



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.