate clearance of all export and import consignments, moving away from its previous position to process documents for only essentials, industrial raw materials and emergency medical products.

The move comes to alleviate the acute contained congestion at the Chattogram port, leaving incoming vessels to wait for days on end to get a berth.

As of yesterday, import containers lying at the port reached 49,974 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs), against the capacity of 49,018 TEUs.

This means those who import goods for commercial purposes will be also able to clear their goods, said a senior official of the National Board of Revenue (NBR).

Since the beginning of the countrywide shutdown, the NBR included more imported products in its list to facilitate the clearance from the ports and ensure a smooth supply chain of goods in the country.

It initially asked field offices of customs at ports to keep services running at a limited capacity to facilitate the clearance of essential commodities and shipment of export items.

Later, the NBR included industrial raw materials, capital machinery and parts, agricultural equipment and components, ingredients of poultry and fish feeds and the goods imported under diplomatic privilege and brought into the country by the public, semi-government and autonomous organisations in the list of items for duty assessment and clearance.

In its order yesterday, the NBR asked all customs stations to keep normal office activities open.

It, however, suggested customs officials take protective measures as per guidelines of health directorate and ensure social distance.





FOUNDER EDITOR  
LATE S. M. ALI

DHAKA THURSDAY APRIL 23, 2020, BAI SHAKH 10, 1427 BS

# Confronting Covid-19: Lessons from other nations

*This is the first article of a two-part series. The other part will be published tomorrow.*

## Farmers should be given full support

*Collective effort to avoid a famine is what we need*

In her speech on April 20, the prime minister warned about the possibility of a global food shortage due to the coronavirus if steps are not taken in the right time. We welcome her decision to pre-emptively warn everyone of such a grave possibility and hope it will be taken seriously by all stakeholders.

As this newspaper reported on April 21, the PM emphasised on the need to produce and preserve food to overcome any possible food crisis in the post-coronavirus world. She urged farmers to use all the available land in the country to grow crops and asked law enforcement agencies to cooperate with them. In that regard, it is essential that farmers are given all the help they require. That includes financial assistance to help them hire helpers to harvest crops, get machinery, etc. The financial institutions should be instructed to provide farmers with low-interest loans, and ensuring there is enough storage space for their food produce is also key.

Last year, we witnessed a massive debacle in procuring rice from farmers, many of whom had to endure losses after being forced to sell their produce at very low prices. The government must ensure there is no repeat of that, and its decision to purchase a significant amount of Boro paddy directly from farmers does indicate that it has somewhat learned from its previous mistake. Corruption has always been a huge problem when it comes to the agriculture sector. And the government needs to be stern in its action against those who try to benefit at the cost of farmers or others, particularly as we are currently in a crisis period.

Paddy harvesting has already started and more food grains will be produced in the near future. Therefore, it is essential that farmers get the assistance they need as soon as possible. With the right steps, we agree with the PM that a famine-like situation can be avoided and everyone now needs to work towards that.

## Making people stay at home

*Awareness and strict enforcement of govt. directives are the key*

It is most unfortunate that many amongst us have taken the directives given by the government to stay at home and maintain social distancing very lightly, despite the fact that the numbers of new infections and deaths from Covid-19 are increasing every day in the country. Although law enforcers and even army officials are on the ground to ensure social distancing, people are still coming out of their homes and gathering at local bazaars and streets without maintaining safe distance from one another. Amid such a situation, as the government plans to extend the shutdown by at least a week, we think it should also consider taking some extra measures to make people stay at home.

Raising awareness among people about the probable disastrous impacts of social gatherings at this time is key to keeping them housebound. In the capital, where the infection rate is much higher, the two city corporations can play a crucial role in this regard by engaging the ward commissioners and councillors. The public representatives across the country should also play their part.

Moreover, the role of the law enforcers is of critical importance here; they have to be as tough as needed to enforce the shutdown. We expect them to take harsher measures in the worst-hit areas. Besides, the government's relief and other efforts to help the poor people should also be carried out following social distancing guidelines. The authorities' decision to keep Karwan Bazar, one of the largest kitchen markets in Dhaka, closed for retail sales as a means to contain further spread of the virus is commendable. Decisions should also be taken about the other kitchen markets in the city which are still crowded by people.

As many of these issues were discussed at a high-profile meeting of the Cabinet Division on Tuesday, we are hopeful of seeing more organised efforts from the government—from raising awareness to enforcing shutdowns, from preparing the hospitals to treat the Covid-19 patients to ensuring high-quality PPEs for doctors and medical staff—to deal with the health crisis that the nation is facing. Since health experts have warned that the Covid-19 outbreak is gradually approaching its peak in the country and that the situation is likely to worsen further, we have no option but to stay at home and strictly maintain the social distancing measures at all costs.

SABIHA HAQUE and SAMIRA MARZIA

It all began when Patient Zero was identified with Covid-19 on December 31, 2019, in Wuhan City, China. Since then, life around the world has changed. All the little things that used to be taken for granted—from stepping outside for a cup of tea to touching one's face—are now a threat to oneself. Compared to the overwhelming numbers of many countries, there are 3,772 confirmed coronavirus cases in Bangladesh as of April 22. But the potential for a surge in cases remains unless we adopt necessary measures and prepare for a possible catastrophic future.

Covid-19 is not only a public health or medical issue; it requires a multidisciplinary planning and approach. The outbreak of the virus challenges not only the virological and epidemiological fields but also requires the critical intervention of spatial planning. Urban systems and deadly diseases have historically maintained a correlation that functions in parallel during and after the outbreak. The 19th-century cholera pandemics in Europe resulted in the development of water and sewage systems. In 1854, British physician John Snow used geographic mapping to locate a cholera outbreak in London that led to the saving of many lives. Even though scientists at that time did not fully understand what caused the Yellow Fever outbreak in 1793, Philadelphia began building one of America's first water treatment plants after the fever subsided.

Many of the successful measures taken by some countries to reduce the spread of Covid-19, as well as bring down the number of deaths, are based on a collaborative and multi-agency action.

Covid-19 may gradually create a substantial change in the urban system once it de-escalates. But while it is still in progress, it is also extremely crucial to have a better assessment of successful strategies in various countries so that we can identify and analyse possible measures that may work in our own context.

Most virus-affected Western countries have imposed a temporary lockdown, or a slowdown, on their people to ensure fewer gatherings so that the spread of the virus is slowed, and the surge on hospitals is levelled. Until recently, Europe was

the epicentre of the Covid-19 pandemic. Currently, on a global scale, the United States has the highest infection rate and the highest number of deaths. While these countries have imposed lockdowns and closed borders, they still have a difficult time keeping the numbers down.

On the other hand, New Zealand seems to have managed to contain the outbreak before it ever had a chance to begin. Some East Asian countries are also managing it in an effective way. Vietnam, for instance, has had fewer cases with no death count so far. With the motto of "proactiveness and consistency throughout the response," Vietnam is

Korea, Singapore, China, and Taiwan took lessons from that epidemic, and started taking precautions for future epidemics long before they tracked down the first coronavirus patient in the region.

Since the antidotes or vaccines for the coronavirus are still in the pipeline, the East Asian countries cited here used both pragmatic and high-tech systems. Taiwan used prevention policies to reduce the infection rate. China teaches us the importance of preparedness to prevent and control infectious disease outbreak with technology and pragmatic systems. On the other hand, the South Korean experience emphasises the need

mentioned, and the measures that we can take. First, let us take a look at the comparative picture:

**Taiwan:** Taiwan implemented a 124-point action plan to keep the death rate to less than 2 percent of the confirmed cases. The country was also very strict about border control and screening. Government policies to isolate people and mandate on the mask export, as well as fixing selling price and local production proved effective for public health.

**Hangzhou, China:** Hangzhou is the capital city of Zhejiang Province in China, about 1,000 miles away from Wuhan—the ground zero for the coronavirus pandemic. Authorities in Hangzhou were cautious the very moment the virus spread in Wuhan, going into a lockdown to prevent the infection. China's use of technology helped management facilities to isolate, monitor and treat positive cases with accuracy. With constant tracking, there was breach of privacy but identification of infected cases was prompt and efficient. This also reduced the contamination in clusters.

**South Korea:** Having conducted over 15,000 tests daily, South Korea also maintains an expansive and well-organised testing system. This allows the country to completely isolate the patients from the virus-free people. Through the use of apps, the authorities keep track on a patient's whereabouts, and also lets people know who may have come in contact with the patient in recent times based on their recent locations. The idea is to identify and isolate every single person who may come closer to the affected person.

**Singapore:** The early preparation taken by the authorities has been in favour of Singapore. It relied on tracking the affected people using the vast network of social media, apps, and text messages. Over 9,000 temporary health clinics have been established to keep the patients isolated. The goal is to keep the affected people completely separated in temporary clinics, away from the virus-free community, and to make sure no transmission takes place by them.

Sabiha Haque and Samira Marzia are respectively Senior Research and Design Associate and Research and Design Associate at the Bengal Institute for Architecture, Landscapes and Settlements. Nusrat Sumaiya Tani facilitated the research.



COURTESY: AUTHORS

one of the first countries to have sealed down neighbourhoods when workers started coming back from China after the Chinese New Year. They also put great emphasis on building awareness in their own cultural way of dancing, singing, and making short animations.

Of all countries, South Korea, Singapore, China, and Taiwan have taken effective strategic measures at the right time, and have been largely successful in slowing down the spread of the virus compared to many developed countries. It is known that the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) has a genetic relation with SARS-CoV that caused an outbreak during 2002-2004, mostly in Eastern Asia. South

for isolating the patients and building awareness among the people using the social media platform. The main focus of Singapore was to track the virus-affected people, and isolate the virus-free people from the affected ones by keeping the latter in hospital until they recover.

Researchers at Bengal Institute looked at Taiwan, the Chinese province of Zhejiang, South Korea and Singapore to understand the strategies each country developed and implemented to fight against Covid-19. We in Bangladesh can learn from these strategies in order to devise our own successful measures. In two parts, we present a comparison of the successful strategies of the four countries

# The double whammy of Covid-19 and climate change

*We need global solidarity to tackle the emergencies*



SALEEMUL HUQ

ONE OF the biggest lessons coming out of the Covid-19 pandemic is that we are living in an interlinked world where no country can cut itself off for very long and no country can

tackle the problem by itself. This lesson is even more true as we battle the double whammy of Covid-19 and the climate change. Therefore, one of the solutions that we need immediately is the operationalising of global solidarity. This needs to happen at multiple levels including governments working through the United Nations, multinational companies working globally, financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank as well as many others.

Currently, the most vulnerable communities in cities around the world, mainly in developing countries, are suffering the most from the lockdown measures and economic downturn that many countries are facing. While individuals and households in the slums of Dhaka, Mumbai, Nairobi, Lagos, Buenos Aires and Manila might feel that they are alone and cannot do anything themselves, they are, in fact, linked to the wider citizenry both in their own countries and across the globe.

Over the last couple of years, I have been involved in an effort to link up the communities that are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change under the aegis of the Global Commission on Adaptation (GCA). The GCA has come out with seven Action Tracks on Adaptation globally and is currently in its Year of Action for each of the tracks. I have been closely involved with one of these tracks, namely the Locally Led Adaptation Action Track, which is led by two of its commissioners, namely Dr Musa representing both BRAC Bangladesh and BRAC International and Sheela Patel of the Slum Dwellers International (SDI) which links together locally led groups in the major slums of the developing world. Together with other groups working

with the most vulnerable communities such as indigenous people, women, children, waste-pickers and others, we have been linking these grassroots groups with universities and research institutions both locally and globally to share the practical experience and experiential learning emerging out of these disparate but connected groups around the world.

In the last few weeks as the Covid-19 pandemic has been spreading from country to country, the communities with which we have been working have found themselves to be at the forefront of lockdowns being imposed in many countries. Hence, we are immediately moving our work into tackling the Covid-19 while, at the same time,

implemented to deal with the Covid-19 public health problem as well as the economic fallout of the lockdowns, it is absolutely necessary to involve the communities themselves in implementing the policies. The one-size-fits-all approach behind total lockdowns is almost impossible to bear fruit in the most densely populated slums in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

The groups we are working with are already engaging with their local and national authorities to ensure that the people are enabled to take action through providing proper information and advice, rather than mere enforcement of regulations by the police.

The other dimension that we will be

and protecting the natural environment.

Finally, there is the opportunity that we need to explore, using the potential created by the ongoing shutdowns, to connect with each other over social media and online meeting platforms. We will be undertaking webinars, Zoom meetings and blogs and video logs to share our thoughts and experience with each other and with the rest of the world.

We are trying to follow the great example of the schoolchildren in the Fridays for Future movement, under the leadership of Greta Thunberg, who have been coming out of school in hundreds of cities around the world, including in Bangladesh, every Friday for over a year. They have also adapted their Friday school strikes to take them online after the schools were shut due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

We are aiming to link students from many universities in Bangladesh with their counterparts from LUCC as well as others in the South Asian region and finally other parts of the world. The idea is to engage the university students, who don't have classes now, with the vulnerable communities in their respective towns and join forces to tackle both Covid-19 and climate change going forward.

Personally, the most important lesson that I can discern from the best practices we are seeing around the world in dealing with Covid-19 is that states like Kerala in India and countries like Vietnam as well as Korea and Germany have relied more on informing their respective populations about what they had to do and why, rather than suddenly announcing decisions and using law enforcement authorities to impose those. Hence, when it comes to the most vulnerable developing countries including Bangladesh, we must rely on informing and educating our populations, particularly the most vulnerable communities, and listen to their concerns when formulating and implementing new policies or regulations. Without an informed and engaged population, we cannot overcome either the Covid-19 pandemic or the climate change emergency.

Saleemul Huq is Director of the International Centre for Climate Change and Development at the Independent University, Bangladesh.



Climate change is only going to make health crises like coronavirus more frequent and worse.

PHOTO: REUTERS/CARLOS OSORIO

preparing for tackling the climate change impacts that will inevitably affect them.

One way in which we plan to do so is for the researchers from the Least Developed Countries (LDC) Universities Consortium on Climate Change (LUCC) to talk to the representatives of communities in the most vulnerable cities and towns and then tell their stories through social media—and at the same time, to engage with decision-makers at the city and national levels and even the global level. Our contention is that for a better impact of the policies being

exploring in the near term is to ensure that the different national economic stimulus packages that are being planned and implemented in every country prioritise investments that are both people- and environment-friendly. It is essential to ensure that we do not return to business as usual, which had caused the public health and climate change emergencies in the first place, but rather move towards a "new normal" where the policies are aimed at helping the most vulnerable citizens of every country as well as reducing emissions of greenhouse gases

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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### Stop corruption in relief distribution

Due to the nationwide lockdown, numerous individuals have lost their jobs and other sources of income. And with no means to earn money, many of them are suffering from hunger, particularly those from the low-income and marginalised groups in society. So dire is their situation that many are being forced to take the risk to come out of home with the hopes of collecting alms whenever and wherever possible.

Though the government has allocated food and financial aid for the poor and needy, it seems that the relief is not reaching those who need it the most. Recent reports have shed light on the misappropriation and irregularities in the distribution process. In one case, UP chairmen and members were suspended for embezzlement of relief rice, assault on relief seekers and negligence of duty. It's a shame that despite the prime minister's warning that corruption in relief distribution would not be tolerated, such incidents keep happening. When will we ever learn? We are dealing with a crisis here, yet some people can't overcome their greed.

Abu Hasnat Evna Mostafa, North South University



# A Tale of Two Standards

Price alteration, contractual imbalance and legal remedy in RMG sector

JUNAYED CHOWDHURY

WHEN the tragic Rana Plaza incident occurred on April 24, 2013, the entire international readymade garments (RMG) community cried out loud—and rightly so—about the abysmal working conditions in Bangladeshi apparel industry. In an article in *Time* magazine on July 11, 2013, a broadside was launched that Bangladeshi RMG workers “perish on the job with depressing frequency”. Then in May and July 2013, we saw the formation of the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh (Accord) and the Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety (Alliance) respectively—two multi-stakeholder governance programmes that worked towards a safer RMG industry in Bangladesh. There is no gainsaying that both Accord and Alliance have done good things for the RMG sector in Bangladesh.

However, it is equally true that steps taken under the Accord and the Alliance were possible because of the influence exerted by Western buyers over Bangladeshi factories. Noted management consultancy firm McKinsey & Company wrote in its 2011 survey report that price attractiveness was the first and foremost reason for Western brands purchasing in Bangladesh. To put it bluntly, Western brands can dictate the pricing terms of a contract with Bangladeshi factories.

Enter Covid-19 in 2020—with teetering economies and trembling infrastructure. Bangladeshi RMG sector has already reported an estimated USD 3.17 billion worth of orders being cancelled. Many international brands are raising defences of force majeure and frustration of contracts under Covid-19 to get out of their obligations, the legality of which is a subject matter of deep discussion in itself.

Recently, however, it has been reported by Reuters that Western brands that agreed not to cancel orders due to Covid-19 epidemic are demanding price cuts of up to 50 percent. The news report also quoted Rubana Huq, president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), as saying, “We are still observing

their departure from original contract terms... which includes renegotiating prices as low as 50 percent of the original deal.”

It's important that we explore the legality of such a stance by the foreign brands. It is true that a contract can be altered by mutual agreement of the parties (see section 62 of the Contract Act 1872). But here, the issue is not about mutual alteration of a contract. The problem lies in the bargaining power of the parties and the context in which such a bargain is made by a party. And at the heart of that context are the principles of economic duress and undue influence.

First, let us start with some general principles. As a matter of law, no contractual bargain—however hard it may be—which is the result of the ordinary interplay of forces will be declared invalid. For example, if a poor man agrees to pay a high rent to a landlord, then the law will not interfere on the ground that it is an unfair bargain. In the eye of the law, the man's impetuosity will not be a defence in a case by the landlord for non-payment of rent. The decision to declare such a bargain illegal is left to the Parliament.

But every law has an exception. There are cases where courts will interfere and set aside a contract if it can be shown that the parties have not bargained on equal terms—where the bargaining power of one of the parties is so strong and the other's is so weak that, as a matter of fairness, the court will decide that the strong should not be allowed to push the weak to the wall.

One such example is the case of “undue influence”. For example, an employer—the stronger party—employs a builder—the weaker party—to do certain work for him. When the builder finished his work and asked for his payment, the employer refused to pay unless he was given some added advantage, like a discount. It may well be that in order to pay his employees, the builder agrees to such a discount and revision of the original contract. It has been observed that the court will set aside such a contract executed under pressure by the weaker party. This principle is codified in section 16 of the Contract Act 1872.

In this type of cases, the common

undercurrent is “inequality of bargaining power”. It has been held by the courts that when there is inequality of bargaining power in a contract that is grossly underpriced, the law gives relief to the one who executes such a contract, when his bargaining power is seriously impaired by his own needs, coupled with undue influence by or for the benefit of the counter-party.

Here, it should be remembered that the

advantage of the economic pressure of circumstances, rides onto it and forces the weaker party to revise a subsisting contract, such conduct no longer remains reasonable and the court will strike down such conduct. Covid-19 has created a dire economic situation in the global trade and business. Nonetheless, just because there is economic uncertainty does not mean that a party can renege and walk away from a subsisting

such contracts after receiving the discounted payment from the buyers?

There is a legal maxim—“No person can insist on a settlement procured by compulsion”. A Covid-19-induced factory closure and business disruption can be labelled as “economic compulsion”, which can be validly raised by RMG factories that are saddled with revised contracts by Western brands with discounted price. In other words, Bangladeshi RMG factories may be able to recover the price under the original contract on the ground of “economic duress” if it could be shown that the revised contract is executed against a threat of the Western brand to break the original contract.

But it should be remembered that the RMG factories relying on “economic duress” must first rescind the revised contracts and demand the balance price under the original contracts (see section 66 of the Contract Act 1872). It is essential to do so because under section 19A of the Contract Act 1872, a contract that is executed under undue influence is “voidable” and not “void”, which means the revised contract must be rescinded by the party relying on “economic duress” once the facts surrounding the duress cease to exist.

The proposed price cut by Western brands through revision of subsisting contracts with RMG factories has been a tale of two standards. On the one hand, Western brands wailed at the Bangladeshi RMG industry's state after the Rana Plaza collapse and worked commendably through Accord and Alliance towards improving workers' safety. On the other hand, in these testing times of Covid-19, the brands are threatening to walk away from valid contracts if heavy discounts are not offered by RMG factories which, as Reuters reported, would be “heaping economic pain on a country already reeling from the crisis.”

In the wake of the Rana Plaza tragedy, Bangladeshi RMG factories had nothing to defend themselves. But this time, the law is by their side.

Junayed Chowdhury is an Advocate of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh and the Managing Partner of Vertex Chambers.



Western brands can dictate the pricing terms of a contract with Bangladeshi factories.

STAR FILE PHOTO

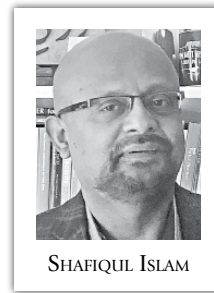
word “undue” does not mean the existence of any wrongdoing. Rather, it refers to the self-interest of a contracting party who is indifferent to the distress he is causing to the other party. On the other hand, a person who is in extreme need (for example, of money) may knowingly consent to a most one-sided bargain, only to get himself out of such financial peril.

But when the stronger party takes

contract. The demand by a Western brand, being the dominant party in a RMG contract, not to cancel orders in exchange of price discount due to Covid-19 reeks of such an attitude.

What could be done by Bangladeshi RMG factories in such a situation? What if factories agree to revised contracts with discounted price to tackle their own financial pressure of paying the workers? Can they challenge

# What Bangladesh can do to fight the coronavirus



SHAFIQUUL ISLAM

WE did not know about this invisible enemy even a few months ago. Yet, in this short period of time, it has affected 210 countries and territories around the world, infected over 2.5 million people and killed over 180,000

globally. According to the official estimate, the number of Covid-19 cases in Bangladesh is 3,772 (as of April 22). Even if we take this number to be true, there are probably at least five times more untested cases. This, hypothetically, puts the number of local infection cases around 18,000-19,000.

This still may sound like a small number but this enemy is not an equal-opportunity killer. It does not prefer survival of the fittest or the wealthiest. Only the most adaptive will survive (recall, dinosaurs did not survive; humans did).

So how can Bangladesh be adaptive? Is it possible for the country to minimise the impact?

Yes, it is still possible, but time is running out.

We must keep one thing in mind: this is not the time to argue what could have been done or who did not do what or who should be blamed. Everyone needs to work together—governmental, non-governmental and private institutions as well as citizens. This is the time to learn from other nations. But make this learning adaptive with what Bangladesh has as resources: physical, economic and cultural.

**Working with an interdisciplinary group with multiple expertise:** It's unfortunate if leaders have to make decisions based on incomplete and uncertain information. Our leaders and policymakers must plan to work with a diverse group of scientists, engineers, business leaders, opinion makers, and citizens. They must listen carefully to

multiple perspectives and decide based on situation-specific information. There is no single solution. We must be adaptive as new information comes in.

**Dividing the population into risk groups for treatment and survival support:** This virus does not care about socio-economic conditions, religion or prejudices. Older people with pre-existing medical conditions are more vulnerable. Daily workers with “hand to mouth provision” are at high risk of starvation and malnutrition. It is, therefore,

*This is not the time to argue what could have been done or who did not do what or who should be blamed. Everyone needs to work together—governmental, non-governmental and private institutions as well as citizens. This is the time to learn from other nations.*

important to create risk groups—for treatment and survival support—and make actionable plans with advice from the experts.

**Diagnostic tests must be made simpler and accessible:** Assuming that everyone is a carrier is the best protection as seen in Japan. So we must act accordingly to minimise exposure and spread. Testing can be reserved for the more vulnerable people. It is unlikely

that Bangladesh will have sufficient testing kits available anytime soon. Thus, using simpler screening through temperature and oxygen saturation level measurement will be more practical. People with high temperature and low oxygen level can be isolated and then treated.

**Supporting healthcare professionals:** We must prepare for a possible surge in the number of severely ill patients. So we must collect as many Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) as possible for healthcare professionals and first responders. Deploy resources to manufacture ventilators and create more intensive care units (ICUs). Repurpose some of the schools, university halls, hostels and other spaces as quarantine and make-shift hospitals for the less severe patients.

**Engaging the NGOs:** Use their network, infrastructure and experience to execute situation-specific responses. NGOs can come up with Covid-19 survival manuals and protocols of what to do or not to do. They can do rapid surveys to find out what interventions are working (or not working) and adapt quickly.

**Deploy Army, BDR and police judiciously:** From India to Rwanda to South Africa, countries have deployed security forces to enforce quarantine and lockdown. Bangladesh has also deployed the Army to carry out these operations and take part in relief efforts. Military-enforced lockdown is not without problems, as observed in South Africa, Kenya or Uganda. Yet, at times like these, deployment of troops, when done carefully and compassionately, can build confidence. The security forces can be repurposed by integrating with a public healthcare approach that puts community engagement at the centre. The Army with their excellent organisational and logistical skills can work with the youth volunteers to execute many essential services for citizens with different risks.

**Inspire the public, engage the youth and create a volunteer force:** This is the

time for the public—particularly youth—to actively engage with their energy and creativity. Students and young professionals can organise online hackathon and crowdsourcing to learn tips and tricks from other countries that are actionable (for example, making ventilators and masks with local resources) in Bangladesh.

Organisational and logistical experiences of the armed forces can help mobilise the youth to execute many labour-intensive activities—driving recovered patients home, checking with elderly neighbours, delivering food to vulnerable groups, etc.—as appropriate. This will help build trust between the enforcers and the citizens. This will also lessen the burden from healthcare workers.

**Be a model Covid-19 fighter:** Follow the safety guidelines. Create “community self-policing” units to encourage and enforce preventive measures. Encourage local leaders, village elders, imams and priests to be the early adopters of wearing masks, washing hands and isolating oneself when needed. Like the virus, modelling virus fighting behaviour can also be contagious. It has started happening in Boston, Nairobi, Tehran, etc. In Tehran, it is considered cool and responsible to wear a mask while, in Boston, people consider wearing a mask heroic!

We need to minimise the impacts of secondary effects like hunger, isolation and mental depression. We must mobilise resources from governmental, non-governmental, private sector and donor agencies to create safety nets for the most vulnerable groups facing shortage of survival essentials including nutrition, daily medicine needs and other supplies.

**Aggressive and personalised social messaging:** Assume what you hear (rumours and misinformation without verification) may be more viral and deadly in killing trust and confidence. Do not spread unverified information. This is not the time to criticise. Be critical of action, not of individuals or institutions. And continuously look for what

works (and why) and how to be adaptive to changing situations.

We must emphasise the importance of personalised and context-specific messages. For example, convince the imams to tell people that they don't need to come to the mosque; they can stay home and pray. Use Saudi Arabia's action to close the mosques as an example, if necessary. Avoid mass funeral rituals, and encourage alternative and safe forms of grieving and burial.

Avoid fake Covid-19 news and misinformation. Seek reliable sources of information. Create trusted information networks to make actionable information, empathy and resilience go viral.

**Reasons for optimism and decisive action:** Covid-19 is affecting the population over 65 years disproportionately (over 80 percent of fatalities involve over 65-year-olds with pre-existing health conditions); the youth (less than 30 percent) shows mild symptoms with very low fatality. But the youth still need to be careful because they may infect other people. Over 94 percent of Bangladeshis are less than 65 years old and this may make the country seem less vulnerable. But this is not the time to celebrate this optimistic (yet highly uncertain) projection. If we do not act quickly and decisively, it may turn into a nightmare.

Despite its many dysfunctional institutions, poverty and widespread corruption, Bangladesh has achieved remarkable progress in many development indicators. Now is the time to promote and accelerate this Bangladeshi Brand of Ingenuity. If Bangladesh takes a concerted and determined approach of adaptive learning, it can minimise the impacts of the coronavirus disaster. Bangladesh can forge an actionable and adaptive plan to defeat this virus and show the world that it is a model of adaptive survival, resilience and ingenuity.

Professor Shafiqul Islam is Director, Water Diplomacy Program, Civil and Environmental Engineering, Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, USA.

**QUOTABLE Quote**

**LUDWIG VON MISES**  
(1881-1973)  
Austrian-American libertarian economist

*The criterion of truth is that it works even if nobody is prepared to acknowledge it.*

**CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH**

**ACROSS**

- 1 Folded food
- 5 Bulletin board items
- 10 Love affair
- 12 Singly
- 13 Ship of 1492
- 14 Scout's job
- 15 Chick holder
- 16 Holsteins, to tots
- 18 1950s singing style
- 20 Count start
- 21 Inner: Prefix
- 23 "Street Dreams" rapper
- 24 Shore eroder
- 26 Kitty
- 28 Was victorious
- 29 Dainty drinks
- 31 Gallery fill

**DOWN**

- 1 Not live
- 2 Pal, to Pedro
- 3 Crichton novel
- 4 Unconscious
- 5 Poi source
- 6 Guinness of film
- 7 Silk sources
- 8 Commonly called
- 9 Detects
- 11 Punk
- 17 Make a choice
- 19 Tie the knot
- 22 Saying "nay"
- 24 Raptors' home unit
- 25 All things considered
- 27 GI-entertaining grp.
- 28 Terre Haute's river
- 30 Skater Midori
- 33 Actor Willis
- 34 "The Age of Anxiety" poet
- 35 Monopoly cards
- 37 Cotton pod
- 38 Just
- 42 Gloss target

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

**BEETLE BAILEY** BY MORT WALKER

THESE OLD THINGS DON'T WORK VERY WELL ANYMORE

MAYBE YOU NEED A NEW COMPUTER

I WAS TALKING ABOUT MY FINGERS!

**BABY BLUES** BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

WHAT WILL YOU PUT ON YOUR YOUTUBE CHANNEL?

LOTS OF STUFF

MOSTLY, I'LL POST VIDEOS OF ME TALKING ABOUT MOTHERHOOD IN A HUMOROUS WAY.

SO YOU'RE HIRING WE-TESTERS?

I'M FUNNY ZIE!

HAWAIIA HAWAII! GOOD ONE, MOM!

**YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS**

A MAZED SPAM  
BOLERO URGE  
SEESIN ROOT  
T E E O F F  
BETS HEIST  
AVA CHARLIE  
SEX LEAR ETA  
INFLATE RUM  
STIES ASPS  
LEERED  
STEW EXACTA  
HERA APPEAR  
EASY POTENT



GRAPEVINE



## JAYA'S Request

Actor Jaya Ahsan has been in home quarantine for a while due to the COVID-19 pandemic. She has been urging others to stay home as well. Regarding this, she said, "We will only be safe if everyone stays at home. This is the only way to keep ourselves and our loved ones in

good health. We can do whatever we like at home, like spending time with our family, listening to music, reading poetry and prose, and communicating with loved ones in anyways aside from going outside. We're only closing the door to our homes, not our hearts."

## SABNAM FARIA'S Contributions

The world is stagnant because of the pandemic. The nationwide shutdown to contain the spread of the virus in Bangladesh has affected everyone's lives. Our entertainment industry is also going through a difficult time because of the lockdown. Just like other actors, Sabnam Faria has also been home quarantining. She recently shared what she has been doing at home. She said, "I am taking care of my mother. Previously, I did not know how to cook, but I have learned cooking now. I have also been drawing costume designs, and I try to do yoga regularly." She added, "I am trying to help people in need as much as I can, during this unprecedented crisis. I have contributed my one month's salary to the Actors' Equity and took part in director Mostafa Kamal Raz's initiative to help the poor. I also distributed food and basic necessity packages to one twenty families. And I plan to hand out more packages to one fifty families during the first week of Ramadan."



## Salma with the People



Singer Salma donated relief materials and children's food both in and out of Dhaka through Safia Foundation. She said regarding it, "Due to the lockdown and scarcity of volunteers, it is very difficult to work outside of Dhaka. Still, Safia Foundation made sure to help as many people as possible. 300 families from Taragonia and Doulatpur received the donations. We plan on providing relief to more families in the future." She also encouraged the people to come forward and help the underprivileged, and also thanked those who assisted in providing the relief to places outside of Dhaka.

## Heart-To-Heart with BHABNA

Ashna Habib Bhabna is an emerging actor in the entertainment industry. She is mostly known for her roles in 'Voyangkor Sundor' and 'Borosh'. Aside from that, she has worked in several TVCs, television series and dramas, for which she has received immense praise. In this interview with Rafi Hossain, she talks about her love life, career and future plans.



**Rafi Hossain:** Welcome to Uncensored with Rafi Hossain. Today, we're here with Bhabna. Bhabna, you're always very open during interviews and your answers are spontaneous. Many artists are usually reluctant to share the details about their lives. Why do you think that is?

**Bhabna:** Artists sometimes feel that the information they share may be misused. I think that is where the hesitation stems from.

**Rafi:** You yourself were quite private about your love life in the beginning. Now, you have been openly discussing it in interviews. What changed?

**Bhabna:** I was waiting to settle down and see how the relationship progresses before I mentioned anything to the public. Moreover, there is a stigma in our industry that once you are in a relationship, you will get fewer job offers. Everyone expects female actors to have a certain image, and being single is a part of it. People constantly assume that I only work with Animesh, when in reality, I haven't worked on any project with him for the past two and half years. People are always looking for things to gossip about.



a certain group of people. In the end, it's about their comfort zone and chemistry. This doesn't only apply for actors but extend to the rest of the crew as well. For instance, Tisha apu has acted in a lot of movies by Farooki bhai. However, the characters she played were a perfect fit for her. I especially loved her in *Doob*; it was truly an exceptional film. But, as you will notice, the media focuses on the fact that they are working as a couple, rather than praising her acting skills.

**Rafi:** I'm sure your fans are eagerly waiting to get more updates on your relationship. Do you plan to get married soon?

**Bhabna:** I don't know, actually. I do plan to marry him someday, but we don't have any detail planned yet. I am a very romantic person, and I used to dream of destination weddings and an extravagant party. Animesh, on the other hand, is very mature and realistic. I love romantic clichés. I am a huge fan of Karan Johar for the way he portrays love in his movies.

**Rafi:** What would you do if you ever met Karan Johar?

**Bhabna:** I would hug him and tell him how big of a fan I am. I would love to work with him. It would be a dream come true. Initially, people were quite judgmental about him as he made romantic movies. Now, he has created various kinds of movies and established himself as one of the best directors in India. He is very successful and everyone wants to work with him. For instance, in Netflix's *Lust Stories*, he worked alongside three unique directors, and they created an amazing project. We need directors and producers like him in Bangladesh.

**Rafi:** Do you have anything interesting planned for the near future?

**Bhabna:** I am writing my third novel right now. Other than that, I want to play new and different characters. I definitely want to work on a film this year as well. I also want to focus on my studies alongside my work.

**Rafi:** Lastly, do you have any message for our readers?

**Bhabna:** Something that really bothers me are the negative comments I receive on social media regarding my loved ones. My family forbids me from sharing any of their pictures online because of such comments. But, of course, there also many people who shower me with their love and positivity. I am really grateful for that.

Shreya Shomoyeeta



**Rafi:** Is there any director that you want to work with?

**Bhabna:** I have worked with Mostofa Sarwar Farooki on many projects before, and I'd like to continue doing so. I want to work with directors who are creative and have a unique vision.

**Rafi:** Do you think artists here have an issue auditioning for roles they play?

**Bhabna:** I, myself, have auditioned for several roles. Every actor in *Voyangkor Sundor*, including me, had to audition. I have no issues with that as the director may have a certain vision in mind, and I may or may not be a perfect fit for it. For instance, there will be a new movie on *Bangabandhu*, and actors will want to audition for it as it is a respectable project. But, when it comes to new directors, they don't have the same approach. Acting is our profession, and from that perspective, they should be ready to audition, despite how well established they already are.

**Rafi:** Do you think directors are more likely to cast their significant others for roles in their movies?

**Bhabna:** I don't think that's the case. Directors always have a team that they enjoy working with. Even popular directors like Sanjay Leela Bhansali and Satyajit Ray preferred working with

POPCORN HIGHLIGHTS

### Mrs. America

*Mrs. America* is a drama television miniseries on Hulu. It has been created by Dahvi Waller, produced by Tanya Barfield and Boo Killebrew, and stars Cate Blanchett, Rose Byrne and Elizabeth Banks, among others. The series focuses on the political movement to pass the Equal Rights Amendment. It was originally premiered on April 15, 2020.



### The World of the Married

*The World of the Married* is a South Korean television series which has been based on *Doctor Foster*. It has been created by Kang Eun-kyung, produced by Park Joon-seo, and stars Kim Hee-ae and Park Hae-joon, among others. The plot follows a doctor who, after finding out her husband has been cheating on her, begins to plan her revenge. The series premiered on JTBC on March 27, 2020.

Shreya Shomoyeeta



SPOT THE DIFFERENCES

Find the differences from, "Spies in Disguise"



### The Last Dance



*The Last Dance* is a sports documentary miniseries available on Netflix. It has been directed by Jason Hehir, and produced by Michael Tollin, under the banner of NBA Entertainment and ESPN Films. It revolves around the 1997-1998 Chicago Bulls during NBA season. It was originally released on April 19, 2020.





## 'Looking forward to working with Tamim the captain'

2020 was supposed to be the biggest challenge for Russell Domingo, who was appointed as head coach of the Bangladesh cricket team last year. The 45-year-old, who is currently back in South Africa, is however chalking out plans for the Tigers' upcoming assignments once the coronavirus pandemic eases off. The Daily Star's Mazhar Uddin spoke with the coach about various issues including his plans for the Tigers during an interview over phone. Following are the excerpts of the interview:

The Daily Star (TDS): There were quite a lot of fixtures this year for Bangladesh, especially in Test cricket including the home series against Australia. You must have had big plans for it?

Russell Domingo (RD): Very disappointed that we are not playing the big series against Australia. Big tour to the UK against Ireland would have been great too. Missing those two series is a big blow for us. The more Test cricket we play, the better it is for us. So of course I am very disappointed in missing out on those, particularly the series against Australia.

TDS: It is still uncertain whether international cricket will return anytime soon. What will be your plan when things get back to normal?

RD: Obviously not sure when international cricket is going to start again. But important is that before starting, we get some time to prepare both physically and technically before we rush into a series again.

TDS: What will be your biggest challenge when cricket returns?

RD: Biggest challenge when we start again, I suppose, will be getting players physically fit to start playing again. The players have been given individual training programmes and schedules. But being in lockdown does limit your physical preparation considerably, so getting guys fit before we play again is of paramount importance.

TDS: Are you willing to give more emphasis on domestic cricket during this period?

RD: Regarding domestic cricket, I am not sure when that's going to start again, but



obviously I keep a keen eye on who is doing well in domestic circuit. Dhaka Premier League is not taking place anymore but the Bangladesh Premier League and four-day cricket is also important and when I can I follow those very closely.

TDS: Keeping the current situation in mind, Shakib Al Hasan is expected to be available by the time things get back to normal. Your take on that?

RD: I suppose by the time we start playing, Shakib will be nearly available again. I think he is banned till the end of October.

The plus side is that he is not missing too many games [for Bangladesh]. He is a great player and the best all-rounder in the world. To have him back in our group will be fantastic for the team. The players will enjoy playing with him, they look up to him. He is a great player to be around the younger players.

TDS: What's your take on appointing Tamim Iqbal as the new ODI captain?

RD: I am looking forward to working with the new ODI captain Tamim. I have enjoyed my time with him since he has

been back to the squad after his break. I am really pleased that he has been appointed. We looked at one or two other options available for the new captain. But the board decided to go with Tamim and I think it is a very good decision. I am certainly looking forward to working with him. I have enjoyed the way he has gone about his business and prepare them to make Bangladesh a force in world cricket.

TDS: Do you think there will be an added pressure on Tamim as the successor of Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, who is the most successful ODI captain for Bangladesh?

RD: Hard for me to talk too much about Mashrafe. I don't know him that well. I have been involved in a few games with him. Three games against Zimbabwe, so I don't know how he goes about his business. But look Tamim is one of the Bangladeshi legends. He has performed unbelievably well. He is the leading run-scorer in all formats for Bangladesh. He has got the pedigree and the knowledge in the game to lead the team well. So, I don't think he will be under any more pressure than any international captain around the world. I am expecting great things from him going forward.

TDS: Do you think the cricket world will remain the same once this pandemic ends?

RD: I don't think cricket or the world is going to be the same after this virus, well not until the vaccine gets found for it. I think everybody is going to be very aware of social distancing. Not getting close to one another, I suppose; making sure our hygiene is where it needs to be. I don't quite think it is going to be the same for a while.



## Taylor recalls 'brutal spell'

AGENCIES

Former Australian captain Mark Taylor said that spell in Antigua during the 1995 tour to the West Indies was one of the most brutal he ever faced.

He has also revealed he wrote to the ICC during the tour to highlight a weakness in the laws of the game after a brutal spell from Curtly Ambrose and Courtney Walsh.

To mark the 25th anniversary of the tour that saw Australia defeat the West Indies for the first time since the summer of 1975-76, Taylor sat down with Wide World of Sports to reflect on a historic series during his time as skipper.

Billed as the unofficial battle for the No.1 ranking, Taylor's side arrived in the Caribbean determined to reverse a 2-1 West Indian victory in Australia in 1992-93.

Taylor said that the Australians were ready for the challenge and "There was no fear in that 1995 side." During the second Test in Antigua, Taylor and opening partner Michael Slater had to face nine overs on the second evening, with Ambrose and Walsh turning up the pace.

Taylor and Slater survived the searching examination from the legendary bowlers, but not without a degree of pain, with both batsmen sporting large ice-packs on their shoulder in the dressing room afterwards.

According to Steve Waugh's tour diary, Ambrose told media prior to the second Test: "Slater is going to have 19 ambulances waiting for him when he goes into bat in this match."

"I actually wrote a letter to the ICC after that Test match, which finished in a draw," Taylor said. "But that second night, we faced nine overs. That's 54 deliveries. I think 35 or 40 of them were short pitched balls that went through somewhere between chest and head height."

"Four or five balls an over were short. They were allowed two bouncers, but that doesn't count the balls at the chest. To me that was intimidatory bowling."

"If someone is bowling short all the time they're not trying to get you out, they're just trying to intimidate you."

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার					
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www.faridpur.police.gov.bd					
তারিখ: ২১/০৪/২০২০খ্রিঃ					
<b>দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি নং ০১/২০২০-২১</b>					
২০২০-২০২১ অর্থ-বৎসরের ১ম কোয়ার্টার (জুলাই-সেপ্টেম্বর/২০২০) এর বেতন সামগ্রী ক্রয়ের নিমিত্ত দি পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট অ্যান্ড/২০২০ ও দি পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট বিডি/২০২০ অফিসের নিম্নলিখিত শর্তসাপেক্ষে সীলমোহরকৃত বামে দরপত্র আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে:					
১।	মহাপালায়/বিভাগ				
২।	স্বয়ং মহাপালায়/জননিরপত্তা বিভাগ।				
৩।	স্বয়ং				
৪।	বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ।				
৫।	দরপত্র সম্পাদনাকারী প্রধান				
৬।	পুলিশ সুপার, ফরিদপুর।				
৭।	কি কারণে দরপত্র আহ্বান				
৮।	জেলা পুলিশের বেতন সামগ্রী ক্রয়।				
৯।	দরপত্রের সূত্র নম্বর				
১০।	স্বয়ং নং-১৯৪৫/ই।				
১১।	তারিখ				
১২।	২১/০৪/২০২০খ্রিঃ।				
<b>কালের বিবরণ:</b>					
১।	দরপত্রের পদ্ধতি				
২।	উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র।				
<b>অন্যান্য বিবরণ:</b>					
৩।	বাক্যে বিজ্ঞপ্তি প্রকাশের তারিখ				
৪।	প্রকাশিত হবে।				
<b>শর্তাবলি:</b>					
৫।	দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি প্রকাশের তারিখ				
৬।	০৩ দিনের মধ্যে।				
৭।	দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তির শেষ তারিখ				
৮।	১১/০৫/২০২০খ্রিঃ, বেল্লা ১৪.০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।				
৯।	দরপত্র জমা প্রদানের সর্বশেষ তারিখ ও সময়				
১০।	১২/০৫/২০২০খ্রিঃ, সময়ে ১২.০০ ঘটিকা।				
১১।	দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ ও সময়				
১২।	১২/০৫/২০২০খ্রিঃ, সময়ে ১৩.০০ ঘটিকা।				
<b>অফিসের নাম ও ঠিকানা:</b>					
১৩।	দরপত্র				
১৪।	ডকুমেন্ট/সিডি/ডিস্ক				
১৫।	১। ডিজিটাল, ঢাকা রেল কার্যালয়, ঢাকা। ২। পুলিশ সুপার এর কার্যালয়, ফরিদপুর। ৩। পুলিশ সুপার এর কার্যালয়, ফরিদপুর। ৪। পুলিশ সুপার এর কার্যালয়, গোপালগঞ্জ।				
১৬।	দরপত্র প্রদানকারী/অফিস				
১৭।	পুলিশ সুপার এর কার্যালয়, ফরিদপুর।				
১৮।	দরপত্র খোলার স্থান				
১৯।	পুলিশ সুপার এর কার্যালয়, ফরিদপুর।				
২০।	সি-স্টেমার সকার স্থান, তারিখ, সময়				
<b>দরপত্র সম্পর্কিত তথ্য:</b>					
২১।	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী মোহর				
২২।	(১) হালদাশাল ট্রেড লাইসেন্স (২) হালদাশাল আয়কর সনদ (৩) হালদাশাল জাট রেজিস্ট্রেশন সনদ (৪) হালদাশাল ব্যাংক সলভেন্সি সনদ (৫) অন্যান্য মোহর				
২৩।	হালদাশাল ট্রেড লাইসেন্স (PG-3) এ উল্লিখিত আছে।				
<b>মূল্যসীমা:</b>					
ক্রমিক নং	আইটেম	পরিমাণ	দরপত্র মূল্য (টাকা)	নিরাপত্তা জামানত (টাকা)	বাক্য সম্পন্ন সময় (দিন)
(ক)	উন্নতমানের দেশী মোড়ের জাল (স্টেট ল্যান)	৪২০০০ কেজি (কম/বেশি)	১০০০/-	১,১০,০০০/-	৩ মাস
(খ)	স্বয়ংকৃত তৈরি	৩২০০০ কেজি (কম/বেশি)	১০০০/-	১,১০,০০০/-	৩ মাস
(গ)	পোলাওর	১৮০০ কেজি (কম/বেশি)	৪০০/-	৫,৫০০/-	৩ মাস
(ঘ)	আলাদা কাঠ	৪০০০০ কেজি (কম/বেশি)	৪০০/-	৮,০০০/-	৩ মাস
(ঙ)	পুরাতন বস্তা, নিলামে বিক্রি	৪০০০০ কেজি (কম/বেশি)	৪০০/-	৮,০০০/-	৩ মাস
(চ)	গম পেশাই	১,৫০,০০০ কেজি (কম/বেশি)	৭৫০/-	১,৩০,০০০/-	৩ মাস
(ছ)	পরিবহন	৪৮৫৪৩০ কেজি (কম/বেশি)	৭৫০/-	৫০,০০০/-	৩ মাস
(জ)	কুসি (সোতা-আলগোতা)	৪৮৫৪৩০ কেজি (কম/বেশি)	৪০০/-	১৫,০০০/-	৩ মাস
<b>দরপত্র সম্পাদনাকারীর বিবরণ:</b>					
২৪।	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্মকর্তার নাম	মোঃ আলিমুল্লাহ/মোঃ বিপ্লব-সেনা।			
২৫।	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্মকর্তার পদবী	পুলিশ সুপার।			
২৬।	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্মকর্তার ঠিকানা	পুলিশ সুপার এর কার্যালয়, ফরিদপুর।			
২৭।	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্মকর্তার মোবাইল নাম্বার	ফোন: ০৬৩১-৬৩০৭৭, ফ্যাক্স: ৬৩০৮৯ মোবাইল: ০১৭১৩৩৭৩৫৩০			
<b>২৮। বিশেষ শর্তাবলি:</b>					
ক) নিম্নলিখিত সময়ে পরে আর কোন দরপত্র গ্রহণ করা হবে না। খ) কোন কারণে দরপত্র গ্রহণের পরে দরপত্র গ্রহণ বা বাতিল করার ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন। গ) দরপত্র গ্রহণের পরে দরপত্র গ্রহণের পরে দরপত্র গ্রহণ বা বাতিল করার ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন। ঘ) দরপত্র গ্রহণের পরে দরপত্র গ্রহণের পরে দরপত্র গ্রহণ বা বাতিল করার ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।					
মোঃ আলিমুল্লাহ/মোঃ বিপ্লব-সেনা ফোন: ০৬৩১-৬৩০৭৭, ফ্যাক্স: ৬৩০৮৯ E-mail: spfaridpur@police.gov.bd					
ক্রি-৭৫২					

## Dutch season is effectively over: KNVB

REUTERS, Amsterdam

The Dutch football season was effectively ended on Tuesday as the government extended a ban on major public events by three months, the Dutch football association (KNVB) said in a statement.

The KNVB said it would not continue efforts to try to complete the 2019-20 campaign, but would first consult UEFA, who has asked member countries to try to finish their seasons.

Dutch prime minister Mark Rutte on Tuesday banned events including professional sports and music festivals until Sept. 1 to prevent a resurgence of coronavirus infections.

"That the events requiring a permit remain prohibited until September 1 now offers clarity," said the KNVB.

## No cricket in near future: Ganguly

AGENCIES, New Delhi

Top-flight cricket in India will not return to India any time soon, according to BCCI president Sourav Ganguly, who says sport should take a backseat 'when there is risk to human life'.

The Bundesliga, the German football league, is likely to be the first top-flight league that sets the tone for the future with discussions being held for the league to resume sometime in May.

But Ganguly said that had no bearing on India. "The social reality of Germany and India are different, there will be no cricket in India in the near future," Ganguly told Times of India. "There are too many ifs and buts involved. More importantly, I don't believe in sport when there is a risk to human life."



While Kylian Mbappe decided to go the route of curling up under a blanket and patiently waiting out the coronavirus pandemic, Neymar channelled the other half of the population as he decided to pursue more productive interests.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

## Kohli 'howled' all night after first rejection

AFP, New Delhi

India captain Virat Kohli revealed Tuesday how he "howled" through the night after being rejected by his state side before turning into the world's leading batsman.

Kohli and his Bollywood actress wife Anushka Sharma spoke about their lives and careers in an online session with students on how to get motivated.

"The first time I was rejected in the state selections, I remember it was late at night and I just cried," said the 31-year-old cricket superstar.

"I howled till about three in the morning and I could not believe it," he added.

"Because I scored well, everything was going perfectly for me. I performed till I reached that stage and I was rejected."

"And I kept asking my coach for two hours, why didn't it happen? And

I couldn't make sense of it. But when there is passion and commitment, that motivation comes back to you."

Kohli made his debut for home state Delhi in 2006 before breaking into the national team two years later in a one-day international against Sri Lanka.



He has since shattered records on the way to accumulating 7,240 runs, including 27 centuries and 22 fifties in 86 Tests.

His marriage to Sharma in 2017 has added to the spotlight on him and

Kohli credited his wife for improving his temper.

"To be honest the patience bit I have learnt ever since me and Anushka met each other. I was a very impatient before," said Kohli. The couple met in 2013 when filming a shampoo advert.

"The learnings from one another that we have had, looking at her personality, looking at her composure in situations has really inspired me to fight it out."

"Even when things are tough you have to swallow your ego and keep being there in adversity, keep fighting your way out and eventually you will find a way."

"So that's what I have seen her do and I have learnt from that."

Kohli said he can now apply the attribute "where things are totally against you."

"Sometimes you have to bat in a Test match for two hours for 20 runs but the team wants you to do that. So you should be able to do that."



# World on brink of 'hunger pandemic'

UN says 'multiple famines of biblical proportions' on cards; WB warns remittance dip

**AGENCIES**  
The world is facing widespread famine "of biblical proportions" because of the coronavirus pandemic, the chief of the UN's food relief agency has warned, with a short time to act before hundreds of millions starve.

The bleak warning came as deaths from the virus surpassed 180,000 worldwide yesterday, with governments anxiously trying to chart a path out of the unprecedented global health and economic emergency. Nearly 2,600,000 people have been infected.

The virus has exposed the vulnerability in the health care systems of the most advanced nations and it is widely feared to wreck more havoc on developing and poor ones. What appears to be certain is that the economic disaster following in the wake of the pandemic will lead to huge strain on resources.

Debates are raging worldwide over when and how to relax lockdowns imposed to prevent the spread of the highly contagious virus. Many leaders fear triggering another wave of infections by doing so but are also worried about the mounting economic costs and signs of social tension.

"We are on the brink of a hunger pandemic," WFP director David Beasley told the UN Security Council in a video conference on Tuesday.

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Two toddlers enjoying a meal sitting on the street near TSC on Dhaka University campus while there is a long line of people behind waiting for their turn to receive the handout provided by a member of the DU students' union.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN



## Shazneen's 22nd death anniversary today

STAR REPORT

Today is the 22nd death anniversary of Shazneen Tasnim Rahman.

On this day in 1998, 15-year-old Shazneen was raped and brutally murdered in a premeditated manner at her home in Gulshan.

Shazneen, who was a grade-IX student of Scholastica School, was murdered on the night of April 23.

More than 19 years after the shocking incident, the convict in the Shazneen rape and murder case, Shahidul Islam alias Shahid, was

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

## 6 more die after showing Covid-19 symptoms

STAR REPORT

At least six more people died in four districts with coronavirus symptoms between Monday night and yesterday evening.

Officials have put houses of the deceased under lockdown while their samples were collected for Covid-19 tests.

Among the deceased, one died at Dhaka Medical College Hospital on Tuesday night.

A 52-year-old man died with Covid-19-like symptoms early yesterday at the isolation ward of Khulna Medical College Hospital.

The man, a resident of Fultola upazila, died an hour after he was admitted to the hospital around 1:00am, our Khulna correspondent reported, quoting Shailendronath Biswas, spokesperson of the hospital.

A 42-year-old man from Baliakandi upazila of Rajbari died while undergoing treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) with Covid-19 symptoms on Tuesday night.

The man was a hawker and lived in a rented house in Narayanganj, Nurul Islam, civil surgeon of Rajbari said.

The patient was admitted to DMCH on Tuesday as he was suffering from cold, cough and respiratory problems, he said.

The body was buried by the Islamic

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

### 'Bangladesh will again be Shonar Bangla'



Bangabandhu is seen talking to officials during his visit to the UN office in Dhanmondi on April 20, 1972.

April 23, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

BANGABANDHU'S SURPRISE VISIT TO A VILLAGE

They can't believe their eyes. Are they dreaming, they wonder. None else but Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman himself is there right in their midst, reports Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha.

It happened today at Kuria, a village eight miles north of Dhaka. It

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



## 3 arrested for stealing rice for poor

STAR REPORT

Law enforcers and local administration officials recovered over 480 kg rice and 42 litres of soyabean oil meant for the poor in Noakhali and Mymensingh on Tuesday.

Besides, a union parishad chairman in Narail was sued on the same day over embezzling 41 tonnes of rice. Three local Awami League leaders were arrested on charges of stealing rice and edible oil in Noakhali and Mymensingh.

Incidents of embezzling rice and other daily essentials are being reported in different parts of the country at a time when the government is distributing those among the low-income people to support them during the ongoing nationwide Covid-19 shutdown. Some items are also sold at cheaper prices through government-appointed dealers.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

## Nasa finds earth-like planet in old data



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Nasa in old data from a retired space telescope has found an "intriguing" planet that could be home to life.

The Earth-sized exoplanet orbits around its star's habitable zone, meaning that the temperature is mild enough to allow a rocky planet to support liquid water.

The distant world was discovered when scientists were picking through old observations that came from the Kepler space telescope, which stopped its work in 2018 but provided a vast trove of data from the stars before it did.

The planet had previously been discarded by a computer algorithm that misidentified it. But as part of new research, scientists were able to have another look at the information in the Kepler data and see that it really was a previously

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

## 10-month-old tests positive in Chattogram

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A 10-month-old baby has been tested positive for coronavirus in Chattogram.

Seikh Fazle Rabbi, civil surgeon of Chattogram, said the boy, of Joara village in the district's Chandanaish upazila, was one of the four persons who were tested positive in the region on Tuesday.

A total of 140 samples were tested at Bangladesh Institute of Tropical and Infectious Disease (BITID)

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



PRAYER TIMING APRIL 23

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha  
AZAN 4-25 12-45 4-45 6-27 8-00  
JAMAAT 5-00 1-15 5-00 6-31 8-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

## 'Drug dealer' killed in 'gunfight'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinaipur

A suspected drug peddler was killed in what Rab said was a "gunfight" with officers in Joypurhat early yesterday.

Rab officials claimed Ekramul Hossain, 32, of Gopalpur village in Panchbibi, was accused in at least 17 criminal cases filed with multiple police stations.

Mohaimenur Rashid, additional superintendent of police at Joypurhat Rab Camp, said over 500 bottles of Phensedyl, some yaba pills, two firearms and several bullets were seized at the scene.

Acting on a tip-off, a Rab team raided a quiet place by the Shree river in Joypurhat town around 3:00am, he told The Daily Star.

As soon as the officers reached the area, the gang members started shooting at them, he said.

Rab members retaliated with gunshots ensuing a gunfight that lasted around 15 minutes, he claimed,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



Women and children sit on the asphalt while waiting for the truck of the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh from which they will be able to buy essentials at affordable prices. The sudden loss of income due to the coronavirus have rendered many unable to pay the full retail prices.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

## Fish farmers in trouble too

Farmers in north-east find it hard to find buyers, transport

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Fish farmers in Mymensingh region are incurring losses because of transport disruption caused by Covid-19 shutdown.

Farmers in Mymensingh, Netrakona and Kishoreganj are unable to harvest fish and sell those to different parts of the country due to lack of buyers and smooth inter-district transportation, said fisheries officials and fish farm owners.

If the current situation prevails, fish farms in Mymensingh district may suffer a loss of Tk 400 crore, said Dilip Kumar Saha, the district fisheries officer.

There are around 1,12,000 fish farmers, mostly in Trishal, Gouripur, Phulpur, Tarakanda, Bhaluka and Muktagachha upazilas, as well as 300 hatcheries and 900 nurseries in the district.

The fish from the district are sent to different parts of the country including Dhaka, Sylhet and Chottagram year-round.

But now, many farmers cannot send their fish outside the district and have to keep feeding the adult fish, instead of starting a new fish rearing cycle, said the officer.

Mahbulul Islam, owner of a fish farm on 15 acres of land in Solimpur village under Trishal upazila, invested Tk 50 lakh, including Tk 20 lakh loan. Five employees work at his farm.

Mahbulul said he couldn't get any transport to send his fish to the market. "I am worried about loan repayment now," he said.

Fish farmer Abu Raihan of Dhanikhola village in Trishal claimed he already incurred a loss of over Tk two lakh since the shutdown.

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