



BANGLADESH UPDATE

414 New cases in 24hrs

4,186 Total cases

127 Deaths

108 Recoveries

GLOBAL UPDATE

185,494 Deaths

2,659,557 Total cases

Risks lurk in reopen move

Say experts about govt decision to allow export-oriented factories to resume work; labour leaders dub it 'one country, two policies'

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY and RASHIDUL HASAN

The government yesterday extended the ongoing shutdown of most of the public and private offices till May 5 in a bid to slow the spread of the novel coronavirus in the country.

However, factories, including pharmaceuticals and export-oriented manufacturing units, can resume operation by ensuring health safety of workers, according to the circular issued by the public administration ministry yesterday.

Experts say the government decision to reopen factories, mostly garment units, will increase the risk of wider transmission of the virus.

The government might have made the move considering the country's economy, but it should not allow any factory to operate unless proper health safety measures and social distancing are ensured at workplaces, they noted.

Labour leaders dubbed the decision to reopen factories as "one country, two policies" and said it would put workers in a more vulnerable situation.

EXTENSION OF SHUTDOWN

This is the fourth time the government has extended shutdown after it first announced the closure of all public and private offices on March 23.

As per yesterday's circular, the emergency services related to the supply of power, water, gas and fuel, activities at ports, and telephone, internet and postal services will remain out of the purview of the shutdown.

There is no restriction on movement of doctors, nurses, health workers and media persons. Besides, the shutdown will not be applicable to vehicles carrying perishable items, agricultural products, medicines and health workers.

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THE AGONY OF WAITING

Tired of waiting for a truck of Trading Corporation of Bangladesh, Aleya Begum falls asleep beside a road in the capital's Mothertek area. Aleya along with many others from the low income group had been in a queue there since 4:00am yesterday to buy essentials at cheaper prices from the truck, which did not arrive until noon when this photo was taken. The bricks on the pavement are placeholders for people in queue.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

TACKLING COVID-19 Hasina calls for a global partnership

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday called for forging a collective global partnership and greater unity to fight the coronavirus pandemic as she placed a five-point proposal that includes devising meaningful strategies.

At a virtual regional conference, titled "Enhancing regional cooperation in South Asia to combat Covid-19-related impact on its economics", organised by The World Economic Forum (WEF), "The world is perhaps facing the biggest crisis in the last 100 years. So, we need to face the crisis together ... We need an approach of collective responsibility and partnership from every society,"



12 devotees max in Tarabi prayers

Govt issues directive; Ramadan likely to begin tomorrow

UNB, Dhaka

A maximum of 12 people, including two imams, can attend Tarabi prayers at a mosque during the holy month of Ramadan.

The religious affairs ministry issued a directive yesterday in this regard.

The step was taken to prevent the spread of coronavirus in the country.

The ministry also said its earlier directive on avoiding mosques and offering prayers at home would remain in force.

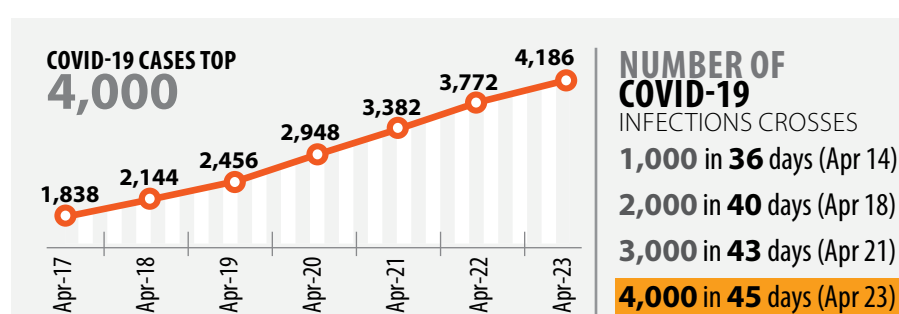
Besides, no public gathering in the name of Iftar Mahfil would be allowed, it said, adding that a circular would be issued today in this regard.

On April 6, the ministry asked people to offer Zohr prayers at home instead of

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'Things better than in US, Europe'

Health minister claims citing numbers from first 45 days, doesn't mention number of tests



WASIM BIN HABIB and MOUDDUD AHMED SUJAN

Despite the continued surge in the number of confirmed Covid-19 deaths and cases, Health Minister Zahid Maleque yesterday claimed that Bangladesh was better off than the US and some European countries.

He presented the number of total confirmed deaths and infections in Italy, Spain and the US 45 days after the first case was detected there and said far fewer people died in Bangladesh from the disease

and contracted the virus by the 45th day, which was yesterday.

The health minister at the government's daily briefing on the coronavirus outbreak picked the three countries that reported the highest number of deaths and infections to compare with Bangladesh.

The officials announced seven deaths and 414 new cases after testing 3,416 samples. This brought the death toll to 127 and confirmed cases to 4,186 in Bangladesh.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Covid-19 taking a toll on cops

218 infected, 652 in quarantine

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

A total of 218 policemen tested Covid-19 positive as of yesterday while 652 others of the force are in quarantine, says the Police Headquarters (PHQ).

According to the PHQ database, Dhaka Metropolitan Police has the highest number of infected officials with 80 positive cases reported, followed by 33 in Gazipur, 17 in Gopalganj and 11 in Narayanganj.

In a statement, the PHQ said, many of the members contracted the virus in the line of duty, adding that the infected officials were receiving treatment at police hospitals across the country.

Amid this backdrop, Bangladesh Police has reorganised the responsibilities of some of its units and asked them to shift their primary focus so that the law and order situation stays under control during the coronavirus menace.

For example, Police Bureau of Investigation, a specialised unit for investigating old and lengthy cases,

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All low-priority projects to halt

Finance division issues circular; announces compensation for govt employees on front line

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

As the government is having to allocate additional funds for certain sectors to combat the coronavirus outbreak, it has suspended financing for all "low priority" projects in the Revised Annual Development Programme (RADP) for this fiscal year, officials said.

A government circular, issued yesterday, said, "Ministries/divisions will take prior permission from the finance division before releasing or spending funds for 'low-priority' projects."

Finance division officials said the permission is likely to be given only for distribution of salaries and wages of those linked to the projects, not for any development work.

The circular also said the projects marked "highest priority" would continue as usual. Ministries and divisions implementing "medium priority" projects would spend funds "only when it is a must", it said.

Projects related to agriculture and health, however, will remain outside the purview of the circular, it said.

Talking to The Daily Star, finance division officials said the number of total projects in the revised ADP is 1,597, which are worth around Tk 1,92,921 crore.

In March, the authorities finalised categorising the projects depending on their priority status as high, medium or low. Of the projects, 330 are "low priority" projects amounting to around Tk 20,000 crore, said the officials.

On the other hand, "high priority" projects include the Padma Bridge, Metro Rail and Karnaphuli Tunnel projects, they said.

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5 more die showing Covid-19 symptoms

STAR REPORT

Five people have died of Covid-19-like symptoms in three districts in the last two days. Samples from their bodies were collected for coronavirus tests.

A 14-year-old girl and an elderly woman died of coronavirus-like symptoms at the isolation unit of Chandpur General Hospital yesterday. They were from Faridganj upazila, reports a correspondent from the district, quoting doctors.

The woman, aged 75, was admitted to the hospital on Tuesday night with fever, cold, cough and breathing problems. She passed away around 1:00am yesterday, said Dr Suja-ud-Daula, resident medical officer at the hospital.

The girl, who showed similar symptoms, was admitted to the hospital on Wednesday. She breathed her last around 11:00am yesterday, the doctor added.

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The use of combine harvesters have been on the rise in Sylhet's haor areas due to shortage of efficient farm labourers. Although the equipment is not suitable for farmlands of the haor, it is cost effective. This photo was taken at a haor in Sunamganj recently.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

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FARM MACHINERY FOR HAOR Subsidy hiked as dilemma remains

Imported harvesters cost effective, helpful amid labour crisis but not suitable for region, say experts, farmers

DWOHA CHOWDHURY and MINTU DESHWARA

The government recently declared 70 percent subsidy for farmers of the haor region, up from the previous 50 percent, for the purchase of agriculture machinery.

But how the decision is affecting the farmers? Specially when they are harvesting Boro braving Covid-19 and facing acute shortage of experienced farm workers?

The agriculture ministry is encouraging the use of combine harvesters and reapers as they are cost effective, but experts say these machines are not so useful in haor land because of the region's topography.

Combine harvester is a versatile machine for reaping, threshing and winnowing while reapers are used only for reaping paddy.

Selim Raza Chowdhury, a well-off farmer of Sukhair Razapur Uttar in Dharmapasha upazila, Sunamganj, bought a combine harvester this year.

"I own 108 acres of paddy land but could harvest only 18 acres due to the crisis of labour. Considering the fact that the labour crisis will be permanent, I purchased a combine harvester this year and will buy another one along with more machines like rice transplanter soon," he said.

Md Nazmul Islam, Dharmapasha upazila agriculture officer, said, "The harvester selling company says the machine can harvest 1 acre per hour, which will be 70 to 80 decimals per hour in the reality of haor. But due to the shortage of farm workers, people are showing interest, and five harvesters were sold in this upazila this year."

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

WHO warns malaria deaths could double

AFP, Geneva

The new coronavirus pandemic could severely disrupt access to anti-malaria nets and drugs in sub-Saharan Africa, the World Health Organization said yesterday, warning that malaria deaths risked doubling if efforts are not urgently scaled up.

The UN health agency called on countries in sub-Saharan Africa -- where nearly 95 percent of all the world's malaria cases and deaths occur -- to distribute malaria prevention and treatment tools now, before they become overwhelmed with novel coronavirus cases.

"Severe disruptions to insecticide-treated net campaigns and access to antimalarial medicines could lead to a doubling in the number of malaria deaths in sub-Saharan Africa this year compared to 2018," the WHO warned, citing new modelling analysis.

The analysis, it said, considers nine scenarios for potential disruptions in access to core malaria control tools during the pandemic across 41 countries, and the resulting possible increases in cases and deaths.

Under the worst-case scenario, in which all campaigns to distribute insecticide-treated nets are suspended and there is a 75-percent reduction in access to effective antimalarial medicines, "the estimated tally of malaria deaths in sub-Saharan Africa in 2020 would reach 769,000," WHO said.

That is twice the number of deaths

reported in the region in 2018, it stressed.

"This would be the highest number of deaths seen in the region since the year 2000," WHO Africa director Matshidiso Moeti told journalists during a virtual briefing from Brazzaville.

The hike would have particularly dire consequences for young children, with those under five making up more than two-thirds of all malaria deaths in 2018.

WHO stressed that so far, sub-Saharan African countries had reported relatively few cases in the COVID-19 pandemic, which has killed more than 180,000 people globally and infected more than 2.6 million.

But the agency, which has long warned that weak health systems in the region risked becoming seriously overwhelmed as cases increase, said the virus was picking up pace there.

"This means that countries across the region have a critical window of opportunity to minimise disruptions in malaria prevention and treatment and save lives at this stage of the COVID-19 outbreak," it said.

Not acting now could have serious repercussions, Moeti warned.

She pointed to the experience of tackling the Ebola crisis from 2014 to 2016, when more people died from diseases previously under control than from the epidemic.

"Let us not repeat that with COVID-19," Moeti said.

various sectors to better prepare for the future.

"During this pandemic, we've effectively used some of the digital tools and technologies, like artificial intelligence and mobile phones to trace infections. So, to better prepare for the future, we can fast develop innovative solutions in various sectors," she said.

Illustrating her government's measures to combat the virus, she said that a 41-day holiday is in-force, while almost three-fourth of the country is under lockdown.

"I've already announced an 11.60 billion dollars package for various sectors of our economy which is equivalent to 3.3% of our GDP," she said, adding the primary focus of this package will be on manufacturing and service sectors, agriculture and social safety net facilities.

The prime minister said that Bangladesh's agriculture is being adversely affected due to disruption of supply chains.

"Around 3.5 billion dollars have been allocated for agriculture to cope with adverse impact," she noted.

Turning to Rohingya, Sheikh Hasina said as Bangladesh is hosting 1.1 million Rohingya nationals, the government also included them in its overall strategy.

"Our policy mechanisms have focused on ensuring the GDP growth momentum by gearing up domestic demand, enhanced competitiveness and poverty eradication," she said.

In this regard, the premier said her government's main interventions will be increased public expenditure, introduced fiscal packages, expanded social safety net programmes and increased money supply.

Hasina calls

FROM PAGE 1

While delivering her statement on "Bangladesh-Building Regional Resilience to fight Covid-19" from her official Ganabhaban residence yesterday, Hasina said, "We don't know how long the pandemic will persist... We need to bring economy, business and society on track; support people to overcome trauma and fear, and revive vital sectors."

The prime minister said she was placing five proposals as the world goes through such a complex scenario.

In her first proposal, Hasina said the world will need a new way thinking about human well-being, tackling inequality, supporting the poor and getting back our economies to pre-Covid levels as poverty and inequality within and among societies will increase rapidly due to the crisis.

In the second proposal, she said, "We need robust global leadership from G7, G20 and OECD. The UN-led multilateral system should step forward. So, the Forum and UN should mobilise and lead governments and global businesses on a focused policy discourse."

She expressed her eagerness to join any such initiative.

In the third proposal, the PM called for devising strategies and practical support measures as the world is currently witnessing a transformation in global businesses, work and manufacturing.

In her fourth proposal, she said a meaningful global strategy should be adopted to share the burden and responsibilities for the migrant workers.

In the fifth proposal, Hasina called for developing innovative solutions in

5 more die

FROM PAGE 1

Dr Md Sakhatul Ullah, civil surgeon of Chandpur, said they asked the Faridganj upazila administration to put the houses of the two on lockdown.

In Chuadanga, a 44-year-old woman died of Covid-19-like symptoms at her in-law's house in Jibannagar upazila on Wednesday night.

The woman had been suffering from fever, cold, cough, diarrhoea and breathing problems for several days, Jibannagar OC Saiful Islam said, quoting her family members.

Samples from her body were sent to IEDCR for Covid-19 testing, Upazila Health Officer Dr Juliet Parwin told The Daily Star.

The OC said the woman went to her in-law's house from Jashore on Wednesday evening.

The houses of the woman's in-law and those of their four neighbours were put on lockdown, he added.

In Mymensingh, two people died at the isolation ward of SK Hospital in the city on Wednesday. The two were undergoing treatment for Covid-19-like symptoms.

Covid-19 taking a toll on cops

FROM PAGE 1

Metropolitan Police, said traffic has been asked to emphasise on crime prevention.

Detective Branch of police, which used to deal with complex and sensational cases, has been ordered to help police stations in investigating regular cases.

Criminal Investigation Department has been asked to keep a vigilant eye on cybercrimes along with its regular duties.

Meanwhile, a significant portion of traffic police in Dhaka has been withdrawn due to thin traffic in the capital's streets.

Contacted, Masudur Rahman, deputy commissioner of Dhaka

reported in the region in 2018, it stressed.

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This photo taken at Malibagh Bazar on Wednesday shows people blatantly disregarding the government's social distancing guidelines amid the growing coronavirus outbreak.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQUE

Subsidy hiked as dilemma remains

FROM PAGE 1

Soleman Miah, a farmer of Kakera village of Kulaura upazila, however, said, "I wanted to purchase one for renting out, but farmers are not interested and I dropped the idea."

Farmers and agriculture machinery experts say the harvesters and reapers are not much useful in haor areas due to the partition of farmlands, mud and standing water.

Jashim Uddin Talukder, a farmer of Laksmibaoar in Chhatak upazila in Sunamganj, said, "When the field is very soft with mud, standing water is too high or paddy is leaning too much, the combine harvester does not work well."

Prof Muhammad Rashed Al Mamun, chairman of the department of farm power and machinery of Sylhet Agriculture University, said, "Most advanced farm machines, like combine harvesters and reapers, are being imported from Japan, China and Korea, and they are designed according to the dry farmlands of foreign countries. But paddy fields in haor are mainly low land -- with mud with standing water."

"The combine harvesters of latest model, with crawler type wheels, can ply the muddy soil but in haor area, the soil is very soft and the harvester loses huge power to accelerate. It is still helpful, considering the labour crisis."

Itefkar Hossain, area sales executive for Sylhet of ACI Motors Limited, said, "Due to the labour crisis and government subsidy, farmers are turning to combine harvesters. Moreover, we are also offering sales with six months' instalments and no interest."

"So far, the modern harvesters are performing well enough in haor though

it loses power and burns fuel a little more due to the mud. But the buyers are happy and there is no plan to look for more advanced harvesters for haor right now."

With 50 percent subsidy, 63 new harvesters have been sold this season in Sylhet division, according to the Department of Agriculture Extension. Now 242 combine harvesters are being used for harvest in the division.

While the demand for farm machines has slightly increased in Sunamganj, it's not the same in Moulvibazar, Habiganj and Sylhet.

In Barlekha, Kulaura and Juri upazilas of Moulvibazar, the areas of Hakaluki Haor where Boro is the main crop, not a single combine harvester was sold this year, according to the agriculture officials.

YET COST EFFECTIVE Farmer Selim Raza of Dharmapasha explains how a combine harvester is cost effective and why farmers need to know about it.

"In haor, a machine can harvest one acre for around 1.5 hours, which costs around Tk 5,000. And Tk 1,000 more is required for labour to collect straws left in the field."

"But it takes around Tk 9 to 11 thousand to complete all the process with physical labours. Moreover, labourers waste paddy at least 5 maund out of 100 maund while a machine wastes maximum 1 maund."

He also said, "The combine harvester I bought usually costs around Tk 28 lakh but with 50 percent subsidy, I got it for Tk 14 lakh. It will cost Tk 8.40 lakh with 70 percent subsidy now."

The 70 percent subsidy was declared

of them died.

"If factories reopen, the virus may spread fast as we know that the factory owners, except for a few, bother the least about safety of their workers."

The garment workers live in densely populated areas in Narayanganj, Savar and Gazipur, and if any of them gets infected with the virus, it will pose a serious risk to others.

"We have already demanded that the garment factories, like other offices, should remain shut until the situation comes under control."

"We also demand that the factory owners allow workers to remain on leave with full wages until the situation improves," Taslima added.

Another labour leader, Kazi Md Ruhul Amin, executive president of Garments Sramik Trade Union Kendra, said the economy or the industry cannot be more important than people's lives.

WHAT BGMEA AND GOVT SAY Arshad Jamal Dipu, vice president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), said they would decide on reopening factories after a coordination meeting on April 26.

Representatives of the BGMEA, the ministries of labour and employment, and commerce and other stakeholders would attend the meeting. A date for reopening factories is likely to be fixed there, he told The Daily Star last night.

Dipu further said the garment factories would be reopened in phases.

The BGMEA has already prepared a draft Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) on how to run factories in this time of crisis and will submit it to the government for approval.

The SOP would cover everything related to workers' safety, he added.

The BGMEA leader mentioned that they would form 15 teams in different industrial belts to monitor whether factories are properly following the safety procedures.

Rezaul Haque, additional secretary of the labour and employment ministry, told this newspaper that following the issuance of the circular, they told the BGMEA and other stakeholders that factories can be reopened once they ensure health safety of workers.

"If any factory cannot ensure workers' safety, it won't be allowed to reopen," he said.

"This is not acceptable ... why will garment workers become scapegoats when all others will stay at home during the shutdown?"

She questioned who would ensure health safety of the workers and who would monitor the factories.

"We have information that workers in 12 districts have already been infected with Covid-19 and five

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UNHCR worried over refugee boats in Bay

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The UN Refugee Agency has expressed deep concerns over the reported failures of vessels in the Bay of Bengal to disembark.

It did not mention any number of boats carrying Rohingya refugees in the sea, but sources say two boats carrying some 500 Rohingyas have been adrift at sea as the regional countries -- Malaysia and Thailand -- refused to accept their entry in the last couple of weeks.

Last week, the Bangladesh coast guard rescued a boat carrying around 400 Rohingyas, whose boat was reportedly refused by the Malaysian authorities. Some 60 Rohingyas die at sea during their two-month stay on the open waters.

Indrika Ratwate, director of the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific of UNHCR, in a statement yesterday urged for greater coordination and responsibility-sharing by states to address the maritime movements of refugees and asylum-seekers on the Bay of Bengal and Andaman sea.

"We are [getting] increasingly concerned by reports of failure to disembark vessels in distress and of the grave immediate risk this poses to the men, women and children on board," he said.

Search and rescue, along with prompt disembarkation, are life-saving acts. The dire -- and, in many cases, fatal -- predicament of thousands of refugees and migrants on the Bay of Bengal and Andaman sea in 2015 ultimately demonstrated the critical, humanitarian imperative for solidarity and joint action to address threats to life at sea.

The 2016 Bali Declaration embodied these principles and outlined the way forward to prevent another crisis on the Andaman sea.

"In the context of the unprecedented current Covid-19 crisis, all states must manage their borders as they see fit. But such measures should not result in the closure of avenues to asylum, or of forcing people to return to situations of danger," the UNHCR official said.

UNHCR stands ready to support governments in carrying out responsible disembarkation procedures and quarantine measures to ensure that public health issues are addressed.

UNHCR noted it is encouraged by the Association of South East Asian States' clear commitment to joint action and a whole-of-society approach in the context of Covid-19.

"Saving lives at sea must be a collective effort, in which any one state that rescues and disembarks refugees can draw on resources pooled from other states in the region," Indrika said.

He said rescue at sea and allowing the persecuted to seek asylum are fundamental tenets of customary international law, by which all states are bound.

"Beyond the current Covid-19 crisis, a predictable and humane disembarkation approach will remain critical. UNHCR is calling on all states to uphold these life-saving obligations to refugees and asylum-seekers."

All low-priority

FROM PAGE 1

"In addition, projects which are being implemented with international development aid are also counted as high-priority," said one of the officials.

Talking on the government move, ministry officials said the revenue collection slowed down because of the coronavirus pandemic and the government was looking at its international development partners for support to complete the projects.

The amount of support required is around 4-5 billion dollars, and it might take the government a few months to get it, they said.

COMPENSATION FOR GOVT EMPLOYEES ON FRONTLINE

In another circular yesterday, the government said it decided to compensate all government employees who would contract Covid-19 while discharging duties amid the coronavirus outbreak.

Those include doctors, nurses and health officials as well as officials of law enforcement agencies, armed forces and other employees of the republic fighting on the frontline to stem the outbreak.

According to the circular, a government employee on grade 1-9 will get Tk 10 lakh if the person contracts the disease. The amount will be Tk 50 lakh if he/she dies.

For grade 10-14, the amount will be Tk 7.5 lakh and Tk 37.50 lakh respectively, while for grade 15-20, it will be Tk 5 lakh and Tk 25 lakh, the circular added.

12 devotees

FROM PAGE 1

Juma on Friday considering the coronavirus situation.

A maximum of five people, including khatib, imam, khadem and muazzin, are allowed to join a jamaat at a mosque and a maximum of 10 people can attend Juma prayers on Friday. However, none from outside the area of a particular mosque is allowed to enter it.

According to statistics of the Directorate General of Health Services, seven people died of Covid-19 in Bangladesh in 24 hours till 2:30pm yesterday, taking the death toll to 127.

Besides, 414 more people tested positive for coronavirus during the period, raising the number of such cases to 4,186.

BANGLADESHI MIGRANT WORKERS

Thousands to move into makeshift govt facilities in Bahrain

JAMIL MAHMUD

Government authorities in Bahrain have recently started moving thousands of Bangladeshi migrant workers from their squalid living facilities to makeshift establishments, to contain the novel coronavirus outbreak.

The initiative was taken following many foreign workers being found coronavirus positive, said an official at Bangladesh embassy in Manama, adding that the opportunity is available for other foreign workers as well. As of yesterday, at least 97 Bangladeshis have been infected with coronavirus in Bahrain. No Bangladeshi has died of the disease yet there, said mission sources.

Being informed about the initiative, embassy officials helped some 200 to 300 Bangladeshi migrant workers shift to the new facilities in the last couple of days. It is expected many others will follow them, the official said.

In Bahrain, up to 10 Bangladeshi migrant workers share a small room which makes them vulnerable to the virus, he added.

In several video clips posted on social media on Tuesday, Bangladesh embassy officials were seen visiting migrant workers' residences and encouraging them to avail the opportunity.

Around 150,000 Bangladesh nationals are currently living in Bahrain, according to Bangladesh mission there.

Construction sector comprises the biggest share of Bangladesh workforce, about 70 percent.

Besides, Bangladeshis are also employed in cleaning companies, driving, farms and plantation. Several thousand, both male and female, are also working as domestic aides.

As of April 22, Bahrain reported 1,973 coronavirus cases, seven deaths

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



With social distancing still remaining a far cry in Dhaka, locals have placed a mannequin by the roadside with an apt message -- maintain safe distance -- written on its body to caution people. It is also wearing a surgical cap and a mask to generate further awareness. This photo was taken in Mohammadpur bus stand area yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

CJ extends closure of courts till May 5

Urgent court functions to continue in limited scope

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain has extended the ongoing closure for all courts across the country till May 5 due to the coronavirus outbreak in line with the government's decision to extend the shutdown of offices.

The chief justice, however, decided to run court functions in a small scope in order to hear and dispose of very urgent cases during the holiday. The Supreme Court administration yesterday issued two separate circulars to this effect.

The chief justice took the decision following recommendations from the Supreme Court Special Committee for Judicial Reforms, SC sources said.

Supreme Court Registrar General Md Ali Akbar signed the circulars saying that social distance must be strictly maintained during court proceedings and the judges concerned will issue necessary directives and instruments in this regard.

In a circular, it has been said that the chief justice constituted a bench each of the Appellate and High Court Divisions of the Supreme Court for hearing and disposing of urgent cases during the holiday.

Justice Md Nuruzzaman will preside over the bench of the Appellate Division while Justice Obaidul Hassan will conduct

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

FOOD SAFETY

Long-term package needed: ActionAid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Terming Covid-19 is a challenge to life and livelihood, ActionAid Bangladesh and some grassroots development organisations suggested the government to go for long term package to ensure food safety and employment.

They also suggested to take suitable initiatives for those living in remote areas like char, haor and hill-tracts as their needs may vary from the mainland.

Through a video conference yesterday, ActionAid Bangladesh and 14 associate grassroots development organisations placed nine recommendations to the government to ensure proper distribution of relief, healthcare and sanitation facilities to marginalised people.

Farah Kabir, country director of ActionAid Bangladesh, said it is not only that people are being infected and dying from Covid-19, but also affecting the country's economy, society and health.

"It's a challenge of life and livelihood," she said, adding that its widespread impact is spreading to remote areas such as chars, haors and hills.

In a press release, the organisations said the marketplace has shrunk due to transport lockdowns and regional lockdowns. Farmers are unable to sell their crops. Inadequate supply of raw materials has led to fears of further decline in production. If this goes on, famine may grasp the country in the coming days.

Therefore, issues like ensuring food and daily essentials

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

7TH ANNIVERSARY OF RANA PLAZA TRAGEDY

Covid-19 adds to woes of survivors

AKLAKUR RAHMAN AKASH

For Yanur, life was slowly starting to get back to some normalcy. She had a child last year and her husband got a job at a construction site.

It wasn't much, but after seven long years, the 20-year-old was finally not haunted by her past anymore. At times, she even felt somewhat happy.

The survivor of the Rana Plaza tragedy, who worked on the sixth floor of the building, severely injured both her legs in the incident. But after taking treatment for a long time and sheer willpower, Yanur, on a wheelchair, moved on with her life.

But then came coronavirus and once again turned her life upside down.

Due to the ongoing shutdown to prevent the spread of the virus, her husband lost his job. The family is now struggling to survive with no money to buy food and other essentials such as medicine.

"I started working at the factory when I was 13 to support my family," she told this correspondent yesterday. She currently lives with her husband and child at a small rented room in

Savar's Arapara area.

"I got married two years back. My husband worked at an RMG factory in Gazipur. We moved to Savar last year. Unable to find work at garment factories, he started working at the construction sites to support us," she added. "It wasn't much, but we were able to survive."

But due to the shutdown, he is out of work. "We are now in a severe crisis. We have run out of our savings, have no money to buy food or even milk for our son... we don't know what to do. Just when we're hoping for a change, this happens," she said.

She said she did not get any relief after the outbreak. On top of that, the landlord is also putting pressure on them for rent, she added.

Not just Yanur, many survivors of the Rana Plaza tragedy are now facing a similar crisis.

Today is the seventh anniversary of the tragedy. At least 1,100 people were killed and over 2,500 injured on April 24, 2013 in the building collapse, considered one of the major industrial disasters in the country.

For the survivors and victim family members, every year, the memory of

the day reopens old wounds. But this year, the coronavirus pandemic has added to their miseries as most of them are struggling to survive due to the shutdown.

Another survivor Nilufar Begum (35), who worked on the fifth floor of the building, severely injured her right leg in the incident.

She received long term treatment at several hospitals, but said her health has not improved. "Not only was my right leg broken, I also sustained injuries in my head and back. The pain still hasn't receded," she said, adding that she was stuck for nine hours before being rescued.

Nilufar received Tk 3 lakh from several organisations after the tragedy, which was spent on initial treatment. "I was barely surviving before... but the recent shutdown has left me with nothing," Nilufar cannot work outside anymore, and requires assistance for all types of movement.

After her husband left, she became dependent on her 13-year-old son, who worked at a store in Savar Bazar Bus Stand area.

"My son used to make Tk 200 a

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

M'singh Medical College gets PCR machine from BAU

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Authorities of Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU) yesterday handed over a Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) machine to the Microbiology Department of Mymensingh Medical College (MMC), to test samples of Covid-19 suspects in Mymensingh region.

BAU professors led by Prof Dr Md Abdul Kafi handed over the machine to MMC Principal Prof Dr Chitta Ranjan Debnath, said MMC sources.

Dr Debnath said BAU has given the machine for as long as it is needed, and assigned two professors of its microbiology and hygiene department to assist with the tests.

He expected that the machine will be installed by Friday, and they would go for tests soon.

Dr Md Bahanur Rahman, a senior professor of BAU's Microbiology and Hygiene department, said this German qPCR machine is an advanced model, and can deliver test results within two hours.

Earlier, a PCR machine was installed at the laboratory of MMC's microbiology department to test coronavirus suspects on March 28. The machine could test 94 samples at a time, and now it would be double through two machines, helping hundreds of Covid-19 suspects in Mymensingh region, said the principal.

The lab has given hope for testing coronavirus suspects of the region, said Dr Hossain Ahmed Golandaj Tara, Mymensingh divisional convener of Coronavirus Monitoring Cell.



Carriages lie idle while a horse eats from a bucket at a field in Lalbagh. With the shutdown to prevent spread of coronavirus in place, some 30 operators and around 60 horses are facing hard times. For the operators, not only there is no passenger, food is also scarce these days. Still they are trying to make sure that the horses are being fed. This act of kindness is also out of necessity as these animals are a source of their livelihood. Oftentimes, the drivers go hungry to feed the horses, which takes Tk 300 per horse a day. This photo was taken on Wednesday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

150 intern doctors at SBMC quarantined

All hostels were locked down on Tuesday after four of them contract Covid-19

OUR CORRESPONDENT, BARISHAL

Around 150 intern doctors are living under quarantine since Tuesday, as all hostels of Sher-e-Bangla Medical College (SBMC) were locked down after four of the interns tested positive for coronavirus.

Sources at Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital (SBMCH) said after tests came out positive, authorities locked down Habibur Rahman Hostel, Jamilur Rahman Hostel, Dr Nur-ur-Nabi Interns' Hostel and Girls' Hostel.

As a result, about 150 interns out of 209 are currently under institutional quarantine. Mentionable, 111 interns were scheduled to be admitted at the hospital but they reportedly did not arrive.

Some of the interns alleged that they are suffering from food crisis, as the cooking staff have fled.

SBMC Principal Dr Asit Kumar Das said authorities have already started testing all interns, and around 55 of them tested negative.

SBMCH Director Dr Bakir Hossain said there is no food crisis in the hostels, because Barishal City Corporation's mayor and hospital authorities sent necessary food to those who are quarantined.

Healthcare operations of the hospital faced some problems, but about 60 doctors will join the hospital in the next two days and then everything would be solved, he said.

'FAILURE TO PROTECT PEOPLE' Resignation of top DGHS boss sought

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Supreme Court lawyer yesterday sent a legal notice to the director general of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), Prof Dr Abul Kalam Azad, asking him to step down from his post as "he has failed to take necessary measures to protect people from the outbreak of coronavirus".

Advocate Md JR Khan Rabin served the legal notice through email, saying that Abdul Kalam Azad and other officials concerned of DGHS have not provided sufficient and proper personal protective equipment (PPE) to doctors, nurses, police personnel, officials and journalists on time to protect them from Covid-19.

Therefore, 3,380 people including doctors and nurses, police personnel and journalists tested positive for coronavirus and 120 died till April 22, he said in the notice.

Advocate Rabin said the DG of DGHS failed to protect people from coronavirus and therefore, has no right to hold office.

He said he will move a writ petition before the High Court for if Dr Azad does not step down within a reasonable period.

Usha Ganguly no more

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Noted theatre personality Usha Ganguly, who gave



a new direction to Bangla theatre in Kolkata, died at her residence in South Kolkata yesterday at the age of 75.

Ganguly was found motionless at her flat in Lake Gardens area of the city by her maid around 7am, her family said.

A doctor was called in who declared that she died of a massive cardiac arrest, they said.

Winner of Indian government's prestigious Sangeet Natak Academy Award, Ganguly is survived by a son but lived alone in her flat. Her husband

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Half of coastal poor have no idea what Covid-19 is: study

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nearly half of the lower-income group living in coastal areas do not have any idea about the Covid-19 virus and primary protective measures against it, a non-government organisation claimed yesterday, based on their survey.

COAST Trust conducted this survey among lower wage earners in Cox's Bazar and Bhola districts through random selection, to assess primary knowledge of the coastal poor and to understand how they are following health directives, said a press release sent yesterday.

It was seen that despite the massive awareness campaign across the country, 49 percent of respondents don't know basic rules of hand-washing and 43 percent said they are not able to follow those rules for different reasons, including lack of availability of soap.

Around 24 percent have no idea about social distancing, and 56 percent respondents either don't know about home quarantine or have misconceptions about it.

Some 13 percent said they don't know why one should wear a mask.

Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, Executive Director of COAST said they conducted this survey to know how the poor people of coastal area are fighting against this completely unknown disaster.

Saadat Hussein passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former cabinet secretary and former chairperson of Public Service Commission Saadat Hussein passed away on Wednesday. He was 73.



He was admitted at the intensive care unit of United Hospital, his son Shahzad Saadat told media.

He was buried at Nikunja-1 Graveyard after Zuhr prayers yesterday.

Saadat was born in Noakhali on November 24, 1946. He studied economics at Dhaka University, received his PhD from Boston University and joined the Civil Service of Pakistan in 1969.

He is survived by his wife, son, two daughters, and friends and well-wishers.



An elderly woman wields a piece of wood at the Basila road intersection in Mohammadpur yesterday, as dozens of low-income people came out to the street after not receiving food assistance for days. Locals alleged that the ward councillor's men took their names and NID numbers several times, but they never received any aid. Many of these daily wage earners also said they were also being pressured by their landlords to pay rent, which they could not pay because their income sources have been cut off.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Usha Ganguly

FROM PAGE 3
Kamalendu died several years ago. Her brother died three days earlier.

She founded the "Rangakarmee" theatre group in 1976 which became known for non-conformist productions like "Mahabhoj", "Rudali", "Court Martial" and "Antaryatra".

Born in Kanpur, Ganguly, who is credited with introducing a new form of alternative Hindi theatre in Bengal, once said, "Theatre is my only life and passion and Rangakarmee is my family," her friends recalled.

"Rangakarmee" gave a new language to theatre in Bengal and created a new audience, which had so far been familiar with Bengali group theatre and English theatre, in the late 1970s and 80s.

Usha Ganguly also worked with Rituparno Ghosh during the scripting for the latter's film "Raincoat".

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee condoled Ganguly's death and paid tributes to her contributions to theatre.

The West Bengal government conferred Ganguly with the Girish Samman honour in 2016.



PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

People queue up for groceries at a TCB truck in Malibagh on Wednesday, with some parking their motorbikes right beside. As the shutdown continues, it's not just lower-income groups that are flocking to the truck that sells fairly-priced essentials.

CJ extends

FROM PAGE 3
The bench of the High Court Division.

The judges will decide the timing and other relevant issues for dealing with the urgent cases.

In another circular, the SC registrar general said the courts of district and sessions judges, metropolitan sessions judges, chief judicial magistrates, and metropolitan magistrates will function for two days a week during the closure for dealing with

urgent matters like bail petitions.

One lawyer can participate in the hearing of a single case keeping social distance strictly, the notification said, adding that no accused prisoners can be brought to the court during this period.

The notification also said the ad-interim orders earlier issued by the courts granting bail, stay, directives for surrender and status quo will remain extended for two weeks after reopening of the courts.

Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 12
"Bangladeshi journalists have been among the leading collateral victims of the tougher methods adopted by the ruling party."

It added that reporters of the two leading dailies are not allowed to attend government press conferences.

It also said, "Ten journalists were attacked and badly beaten by supporters of the Awami League and its student wing, the Chhatra League, while covering municipal elections in Dhaka in early 2020."

According to the report, radical Islamist militants meanwhile harass and even murder journalists and bloggers who dare to defend an overly secular vision of society in Bangladesh.

Criticising the Digital Security Act, the RSF said the government also has a judicial weapon for silencing troublesome journalists -- the 2018 digital security law.

In a general analysis of the situation of press freedom, the report said the coming decade would be decisive for the future of journalism.

"The next ten years will be pivotal for press freedom because of converging crises affecting the future of journalism," the RSF said.

7 UP chairmen,

FROM PAGE 12
M Rafiqul Islam of Gaokandia UP in Netrakona's Durgapur upazila; Mohiuddin Sohel of Galachipa UP in Patuakhali; and Lipi Begum of Keshabpur UP of the upazila.

The notice also asked the suspended public representatives to explain through respective deputy commissioners why they shouldn't be removed permanently from their posts.

Peru to release 3,000 prisoners under virus amnesty

AFP, Lima

Peru will release under amnesty about 3,000 prisoners including those who are particularly at risk from the coronavirus pandemic, the justice minister has said.

The disease has killed at least seven inmates, and infected more than 40 in Peru's overcrowded prisons along with 26 wardens.

"We are going to amnesty approximately 3,000 detainees who fall into the groups vulnerable to the coronavirus," Minister Fernando Castaneda said Wednesday on the ATV channel.

Things better than in US

FROM PAGE 1
The minister said in the first 45-day period in Italy, some 11,000 people died and 1.30 lakh tested positive; in Spain, 10,000 died and 1 lakh tested positive; and in the US, 24,000 died and 1.20 lakh tested positive.

"If we compare, we can see that Bangladesh's situation is far better," said Zahid Maleque.

ARE THE SITUATIONS COMPARABLE?
The minister did not mention the number of people the three countries tested in the first 45 days.

Italy detected the first two cases on Jan 31. In the following one-and-a-half month period, it tested 148,657 samples, according to www.ourworldindata.org.

Spain also detected the first case on Jan 31 and by the following 45 days, it conducted 930,230 tests, according to the health ministry website of the country.

According to www.statista.com, as of April 23, the US performed over 4 million tests for Covid-19, the highest in the world. In Bangladesh, a total of 36,090 samples have been tested so far, according to the Directorate General of Health Services.

Experts say the situations are not comparable especially when the number of tests is not considered.

Testing is one of the major parameters, they said, adding that many cases and even deaths in Bangladesh must remain unreported, thanks to the low number of tests.

They pointed to the fact that Italy and Spain reported their first cases at the beginning of the pandemic when scientists knew little about the virus.

"This [the minister's comparison] is completely illogical. Because, they [the US, Italy and Spain] have done hundreds of thousands of tests by this time [45 days] while we tested far fewer people," infectious diseases specialist Prof Ridwanur Rahman said.

"If we had done enough tests, we might have detected more patients than them since our population density is higher. What they [health department] are saying is unscientific," he told The Daily Star.

There are unreported deaths from Covid-19 across the country, especially in villages, he said.

No import of luxury goods

FROM PAGE 12
Corporation. Television will become an attached department of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

FARAKKA WILL BE DISCUSSED
BM Abbas, Chairman of WAPDA and adviser of Prime Minister Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on power and flood control, says that all aspects of the Farakka Barrage will be discussed at the high-level India-Bangladesh talks beginning in Dhaka on April 26, 1972 to safeguard the interest of Bangladesh. He adds that the interest of Bangladesh with regard to Farakka Barrage is to obtain from the Indian government a guarantee for a minimum quantum of water for use of Bangladesh. Referring to flood control, Abbas emphasises that joint action is essential to lower flood levels in Bangladesh and ensure increased dry weather flow in the rivers which may be

possible through construction of storage dams in upper reaches of the major rivers lying in India.

SSC EXAMS BEGIN
The Secondary School Certificate examinations begin throughout Bangladesh today. The examinations were due to commence on April 22, 1971. The Pakistan occupation forces made an abortive attempt to hold the examinations in August 1971 in which a handful of candidates appeared. Results of the mock examinations were also published in October that year. However, the Bangladesh government declared the results of that farcical examination void in January 1972 and decided to hold the examinations afresh on the free soil of Bangladesh.

SOURCES: April 25, 1972 issues of Bangladesh Observer, Daimik Bangla and Ittefaq

UAE considers reopening malls after shutdown

AFP, Dubai

The United Arab Emirates said yesterday it is looking into reopening its massive shopping malls, a month after they were closed as part of measures to curb the spread of coronavirus.

The restrictions have hit businesses hard, particularly retailers who had expected to cater to a rush of Ramadan shoppers.

Health ministry and crisis authorities have requested a study into "the possibility of reopening commercial centres with their

private sector partners while taking into consideration health requirements", the official WAM news agency reported.

The move comes as Muslims prepare for the holy month of Ramadan, during which believers fast from dawn to dusk and traditionally gather around a family or community meal each evening.

Officials in the emirate of Dubai, whose vast shopping centres serve as its economic lifeline, said they were considering reopening malls "with necessary measures and precautions", according to local reports.

Long-term package

FROM PAGE 3
for people, need to be taken seriously, as well as implementing the lockdown.

They said the relief distribution process at the local level needs to be coordinated between government and non-government organisations.

The NGOs observed that day labourers in urban and rural areas, who were working in various informal sectors have become unemployed.

The organisations said that Boro farming has been in dire straits in terms of harvesting, bringing it to the shed and then to the government warehouse due to the lockdown. They said, the special measures taken by the government to provide labour for harvesting paddy should be extended to more areas.

The ActionAid Bangladesh Country Director said they have taken some short-term initiatives to help the marginalised people, working along with the local administration and through some 14 NGOs.

"To keep the day labourers and marginalised people at home, the government should deliver them food for at least two weeks so that they can stay home and maintain social distance," Farah Kabir said.

The government should provide coronavirus testing kits at all district hospitals and ensure accessibility of the marginalised people from remote areas, the organisations said.

To protect perishable goods such as milk, eggs and fish from damage, these products should be included in the list of relief, they added.

Covid-19 adds to

FROM PAGE 3
day and we somehow managed to survive with his meagre income. But that too has stopped following the shutdown. He cannot find any work now. Most of the time, we go hungry... I need medicine for my pain, which we cannot afford," she said.

She too said she did not receive any relief. "This pandemic is also becoming a traumatising experience for me," Nilufar added.

This correspondent talked to at least eight survivors, all of whom echoed Yanur and Nilufar's sentiments.

Contacted, Khairul Mamun Mintu, organising secretary of Garments Workers Trade Union Centre, said they have been demanding for a long time that the government rehabilitate survivors.

"But no steps have been taken in this regard. In the meantime, they are suffering due to the shutdown. Most have no food or money to buy medicine. The government should make a list of the survivors immediately and help them," he urged.

Watch over

FROM PAGE 12
Rehnuma said the first task is to make a new routine for children.

"The new routine should be made up after consulting with the kids. So that they have a say in the process and it will help them to own the routine," she added.

The physician also said that abruptly stopping the screen time is not a wise decision. There should be a schedule to phase out screen time gradually.

She suggested that an alarm could be set to signal beginning and ending of the time scheduled for playing video games online.

Afternoon

FROM PAGE 12
yesterday. Besides, the rain and thunder shower activity is likely to continue over the next 72 hours.

China rights lawyer barred from Beijing after prison: wife

AFP, Beijing

Chinese human rights lawyer Wang Quanzhang has not been allowed to reunite with his family in Beijing following his release from prison, his wife said yesterday, after Washington urged China to lift restrictions on his movements.

Detained in 2015 as part of a sweeping crackdown on hundreds of lawyers and rights activists, Wang was released earlier this month after serving a four-and-a-half year prison sentence.

Authorities then took him to a property in his hometown of Jinan, northeastern Shandong province, to undergo 14 days' coronavirus quarantine as a precaution, according to his wife, rights activist Li Wenzu.

But yesterday marked 19 days since his release, and he has not been able to return to Beijing and reunite with her and their son, Li said.

"I think they are scared that their mistreatment of Wang during his prison sentence may be fully revealed," Li told AFP.

"Regardless of their motives or plans, their restrictions on Wang's human rights and liberty are against the law. This should be condemned by all."

Numerous human rights observers have expressed concerns over alleged instances of torture experienced by Wang while under detention, and Li has previously told AFP that she is worried about the visible deterioration of her husband's health.

Thousands to

FROM PAGE 3
and 784 recoveries, according to worldometers.info.

Sheikh Mohammed Tahaudul Islam, labour welfare counsellor at Bangladesh embassy in Manama, said around 2,000 Bangladeshis are in quarantine there until Wednesday.

Asked about the new measure, Tahaudul said due to surge in coronavirus cases, Bahrain authorities are more concerned about its spread within migrant workers' camps, because they live in congested conditions.

Most of the infected individuals are from the labour accommodations, Tahaudul told this newspaper by phone.

"As per the measure, Bahrain government is not allowing more than five persons to stay in a standard living room. In some cases, 30 Bangladeshi workers share a three-room flat," he added.

Tahaudul said Bahrain government has created temporary living facilities at school buildings and stadiums.

Beside accommodation, the authorities will arrange food three times a day and provide free wireless internet, he added.

He said Bahrain authorities requested Bangladesh mission to inform Bangladeshi workers to avail the facilities, where they can stay until the situation turns normal.

The initiative started in Manama recently, and will start in other governorates gradually, he added.

In the video clips, a couple of social organisations of Bangladeshi expatriates were seen assisting embassy officials in a campaign to encourage workers.

Asked over phone, a member of one organisation said the opportunity is significant for many Bangladeshis because they are in hardship since their income opportunities have gone due to government imposed shutdown on economic activities.

'Long way to go' to end virus crisis

FROM PAGE 12
against the pandemic, days after Washington said it would freeze funding.

The US, which is the WHO's biggest contributor, accused the organisation last week of "mismanaging" the COVID-19 crisis, drawing ire from Beijing as both countries spar over the deadly virus.

Foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said the new donation would be in addition to a previous \$20 million committed, and would help "strengthen developing countries' health systems".

In announcing the funding freeze last week, US President Donald Trump accused the WHO of covering up the seriousness of the coronavirus outbreak in China before it spread.

He has also charged the WHO with being "very China-centric" despite Washington's heavy funding.

According to Trump, US taxpayers provided between \$400 million and \$500 million per year to the WHO, while "in contrast, China contributes roughly \$40 million a year and even less".

Trump also claimed the outbreak could have been contained with "very little death" had the WHO assessed the situation in China accurately.

The deadly virus first emerged in the central Chinese city of Wuhan, which was locked down in late January to curb the spread. China has denied Western suggestions that it covered up the extent of the virus outbreak, rejecting claims it has an overly cosy relationship with the WHO as well.

The comments came after the director of the US Centers for Disease Control asked Americans to prepare for a second, possibly more devastating, wave of coronavirus infections.

The United States is the hardest-hit country on the planet, with more than 46,500 coronavirus deaths and over 840,000 infections.

But pressure is growing on authorities to ease restrictions to boost the economy, which is reeling from the pandemic.

Trump, who is keen to restart the US economy, issued rare criticism of a Republican state governor on Wednesday, after Georgia allowed small businesses to reopen.

"It's too soon," the president said.

The explosion of coronavirus cases across the United States has overwhelmed healthcare facilities, from the most developed parts like New York City to the Native American territory of the Navajo Nation in the southwest, where a lack of running water and poor infrastructure has made the situation worse.

The WHO and other health experts have warned that strict containment measures like lockdowns should remain until there is a viable treatment or vaccine for the coronavirus.

There was a ray of hope on that front in Europe, where Germany announced Wednesday that human trials for a vaccine will start by next week.

It is only the fifth such effort to have been authorised worldwide, and is a significant step in making a vaccine "available as soon as possible", Germany's regulatory body said.

But even at the current, rapid pace of development, an effective prophylactic could be several months away.

In Europe -- where the death toll climbed past 110,000 -- some countries have slightly eased coronavirus measures, but bans on large gatherings have been extended.

Finland said it would maintain a ban on gatherings of more than 500 people until the end of July, while hard-hit Spain said it did not expect to lift its strict lockdown until mid-May.

"We must be incredibly careful in this phase," said Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez.

In South Asia, coronavirus infections have crossed 37,000, with more than half in India, official data showed yesterday, complicating the task of governments looking to scale back lockdowns that have destroyed the livelihoods of millions.

4 of a family

FROM PAGE 12
Station, said they rushed to the spot around 4:00pm on information and recovered the bodies.

Two knives were also recovered from the spot. The reason behind the killings could not be known immediately, he added.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Bangladesh Railway
Office of the Assistant Executive Engineer/I.C./CLW
Parbatipur, Dinajpur
No. Notice/AEN/IC/CLW/D1/2019-20 Date: 23/04/2020

Invitation for Tender

e-Tender is invited in e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocurement.gov.bd>) by Assistant Executive Engineer/Incharge/CLW, Bangladesh Railway, Parbatipur for the procurement of:

Sl No.	Tender ID	Name of work	Tender/proposal document last selling/ downloading date and time	Last date and time for tender/ proposal security submission
1.	455331	In SSAE/Works/CLW/PBT/Through Repair and changing C.I. sheet roofing of force section paint shop building with other ancillary works at CLW Area.	07-May-2020 15:30	10-May-2020 10:30
2.	452909	In SSAE/Works/CLW/PBT/Construction of Proposed Reinforcement cement concrete R.C.C bank protection Palisade wall for pond in CLW Residential Area	07-May-2020 15:30	10-May-2020 10:30

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender please register on e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocurement.gov.bd>). Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk helpdesk@eprocurement.gov.bd

Md. Ahasan Uddin
Assistant Executive Engineer/IC/CLW
Bangladesh Railway, Parbatipur
GD-754

TRUMP'S THREAT TO DESTROY IRAN GUNBOATS

Guards chief vows 'decisive response'

AFP, Tehran

Iran's Revolutionary Guards chief yesterday warned the US of a "decisive response" after President Donald Trump said he ordered the US Navy to destroy Iranian boats that harass American ships in the Gulf.

Iran and the United States have appeared to be on the brink of an all-out confrontation twice in the past year. Decades-old acrimony between the two sides worsened in 2018 when Trump unilaterally withdrew from a deal that gave Iran relief from sanctions in return for curbs on its nuclear programme.

Tensions escalated further in January when a US air strike killed Qasem Soleimani, the top Iranian general who headed the Guards' foreign arm, the Quds Force.

"We declare to the Americans that we are absolutely determined and serious... and that all action will be met with a decisive response that will be efficient and quick," Major General Hossein Salami said. "We have also ordered our naval units to target (US boats and forces) if they try to endanger the safety of our ships or boats of war."

The latest confrontation between the arch-foes came after the United States accused Iran of harassing its ships in the Gulf last week.

Trump took to Twitter on Wednesday as the Guards said they had launched the Islamic republic's first military satellite. The US president said he had "instructed the United States Navy to shoot down and destroy any and all Iranian gunboats if they harass our ships at sea".

In response, Iran yesterday summoned the Swiss ambassador to Tehran that represents US interests in the Islamic republic, state media said.



Women carry fodder for their cattle through a mustard field on the outskirts of Srinagar. Photo was taken Wednesday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC LATEST UPDATES

DEATH TOLL TOPS 184,000

The death toll from the novel coronavirus pandemic rose to 184,268 yesterday, according to a tally from Johns Hopkins University yesterday at 1200GMT. More than 2,645,092 declared cases have been registered in 193 countries and territories. Of these cases, at least 719,339 are now considered recovered. In US, the death toll stood at 47,681 with 849,092 infections. Italy is the next most-affected country with 25,085 deaths. It is followed by Spain with 22,157 fatalities, France with 21,373 deaths and Britain with 18,151 deaths.

'LONG WAY TO GO'

COVID-19 will stalk the planet for a long time to come, the World Health Organization said, warning that most countries were still in the early stages of tackling the pandemic. WHO boss Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said some countries that thought they had the new coronavirus under control were witnessing a resurgence in cases, while there were troubling upward trends in Africa and the Americas.

NO DEATHS IN CHINA

For the eighth straight day, China's National Health Commission reported no new deaths from COVID-19 in its daily figures. It said China confirmed 10 new cases, six of them imported.

'WE ARE ON THIN ICE'

Chancellor Angela Merkel urged Germans to show endurance and discipline to get through the coronavirus pandemic that is "still at the beginning". Merkel is worried that Germans are relaxing their social distancing efforts. "It is precisely because the figures give rise to hope that I feel obliged to say that this interim result is fragile. We are on thin ice, the thinnest ice even," Merkel told the Bundestag lower house of parliament.

US 'GREEN CARD' CURB

US President Donald Trump announced he had signed an order partially suspending immigration to the United States, arguing the drastic measure would protect jobs during the coronavirus crisis. The suspension hits people applying for permanent residency, or green cards. Seasonal workers, such as immigrants vital to US farm labor, are still allowed to enter.

STROKES IN YOUNG ADULTS

The new coronavirus appears to be causing sudden strokes in adults in their 30s and 40s who are not otherwise terribly ill, doctors reported Wednesday. There's growing evidence that Covid-19 infection can cause the blood to clot in unusual ways, and stroke would be an expected consequence of that.

GERMANY, UK START TRIALS

The race to develop an effective vaccine against the coronavirus gathered pace this week, as clinical trials on humans were approved in Germany and launched in the UK. Though there are now around 150 development projects worldwide, the German and British plans are among only five clinical trials on humans which have been approved across the globe.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

South Asia cases top 37,000 Three negatives and a positive

India records more than 1400 cases in 24 hours; death toll hits 686

REUTERS, New Delhi

South Asia's coronavirus infections have crossed 37,000, with more than half in India, official data showed yesterday, complicating the task of governments looking to scale back lockdowns that have destroyed the livelihoods of millions.

Authorities in India sought this week to ease a stringent 40-day lockdown of the population of 1.3 billion by allowing farm and industrial activity in the least-affected rural areas.

But more than 1,400 new cases reported on Wednesday, for one of India's biggest single-day jumps in recent weeks, carried its tally to 21,797 infections. 686 people died.

"We have to remain focused in this fight, the effort is to stop the spread at any cost," said Satyendra Jain, the health minister of Delhi, one of India's top three virus hotspots.

"If we want end the lockdown, we have to bring down the number of



red zones."

In neighbouring Pakistan, which has reported 10,513 cases, including 224 deaths, Prime Minister Imran Khan tested negative for the virus, the information and broadcasting minister said.

Khan was tested after a meeting last week with the head of one of the country's biggest charity organisations, who later proved to have the virus.

"I am happy to report that his test is negative," said Firdous Ashiq Awan, the minister.

But concern is growing over

Pakistan's move, in response to appeals from religious groups, to allow mosque gatherings during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, despite experts' warnings that they could fuel uncontrollable spread of the virus.

The fasting month is expected to begin today.

Until now, South Asia, home to a fifth of the world's population, has suffered fewer infections in the pandemic than rich nations such as Britain, Spain and the United States.

But that could be the result of lower rates of testing that health experts believe may allow the virus to lurk undetected.

Afghanistan has reported 1,176 cases, including 40 deaths. Sri Lanka has reported 330 cases, including seven deaths.

While Maldives, Nepal, Bhutan have reported 34 cases, 45 cases six cases respectively. These three country reported no deaths.

Questions raising over China test accuracy

REUTERS, Wuhan

Trader He Ximing in the Chinese city of Wuhan says he has no idea how or where he caught the coronavirus or why repeated nucleic acid tests showed he didn't have it.

He was not a coronavirus patient, doctors told him, even though he had been having difficulty breathing with what he described as smothering chest congestion from early February.

But his condition worried the authorities enough to get him sent to a quarantine centre. Still, he did not challenge the three negative tests at the time. After all, his wife did not fall sick.

But he could not shake off the nagging suspicion that he had the coronavirus and in late March went to a hospital in Wuhan for more tests, including one for antibodies.

"This time he tested positive. 'I didn't expect it,' the 52-year-old vegetable seller said as he showed Reuters a copy of his test results - positive for antibodies showing exposure to the coronavirus.

Finally, at least, he had an explanation for why he felt so terrible. "I felt like I was dying. You can't imagine how it feels."

His case is not unique. Similar instances in China and elsewhere have compounded concern over the accuracy of coronavirus testing, even as authorities push for testing as key to handling the crisis.

Unreliable testing could undermine strategies not just for stopping the virus but for opening up locked-down economies, as pressure grows on governments around the world to ease restrictions.



Protesters display placards and US flags from their vehicle demanding the "Stay at Home" order to be lifted and the government to re-open the state during an "Open California" rally in downtown Los Angeles, on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP

Pandemic becoming a rights crisis

Says UN chief

REUTERS, New York

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres yesterday said the coronavirus could give some countries an excuse to adopt repressive measures for reasons unrelated to the pandemic as he warned that the outbreak risks becoming a human rights crisis.

Guterres released a UN report highlighting how human rights should guide the response and recovery to the health, social and economic crisis gripping the world. He added that while the virus does not discriminate, its impacts do.

"We see the disproportionate effects on certain communities, the rise of hate speech, the targeting of vulnerable groups, and the risks of heavy-handed security responses undermining the health response," Guterres said.

The UN report said migrants, refugees and internally displaced people are particularly vulnerable. It said more than 131 countries have closed their borders, with only 30 allowing exemptions for asylum-seekers.

"Against the background of rising ethno-nationalism, populism, authoritarianism and a pushback against human rights in some countries, the crisis can provide a pretext to adopt repressive measures for purposes unrelated to the pandemic," he said. "This is unacceptable."

The United Nations did not give any specific examples of such measures.

Guterres called on governments to be transparent, responsive and accountable and stressed that civic space and press freedom were "critical." He said: "The best response is one that responds proportionately to immediate threats while protecting human rights and the rule of law."

West Bank annexation 'an Israeli decision': Pompeo

REUTERS, Washington

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on Wednesday it was up to Israel whether to annex parts of the West Bank and said that Washington would offer its views privately to Israel's new government, drawing a warning from Palestinians who vowed not to "stand handcuffed" if Israel formally took their land.

"As for the annexation of the West Bank, the Israelis will ultimately make those decisions," Pompeo told reporters. "That's an Israeli decision. And we will work closely with them to share with them our views of this in (a) private setting."

Pompeo also said he was "happy" Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and centrist rival Benny Gantz signed a deal on Monday to form a national emergency government, saying he did not think a fourth Israeli election was in Israel's interest.

The coalition agreement says that while the new government will strive for peace and regional stability, plans to extend Israeli sovereignty to Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank - land the Palestinians seek for a state - could advance.

The move would mean a de-facto annexation of territory that Israel seized in a 1967 war and that is presently under Israeli military control. It would have to be greenlighted by the United States, after which Netanyahu would be permitted to advance the plans from July 1, the agreement says.

Pompeo's comment drew condemnation from Palestinian President Mahmoud

Abbas, who said his administration would view agreements with Israel and the United States as "completely canceled" if Israel annexes land in the West Bank.

"We have informed the relevant international parties, including the American and the Israeli governments, that we will not stand hand-cuffed if Israel announces the annexation of any part of our land," Abbas said on Palestine TV.



According to Abbas' office, the televised remarks were recorded shortly before Pompeo made his statement.

The Palestinians and many countries regard settlements as illegal under the Geneva Conventions that bar settling on land captured in war.

A US President Donald Trump's peace proposal unveiled in January was embraced by Israel and rejected by the Palestinians, partly because it awards Israel most of what it has sought during decades of conflict, including nearly all the occupied land on which it has built settlements.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Upazila Health Complex
Ramu, Cox's Bazar

Tender Notice

Memo No. UHC/Ramu/MSR Tender/2019-2020/1831 Date: 22/04/2020

Invitation for Tender (IFT) for procurement of MSR goods for Upazila Health Complex, Ramu, Cox's Bazar in the fiscal year 2019-2020.

01	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.		
02	Agency	Upazila Health Complex, Ramu, Cox's Bazar.		
03	Procuring entity district	Cox's Bazar.		
04	Procurement method	Open Tendering Method (OTM).		
05	Tender name	Procurement of MSR in the fiscal year 2019-2020.		
06	Budget and source of funds	Revenue, Development and GOB.		
07	Name of group	Description	Price of tender schedule (only each, non-refundable)	Tender earnest money amounts (refundable)
	A	Medicine	750/- (Taka seven hundred fifty only)	50,000/- (Tk fifty thousand only)
	B	MSR Instruments	750/- (Taka seven hundred fifty only)	50,000/- (Tk fifty thousand only)
	C	Chemical, Re-agent, X-ray film	750/- (Taka seven hundred fifty only)	25,000/- (Tk twenty-five thousand only)
	D	Gauge, Bandage, Cotton	750/- (Taka seven hundred fifty only)	25,000/- (Tk twenty-five thousand only)
	E	Linen goods	750/- (Taka seven hundred fifty only)	25,000/- (Tk twenty-five thousand only)
	F	Furniture	750/- (Taka seven hundred fifty only)	25,000/- (Tk twenty-five thousand only)
Name and addresses of the office				
08	a) Tender schedule selling place	Upazila Health Complex, Ramu, Cox's Bazar.		
	b) Tender schedule receiving place	1. Upazila Health Complex, Ramu, Cox's Bazar.		
	c) Tender schedule opening place	Upazila Health Complex, Ramu, Cox's Bazar.		
09	Tender schedule selling date	Tender booklets will be sold from the date of 25/04/2020 to 11-05-2020 during the office hour. No Tender booklet would be sold after schedule date and time.		
10	Tender dropping and closing date and time	12-05-2020 at 12.00 Noon.		
11	Tender opening date and time	12-05-2020 at 12.30pm.		
12	Description of terms and conditions	Detailed description in Tender booklet.		
13	Description of goods & related services	Detailed description in Tender booklet.		
PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS				
14	Name of procuring entity	Dr. Nobel Kumar Barua.		
15	Designation of procuring entity	UH&FPO.		
16	Address of procuring entity	Upazila Health Complex, Ramu, Cox's Bazar.		
17	Contact details of official tenders	Phone:		
Note: a) Price of tender schedule would be paid by Treasury Challan into the Code No. 1-2711-0000-2366 for The Upazila Health & Family Planning Officer, Ramu, Cox's Bazar by the Sonali Bank, Ramu Branch.				
b) If the date of selling, receiving and opening of tender is disturbed under any unavoidable circumstances, the next working day will be applicable for the same respectively.				
c) Corrigendum if necessary in future will be a part of this notice. The competent authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tender without assigning any reason whatsoever.				

STOCKS		COMMODITIES		ASIAN MARKETS				CURRENCIES			
DSEX	CSCX	Gold	Oil	MUMBAI	TOKYO	SINGAPORE	SHANGHAI	USD	EUR	GBP	CNY
Closed	Closed	\$1,735.60 (per ounce)	\$21.88 (per barrel)	▲ 1.54%	▲ 1.52%	▼ 0.30%	▼ 0.19%	BUY TK 83.95	89.71	102.63	11.69
				31,863.08	19,429.44	2,542.37	2,838.50	SELL TK 84.95	93.51	106.43	12.29

যেই থাকুন, নিরাপদে থাকুন আর আপনার কিস্তি জমা দিন জুন মাসে

এসআইবিএল-এর সম্মানিত মুদারাবা ডিপোজিট ফিম (MDPS) গ্রাহকবৃন্দ এপ্রিল, মে এবং জুন মাসের কিস্তি একত্রে জুন মাসে জমা দিতে পারবেন। এমনকি ব্যক্তি কোন ফি দিতে হবে না।

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Star BUSINESS

DHAKA FRIDAY APRIL 24, 2020, BAISHAKH 11, 1427 BS starbusiness@thedailystar.net

TAMING CORONAVIRUS RAMPAGE

Garment factories should go for gradual reopening: CPD

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Garment factories should be reopened gradually after ensuring health and safety of workers because a long-term shutdown will hurt the economy, said an economist yesterday.

Bangladesh may lose its competitiveness in the international markets due to a lengthy production suspension as countries such as China and Vietnam have resumed their manufacturing lines.

All stakeholders should hold a dialogue on the matter, said Mustafizur Rahman, a distinguished fellow of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD).

He spoke at a virtual discussion titled "7th Anniversary of Rana Plaza Tragedy: Crisis of Workers and Employers during the Coronavirus Pandemic - Government Initiatives and Way Forward", organised by the CPD.

The Rana Plaza building, which housed several garment factories, collapsed on April 24 in 2013, killing more than 1,134 people, mostly workers, and injuring another 2,500.

"Given the health emergency currently in place, factories need to continue with the holidays as per instructions of the government," said Khondaker Golam Moazzem, research director of the CPD, while presenting the keynote paper.

Most of the garment factories have kept their operations shut after the government enforced a countrywide lockdown from March 26 to curb the spread of the coronavirus infection. The lockdown has been extended to May 5.

Time has not come yet to say whether Bangladeshi garment sector would benefit in the post-coronavirus era and amid a bickering relationship between the US and China,

Rahman said.

"If we can recover from the coronavirus and restart factory production, we will be able to maintain our competitiveness," he added.

The Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) is preparing a standard operating procedure such that the factories can resume production soon, said Arshad Jamal Dipu, vice-president of the trade body.

Factory management can follow health and safety rules inside the units. But workers might still catch the highly contagious virus on their way to work or at their residences even if the environment inside the factories improves.

The BGMEA has a plan to set up three coronavirus testing units and 130 private clinics in Gazipur for the workers once the units are reopened.

So far, 98.50 per cent of the workers have received the salary for March.

On the factory layoffs, Dipu said the BGMEA already suggested its members not choose that option. But the factories that suspended production temporarily will pay 60 per cent of the workers' gross salaries during the period, he added.

Although the safety situation has improved in the workplaces because of the efforts of the Accord and Alliance after the Rana Plaza building collapse, the long-term benefits of the victims have remained unaddressed, said Amirul Haque Amin, president of the National Garment Workers Federation.

Many garment factories are still in operation now in the name of producing personal protective equipment (PPE) and are producing other exportable goods despite the growing cases of coronavirus infections.



Bangladesh witnessed its deadliest industrial disaster when the Rana Plaza building caved in on April 24 in 2013. Although the country has come a long way since then and seen improvement in the working condition, the novel coronavirus pandemic has thrown an even bigger challenge to the apparel workers. With factories shut and demand for the products they make collapsed, they are staring at a bleak future.

AMRAN HOSSAIN

"This kind of factories should be identified and blacklisted, if necessary," Amin said, adding that 15 per cent factories did not pay the salary for March as of yesterday.

Some factory management are docking the workers' wages for the last five days of March, he said, adding that some are laying off their units although there is no scope for such action during general holidays.

During general holidays, workers should be allowed to go on leave with full salaries, Amin said.

Even seven years after the Rana Plaza tragedy, there has been little change in the rules on how garment factories run, Nazma Akter, president of the Sammito Garment Sramik Federation.

There is no balance of power between trade unions and factory managements, Akter said, while demanding a halt on the layoffs.

She demanded reinstatement of the

terminated garment workers and completion of wage payment for March as soon as possible.

The justice of Rana Plaza is yet to be served, said Joly Talukder, a leader of the Garment Workers Trade Union Centre.

An understanding has been reached at the International Labour Organisation on ensuring health and safety for garment workers once factories reopen, said Farooq Ahmed, secretary general of the Bangladesh Employers' Federation.

International retailers should come up with

assistance to help local garment manufacturers, who alone can't provide all kinds of support to workers, Moazzem said.

"Every crisis gives a good lesson," said Fahmida Khatun, executive director of the CPD, while moderating the discussion.

For instance, Bangladesh improved compliance in the garment sector after the Rana Plaza building collapse. So, this coronavirus pandemic can also give a good lesson to Bangladesh.

রমজানুল মোবারক

ঢাকা ও ঢাকার পার্শ্ববর্তী এলাকার সাহুরি ও ইফতারের সময়সূচি

বরষাতর ১৫ দিন					শামসিয়ারতর ১৫ দিন					শুকরাতর ১৫ দিন				
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সাহুরি নিষেধ:

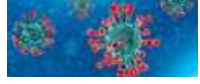
সাহুরি শুরু হওয়ার পূর্বে এবং ইফতারের পূর্বে সাহুরি খাওয়ার ক্ষেত্রে নিষেধাজ্ঞা রয়েছে।

ইফতার নিষেধ:

ইফতারের পূর্বে এবং সাহুরি হওয়ার পূর্বে ইফতার খাওয়ার ক্ষেত্রে নিষেধাজ্ঞা রয়েছে।

সুয়েদ মুসলিম কোর্স:

সুয়েদ মুসলিম কোর্সে সাহুরি ও ইফতারের সময়সূচি প্রস্তুত করা হয়েছে।



TAMING CORONAVIRUS RAMPAGE

Govt now turns to AIIB for \$450m

REJAUUL KARIM BYRON

Bangladesh has sought \$450 million from the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) for this fiscal year to meet the emergency health expenditure and finance the massive stimulus packages the country has unveiled in the face of coronavirus outbreak.

The Economic Relations Division (ERD) has sent a letter to the Beijing-based multilateral lender for \$200 million for the health sector and \$250 million in budget support.

"Negotiations for the fund have begun. We hope to avail the fund in the current fiscal year," said an ERD official.

The World Bank has approved \$100 million for the health sector in Bangladesh to help the country combat the deadly bug. Now, \$100 million from the AIIB would be used as co-financing in the project.



Another \$100 million would be used to set up infectious disease hospital at the country's eight divisional cities.

The fund is not enough to build the hospitals, but the government would be able to start the projects with the assistance, the ERD official said.

Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal is also seeking \$500 million in budget support from the Beijing-based multilateral lender for the next two fiscal years to help the country slipping into financial ruins from the countrywide pause in economic activities to flatten the curve of the lethal pathogen.

He made the requests while speaking to AIIB President Jin Liqun during a video conference yesterday.

The fund would be used for automation in the agriculture sector, agriculture produce, fruit and vegetable processing, cold-storage, leather processing, poultry and fish sectors.

"We have requested the AIIB to continue

its support and assistance to help us ride out the crisis," Kamal said in a press release afterwards.

He has urged the AIIB to provide another \$100 million to rehabilitate micro, small and medium enterprises.

Liqun told Kamal that the AIIB would actively consider the requests and there might be some change to the funding modalities, according to the press release. The ERD would now send formal requests to the AIIB.

The AIIB has doubled available funds under its COVID-19 Crisis Recovery Facility to provide \$5 billion to \$10 billion due to high client demand.

"The global economy is facing a formidable challenge. The situation is changing with each passing day. If we don't start to think about the economy now while tackling the pandemic, it would not be possible to return the economy to normalcy even in 2021," said Liqun in the

press release.

Bangladesh is approaching multilateral development partners to mobilise funds for the stimulus packages it announced in response to the pandemic, which has so far infected 4,186 people in the country and killed 127.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina announced a host of stimulus packages amounting Tk 95,619 crore, which is 3.3 per cent of the GDP, aimed at aiding people's purchasing power, widening social safety nets, increasing money supply and making working capital available for the industries, service sector firms and cottage industries.

Bangladesh has approached the Asian Development Bank for \$1.25 billion, \$700 million from the International Monetary Fund and \$500 million from the Islamic Development Bank.

DJ Pandian, AIIB's vice-president for investment operations, also took part in the video conference.

BB forms Tk 15,000cr fund for industrial, service sectors

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Bangladesh Bank yesterday formed a refinance scheme of Tk 15,000 crore for the industrial and service sectors, much to the relief of the cash-strapped banking sector that was fretting about implementing the Tk 30,000 crore stimulus package announced on April 12 for the two from their own sources.

Under the refinance scheme, lenders will get funds in the form of working capital at 4 per cent interest from the BB, which the end-users will get at 9 per cent.

But to enjoy the refinance scheme, banks will have to provide at least 50 per cent of each loan to the industrial and service sector borrowers from their own sources.

The duration of the refinance scheme is three years that will act as a revolving fund. Banks will have to sign a participation agreement with the BB to enjoy the fund from the scheme.

Banks will be allowed to get an interest subsidy of 4.50 per cent for the disbursed loans, which will be given by their own sources.

The affected clients, who have already taken loans from banks, will be permitted to take a maximum 30 per cent loans from their existing credit limit. The new borrowers will get 30 per cent loans of their requirement.

The most affected borrowers will be given priority while disbursing loans from the fund and banks will provide the loans from their own offer.

Carriers divided over spectrum allocation top-up amid surge in demand

Robi says free spectrum will be win-win for users, operators and govt

MUHAMMAD ZAHIDUL ISLAM

The quest for additional spectrum allocation proposal to manage the surge in demand for data during the protracted shutdowns has led to a faction among the four mobile operators.

Market leader Grameenphone is on one side and the rest -- Robi, Banglalink and Teletalk -- are on the other side.

The three have placed a proposal to the government last week seeking 5 Megahertz spectrum each from the 2,100 band -- where 20 MHz of spectrum has been sitting idle for years -- for free for three months.

This will ensure a win-win proposition for the users, operator and the government as well as the service quality will improve, they said.

The operators can recuperate their revenue losses and at the same time, the government's exchequer will get fattened by the extra tax from users.

The government used to get more than 50 per cent of the operators' revenue and will get more from the users' additional consumption, the three operators said.

However, from the onset, Grameenphone opposed the plan.

But soon after Robi, Banglalink and Teletalk had placed in their request for extra spectrum, Grameenphone put in a separate proposal: it wants extra spectrum and it wants to pay for it.

The three are now saying that Grameenphone is flexing its financial muscle: the Telenor subsidiary can afford to pay for the spectrum but they can't.

"They have always tried to make the spectrum price costlier so that none can afford it," said a senior executive of one of the three operators requesting anonymity to speak candidly on the matter.

Yesterday in a discussion with a group of journalists, Robi said due to the lockdown its data traffic has surged more than 25 per cent. It is not possible to maintain a standard customer experience for all with the spectrum it has.

"There is no alternative to the allocation of adequate amount of spectrum," said Shahed Alam, chief corporate and regulatory officer at Robi.

The operator has long been requesting the government to reduce the price of the spectrum to make it viable for it to purchase the amount of spectrum it needs to satisfy its customers' quality expectations.

Subsequently, it had applied for additional spectrum at a discounted price to the government and Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission last year, which is still awaiting regulatory approval.

"We need to bear in mind that the request was made under normal circumstances. But now, with the pandemic in place, we need to approach it differently and with immediate effect to address the crying need of the customers, who have been compelled to adopt a digital lifestyle to remain connected to the society," Alam added.

Within seven days of receiving the spectrum, Robi can significantly improve its service quality.

And the government can take back the additional spectrum once the three-month period is over, Alam added.

The country's second-largest carrier also said that it has reduced the data price in compliance with the government's



RASHED SHUMON

request and that squeezed its revenue.

However, in a session on Monday, Grameenphone said principally they cannot support the free allocation of spectrum as they are contributing to the government.

However, the spectrum is a crucial component to improving service quality for any operator and Grameenphone will take part in constructive dialogue for acquiring additional spectrum and its decision on the above would depend on the outcome of the discussions, said Hossain Sadat, the operator's director and head of regulatory affairs.

There is enough stock of essentials: Munshi

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

With the prices of almost all the essentials going up over the last month, the commerce ministry yesterday reassured that there is enough stock and also fired a warning to unethical traders looking to create an artificial crisis in the market.

"There is no reason for the price hike," said Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi in a statement after a meeting with importers, processors and wholesalers on stock, supply and market situation of the key commodities ahead of the Ramadan month, beginning tomorrow.

Steps have been taken to ensure smooth transportation of goods and to ensure faster clearance and release of imported goods from the ports.

Besides, the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh is selling commodities, including dates, chickpea, lentil and sugar through its trucks even up to the union level this year at less than the market prices.

The amount of sales is higher this year than any other year in the past, he said, adding that 3,000 dealers are selling the commodities through trucks.

Already some irregularities have been detected and legal actions have been taken against the offenders.

Some 90 teams are monitoring market across the country and activities of TCB are also monitored.

Bank branches in commercial areas in Dhaka, Ctg to stay open

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Bangladesh Bank yesterday asked all banks to keep their branches in the capital's Motijheel and Dilkusha areas and Chattogram's Agrabad and Khatungonj open until further notice.

The branches will be open to the public from 10 am to 2 pm, a move that will help in faster release of imported goods from the Chattogram port.

In another move yesterday, the BB lowered the transaction charge for mobile financial services (MFS) for workers of the export-oriented industries.

MFS providers were asked to impose

a maximum of Tk 4 on the withdrawal of workers' wage under the government stimulus package. But they would get Tk 8 per cashout, with banks chipping in with the rest from the 2 per cent service charge they would get the export-oriented industries.

The government on March 25 announced a stimulus package of Tk 5,000 crore to help export-oriented industries pay their workers' wages from March to April. The salary must be paid into a bank or MFS account.

The industries will get the funds from the stimulus package free of interest, but they will have to give 2 per cent service charge to banks.

All import containers can be shifted to ICDs

DWAIPAYAN BARRUA, Ctg

The revenue authority has at last allowed all types of import containers to be shifted and stored at the 19 private inland container depots until June 30 in a bid to decongest the Chattogram port premises.

As of yesterday, a total of 47,577 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) of import load containers were lying at the port yards, against its capacity of 37,620 TEUs.

The acute container congestion was created due to slow delivery of imported goods amid the long-drawn government holidays declared to contain the spread of coronavirus, according to Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) and users.

But thanks to the National Board of Revenue's decision, about 18,000 TEUs of import containers can now be shifted to the ICDs, said Shipping Secretary Md Mezbah Uddin Ahmed.

Ahsanul Huq Chowdhury, chairman of Bangladesh Shipping Agents' Association, welcomed the move, which came following recommendations from the shipping ministry.

But he stressed on quick dispatch of the import containers from the ICDs. Otherwise, their storage space too would run out.

The NBR though attached some

conditions with the order yesterday.

As per the conditions, all the containers should be scanned while shifting those from the port, and after being transferred to the ICDs, those should be physically examined jointly by Customs House, Chattogram and Customs Intelligence and Investigation Directorate.

Normally, only 38 types of import containers are allowed to be shifted directly to the ICDs. But in the face of severe container congestion, the CPA at a meeting on April 14 proposed shifting about 20,000 TEUs of import containers to the ICDs and SAPL river terminal in Munshiganj.

The NBR on April 18 issued an order allowing another six categories of import containers to be stored at the ICDs but the CPA on the same day sent a letter to the shipping ministry seeking permission to shift all types of import containers.

"The port is the lifeline of the country's economy and it needs to be kept operational at any cost," said Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury, the state minister for shipping, in a press briefing after a meeting with CPA officials in Chattogram yesterday.

CPA Member Md Zafar Alam said they took steps to shift import containers to the ICDs immediately after the NBR order.

NEXT STEP

Making a DIFFERENCE

Using your phones to improve work efficiency

In today's age of smartphones, we end up carrying our phones to work and blame the same device for causing distractions. Having a personalized system that works for you can help you be your best at work. Here are some ways you can enhance your work efficiency by systematically organising your phone to start counting the blessings of technology instead of considering it as a curse:

KEEP ONLY THE ESSENTIALS

There are tons of apps out there to fulfil your needs. Using only the right ones, however, can truly help you in the long run. Uninstall all the unnecessary apps and if you have to keep such apps for obligatory reasons, do so by putting them away from your sight, perhaps at the last section of your apps screen that you rarely reach for. Moreover, having your week plans or tasks entered in your calendar app and giving priority to apps that help you plan your day better can help you stay on top of your game.

CATEGORIZE FOLDERS

Make separate folders containing similar apps to easily switch from entertainment to work mode. You can colour code the folders, although labelling them with convenient names works just fine.

APP BLOCKERS

Putting down the smartphone can be difficult for many

Bangladesh is rapidly moving towards middle income status by 2021. Our businesses definitely offer immense opportunities for the growing economy and this diversity needs a stage for the stories untold. See Bangladesh make its mark on the global map as Making a Difference brings you our proudest success stories from across the country.



individuals. A simple notification ringer can divert your attention from work. There are various app blockers to improve your focus and concentration. Applications like Forest, YourHour or Freedom can ensure that your productivity stays on track and you manage your tasks more effectively.

AUTOMATION SOLUTIONS

Cloud Storages like Google Drive or Dropbox offer you automatic backing up of the contents of your phone to ensure that you do not lose any important document ever. You can save time and get rid of worrying by having the necessary files safely stored. Setting up reminders or alarms can make sure you are well-aware of your plans with others so that you and your co-workers can be on the same page.

REHENUMA RAYSA

A grim picture ahead for Dhaka

More tests and restrictions needed to avoid a possible catastrophe

IT is worrying that the number of Covid-19 cases has been increasing alarmingly in Dhaka, with over 85 percent of all confirmed cases recorded in the division. As of April 23, the country had a total of 4,186 confirmed cases. While one of the reasons for such a high number of cases in Dhaka could be that comparatively more tests are being conducted here, other reasons include ineffective restrictions, lack of awareness among people, population density in the region, etc. Even though Dhaka has the highest number of Covid-19 cases, it does not at all reflect the real picture as the number of tests being conducted here is still very low. Also, with far fewer tests being conducted in other divisions of the country, it cannot be said that the condition of the rest of the country is any better. There are reports in the media of people dying all across the country with Covid-19-like symptoms every day.

Since the outbreak is gaining pace in Dhaka with a surge in deaths and new infections, health experts have warned that if rigorous measures are not taken immediately, the situation can be far worse than we can imagine. What we need now is increased testing, proper contact tracing and isolation efforts. We need to test as many people with symptoms as possible and also trace the contacts of all the positive cases. According to health professionals, every Covid-19 patient represents a cluster of around 20 people who might also be infected. So, all these people should be traced immediately and kept in isolation. Failing to take these steps will mean more deaths and infections in the coming days. Although eventually people would gain herd immunity but that "can be challenging to induce through unchecked infection as there would be a very high rate of serious illness and deaths" (according to Global Alliance for Vaccination and Immunization)—with our health system overwhelmed well beyond its capacity.

As the outbreak is approaching its peak in Dhaka, no one should be allowed to come out of their home for the next few weeks. Only by increasing the number of daily tests, contact tracing, detecting the hidden cases and strictly enforcing the lockdown measures, can we avert a possible public health catastrophe.

Pandemic exposes gaps in education system

Internet inequality a huge obstacle to distance learning

WITH the number of coronavirus cases in Bangladesh jumping by around 300-400 per day and the ongoing nationwide shutdown extended to May 5, it is clear that we still have a long way to go in dealing with this crisis. Academics have warned that this prolonged shutdown will lead to a significant increase in session jams at public universities.

Many universities across the world have responded to the global shutdown by introducing online classes. However, the sudden shift to remote learning has exposed education inequalities within countries, including internet inequality—and Bangladesh is no exception. According to a report published in this daily, top administrative officials from public universities said that lack of facilities at institutions and uneven internet access for students, many of whom are now in their village homes, make it impossible to introduce online education. Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics' data shows that only 37.6 percent of households have access to the internet by any device from home, and only 5.6 percent of households have a computer or tablet.

In this situation, it is likely that introducing online education will further exacerbate the gaps in access to education, placing underprivileged students at a huge disadvantage. However, we must also question why the institutions themselves do not have the facilities required to provide distance learning. Last year, a World Bank report revealed how Bangladesh spends less than the South Asian average on education, and in this moment of crisis, it is apparent that this consistent underspending has taken its toll. Now more than ever, we need to rethink the archaic systems that are still in place in some of our best public universities and push for education that is more dynamic, utilising teaching tools and methods used around the world.

The Ministry of Education and university authorities must work together to come up with a solution that is more concrete than simply adding on extra classes once public universities are allowed to open. This may involve identifying the most underprivileged students and finding ways to improve their internet access in collaboration with telecom companies. It could also involve rethinking systems of assessment at public universities and moving away from the current exam-centred methods. It might not be possible to implement all solutions in the midst of the pandemic, but the current lack of access—depriving our students of their right to education—should lead to long-term changes in education policy that will aim to make it more accessible and equitable.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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The heroes behind burials

It is a pity that we are living in times when, even during the final moments of a patient, their dear ones are reluctant to approach the deathbed. The fear of the Covid-19 has gripped us all and, in some instances, morphed our humanity to an extent that people are even resisting the burial of a Covid-19 patient in their neighbourhood, forcing the family to abandon the body.

News about patients who lost their lives due to the coronavirus and have been ignored by family members are becoming shockingly common. And in such dire times, members of Al-Markazul Islami, a volunteer organisation, have taken on the responsibility to carry out the burial rituals for the deceased. Away from their respective homes, the members reside at the organisation's head office and continue to serve the bereaved families from various religious communities maintaining their specific rituals. Not to mention, everything is done free of cost. I salute these heroes from the bottom of my heart. I believe by acknowledging and honouring them, we can help to keep their spirits up. It's the least we can do for their selfless acts.

E M Sayem Nomany, Narayanganj

Confronting Covid-19: A blueprint for emergency preparedness

This is the second article of a two-part series. The first part was published yesterday.

SABIHA HAQUE and SAMIRA MARZIA

AS there is no universal antidote yet, Covid-19 is here to stay for the long haul. Even when the virus subsides, there is a danger of a second wave and greater economic and social pandemonium.

From Madrid to Mumbai, from Detroit to Dhaka, no place on earth is currently immune from the reach of the coronavirus. But the outbreak, spread and eventual subsidence of the coronavirus will vary from region to region. In part 1 of this article series, published by *The Daily Star* on April 23, we looked at the strategies of four countries with a high success rate in managing the virus. In this part, we will identify and analyse possible schemes that can be implemented in Bangladesh, and can be both effective and fitting in our social and economic contexts.

The most crucial thing to consider is how to gradually regularise everyday public activities with proper safety measures, utilising the resources we have. Provided that all variables remain constant, it is possible to keep the infection rate low with timely policies and pragmatic steps. For example, a community of 50,000 Chinese in Prato, Italy, who went under lockdown even three weeks before the confirmation of Italy's first Covid-19 case, kept their infection rate at less than 50 percent than that of the whole of Italy.

As the virus slowly spreads its insidious tentacles in Bangladesh, the country stands on a vulnerable precipice. With a high transmission rate, especially in densely populated places, it becomes a challenge to tame the numbers of people getting infected.

There are many measures already underway in Bangladesh. The country has been under lockdown since March 26, suspending all modes of inter-city transport and shutting down institutions, offices, and businesses. Testing for Covid-19 infection is now being conducted in 14 labs: 9 in Dhaka and 5 in different districts (as of April 18). Private groups have started to set up temporary hospitals around Dhaka to accommodate the growing number of infected people. Several awareness campaigns are

already in circulation on social media, television, and newspapers. While these developments are crucial to tackle the crisis, for a coordinated response we need to formulate a "Covid-19 Management Action Plan" from the national to the neighbourhood levels.

Besides scarcity of funds and resources, and well-trained personnel who can deal with the virus, Bangladesh faces other challenges too, such as shortage of approved testing centres and treatment facilities, lack of prevention and hygiene awareness, and social inequity. This could become more of a trial if we are to face a

key to preventing future infections. At present, there are 18 national highway gateways to Dhaka city. Besides, there are airports, private helipads, train stations, and bus stations connecting the capital to the rest of the country and the world. Strict border control and inspection at gateways can cut down a lot of foreign-borne contamination.

Preventive measures can certainly begin from the national level, but they can be applied to three key scalar conditions: city or town, neighbourhood, and healthcare facilities. For each city or town administration, measures may be

multi-scalar plan work, it is critical to maintain a close overall supervision by a central task force.

At the metropolitan level, such as in Dhaka, decisive public health and hygiene actions come with a demand for logistics. A surge may not only require setting up of more health centres but also burial grounds. In Dhaka city, there are at least 247 mosques and 22 parks under renovation. With supply of water, some of these places can be potential "hubs for hygiene."

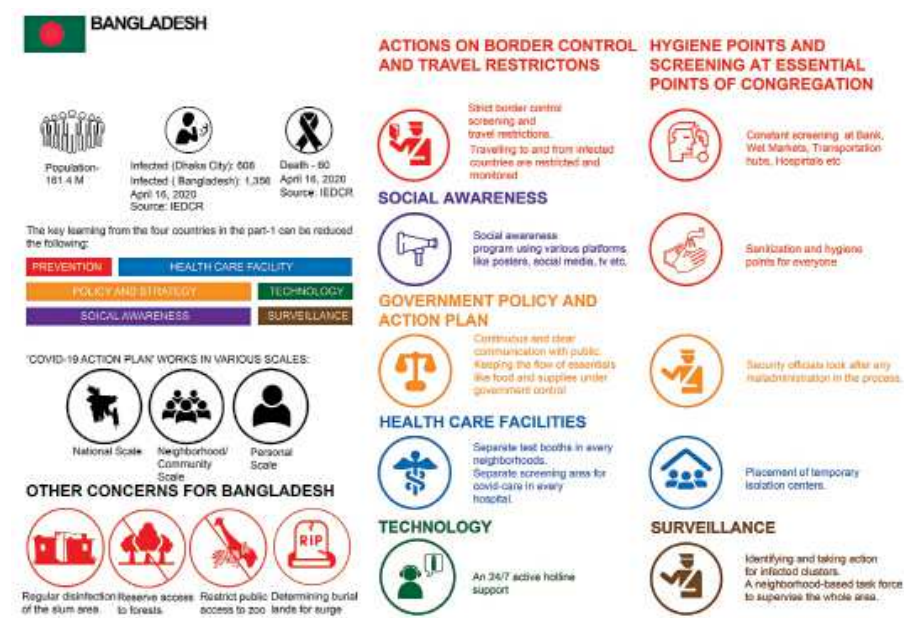
At the neighbourhood level, public spaces can be mapped both for the facilitation of regulated food and wet markets and setting up field hospitals, if needed. Such mapping is important as provision of amenities and facilities is not equal for every neighbourhood. Points of crowding can also be mapped and measures can be taken for regulating gatherings, as well as setting up sanitisation booths, especially for pedestrians, rickshaw pullers and certain vendors. Such booths may also be set up at the entry and exit points of the main *mohallas* and urban blocks. Houses and other buildings may be sanitised regularly. The awareness momentum should be kept through posters, banners and leaflets.

The business-as-usual approach embedded in existing healthcare facilities will not work in case of a highly infectious disease like Covid-19. Segregation of virus-affected patients from the non-infected patients is critical as far as hospitalisation is concerned. Even such services as testing and check-up for coronavirus should be conducted in clearly designated areas.

While surveillance is always a tricky practice, it is essential to continue to track and trace infected people and isolate them. Apps may be used to trace the infected and their movement patterns. At the end of the day, personal awareness remains the starting point of prevention against Covid-19. The more awareness we can create, the more we can prevent infections.

The full version of the article will be found on *The Daily Star* website.

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

surge in cases of both virus transmission and hospitalisations. Bengal Institute researchers believe that we can still keep the death rate low with a choreographed community and government support.

The show should certainly go on. Even during a pandemic, the need for basic amenities and services does not vanish. Essential services such as wet markets and groceries, banks, ATM booths, and regular hospitals need to be accessed by the people. Additional health screening and/or sanitising should be a priority for such points of congregation.

At a national level, controlling modes of transportation and mobility holds the

taken to locate the critical nodes of the city. At those nodes—such as gateways and entry points—strict screening may be applied. Travel restrictions and control may be applied at city and even neighbourhood levels, which can be eased only with the lowering of transmission and hospitalisation rates. A strategic plan should be in place for establishing temporary hospitals with a focus on the site, emergency transportation facilities, water-electricity access, and key staff.

Infected neighbourhoods and areas should be under the surveillance of city and town administrations along with community participation. To make a

What past pandemics teach us



ANINDITA ROY

"Infectious disease which antedated the emergence of humankind will last as long as humanity itself, and will surely remain, as it has been hitherto, one of the fundamental parameters and determinants of human history."

— William H. McNeill

FOR the last five weeks, like many others, I have been working from home, living under massive restrictions imposed to "flatten the curve" of Covid-19—which has become the public health mantra for many countries. A lot has been written about this new pandemic, how and where it originated, how quickly it spread across continents, the complex international health diplomacy, if a blanket decision about lockdown was required, etc. The significant impact of this pandemic on the economy is not unknown to us. Financial schemes have been declared by many countries to minimise the damage.

Seeing everyday headlines, it seems the discussion is heavily tilted towards the economic slowdown (some are comparing it to the Great Depression that lasted from 1929 to 1939), how helpful the financial schemes are, the steps that governments should embrace to prepare and respond to the different scenarios emerging from the Covid-19 crisis. But the fragile healthcare systems in many countries, including the industrialised countries, health policies that are not evidence-based, multiple underlying inequalities in healthcare services—these issues are not making as many headlines as the economic concerns. Above all, there is a lack of discussion on what we have learned from our prior experiences. We may not get all the answers from past epidemics as every disease is unique, but many countries have failed to learn from past outbreaks in strengthening their defences to respond to emergencies. Let us take stock of some examples.

As public health students, we learned that the eradication of small pox was a landmark achievement in the history of public health. We successfully eradicated small pox at a time of weak healthcare systems in many countries and at a time of famine and people fleeing civil wars. This extraordinary achievement was possible due to many factors, such as strong surveillance (paper-based) and containment, nations working together towards a common goal and, of course, mass vaccination. Dr Halden Mahler, Director General of WHO at the time

of small pox, described the eradication programme as an outstanding example of management, not of medicine. At the height of the Cold War, the United States of America and the former Soviet Union worked together to eradicate small pox. However, the lack of international collaboration and coordination at the time of Covid-19 is quite glaring.

Instead of taking calm and balanced approaches, nations are busy blaming

opportunity to track cases and trace contacts more effectively. This has made tracking certain services, such as antenatal care, pre-natal care and expanded programmes of immunisation, possible. We perhaps need to explore how else technology can be effectively used for preventive care, diagnostics, therapeutics and comprehensive disease management. Needless to say, the utilisation of technology should be carried out ethically,



Market workers wearing protective gear spray disinfectant at a market in the South Korean city of Daegu on February 23, 2020.

PHOTO
AFP

each other. Countries are battling for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), which has fuelled price increases and created a frenzy in the market. As we all are working for a common cause, it is time to take a cue from the small-pox eradication programme on international solidarity despite existing ideological and geopolitical differences.

There is no alternative to a strong and effective surveillance system in controlling communicable diseases. The outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), first noted in November 2002, was contained by July 2003 by non-pharmaceutical interventions. Strong surveillance, isolating people, rigorous contact tracing, screening passengers at airports returning from affected countries—all helped to contain the outbreak. Taiwan was on alert due to their experience in SARS. They were quick to control borders, scale up surveillance and implement contact tracing which contributed to their low number of Covid-19 cases despite their proximity to the original epicentre (in China). Taiwan successfully used technology for contact tracing. The proliferation of mobile phones has given us an

with caution and only for health purposes. The fundamental criteria of managing any outbreak are the timeliness of detection, completeness of reporting and laboratory capabilities. The experience of controlling the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) helped South Korea in flattening the Covid-19 curve. They learned it the hard way—that laboratory testing is essential in controlling infectious diseases. We are yet to see if South Korea can sustain this success because there are still many uncertainties about Covid-19. Unfortunately, not many countries have learned from their experience with SARS or MERS. They were completely unprepared for this current pandemic and did not invest enough in their health systems, despite the fact that there had been warnings about communicable disease outbreaks. Countries did not wake up even after the severe Ebola outbreak from 2013 to 2016.

As long as international trade and the movement of people in different continents exist, the risk of disease outbreaks will remain. If we do not buckle down now, future epidemics will have a severe impact on our health systems and on our economy. We

need to recognise the need for a strong healthcare system to counter future challenges. Kerala, a state in southwest India, known as "God's own country", is a shining example of flattening the Covid-19 infection curve. Their investment in public health over many years, improvement in human resources and health system infrastructure helped the state government to handle the outbreak effectively. The experience in controlling Nipah virus in 2018 ensured an effective approach to controlling the novel coronavirus crisis.

Unfortunately, the shining examples are few and far between. It is time to move away from the health vs. economy discussion—both are, after all, interlinked. There is no other alternative than scaling up financial resources for health, building and equipping facilities, ensuring adequate staffing and effective surveillance. Every day we are reading about the lack of healthcare professionals, ill-equipped hospitals and laboratories and weak surveillance systems. Responses to the threats of infectious diseases should be high on the policymakers' agenda. A robust public healthcare system is essential to weather future outbreaks. It will be difficult to close our eyes after realising the economic and human costs of a pandemic.

Recently, I saw a quote in one of WhatsApp messages. It says, "you cannot change the wind, you can adjust your sails". Pandemics will occur in the future

At the height of the Cold War, the United States of America and the former Soviet Union worked together to eradicate small pox. However, the lack of international collaboration and coordination at the time of Covid-19 is quite glaring.

and with greater intensity. It is time to adjust our health system. We have the necessary experience, scientific knowledge and technology to prepare better.

Anindita Roy is a public health specialist working with an international organisation in Geneva, Switzerland.

Migrants are anxiously waiting. Let us not fail them.

RMMRU

THE Covid-19 pandemic has thrown a grave challenge to the policymakers. The government of Bangladesh is engaged in an uphill task to contain the contagion through enforcing lockdowns and raising public awareness, shoring up testing and treatment facilities and framing incentive packages so that damage to the national economy is minimised. A declared priority of the government is to lessen the hardship of workers engaged in various sectors.

In the past, during periods of national crisis (cyclone or floods), migrants remitted higher than the regular amounts to help households tide over the emergency. This time, however, the global scale of the crisis—triggering a sudden contraction in the flow of remittance—has exposed a big section of their left behind families to severe vulnerability. In addition, voluntary return and forced deportation of tens of thousands of workers have further compounded the crisis. Many returned empty-handed.

Reports that migrants from the Gulf states and Europe were not abiding by quarantine rules created an anti-migrant psyche. Households in which migrants returned faced resentment of the locals. They were subjected to harassment, physical assaults, extortion and discrimination in accessing medical care. Without valid evidence, returnee migrant workers were identified as the source for the spread of the infection. The class element of such labelling is evident. There was hardly any stigmatisation of other returnees (business people, students, visitors and other professionals) who failed to adhere to the quarantine rules. Marginalised migrants were the convenient villain.

In this challenging situation, RMMRU proposes several immediate and mid-term measures pertaining to the labour migration sector for consideration of the government.

Immediate Measures

Allocation of fund targeting migrant households: The Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment's allocation of resources for emergency support to the migrants in destination countries and its plan to extend reintegration loan from the Wage Earners' Welfare Fund (WEWF) are important steps. Unfortunately, a much larger amount is needed than what can be mobilised from this

Fund. Instead of relying on the WEWF, which is generated from the migrant workers' own subscription, such fund should be sourced from the government's own exchequer. This will send a positive signal of the government's commitment to the migrants.

There is a need to extend financial support to the migrant families who are in distress and the returnees who came back empty-handed. The government should consider allocation of a large amount of resources, perhaps to the tune of thousands of crores of taka, to provide cash grants to the vulnerable migrant households so that they can stave off hunger and malnutrition. Civil society organisations can be effective partners of the civil administration at the grassroots in identifying the deserving households.

Concerns in destination countries: Taking advantage of the Covid-19 outbreak, some destination countries have taken measures to deport migrants in irregular status. Instead of adhering to international law to protect all migrants during a situation of global crisis, exerting pressure on the countries of origin to take back their nationals with the threat of blacklisting is egregious. The government should urge the concerned states to keep the matter in abeyance until the situation normalises. It is important to note that, in many instances, workers who now find themselves in irregular status migrated through the regular channel with valid visa and work permit, meeting the administrative requirements of both countries of origin and destination. On arrival in the countries of employment, they became victims of the machinations of unscrupulous rent-seeking Kafuels (sponsors) or recruiting agencies at that end.

Many migrant workers who lost their jobs due to the coronavirus crisis either returned voluntarily or were deported; they have not been able to secure their due wages and other benefits. The government should make sure that those affected can claim back such dues as soon as the situation permits.

In some destination countries, migrants cannot access free test and treatment and are thus unable to secure those services. The fear of detention precludes those in irregular status from undergoing tests. The government should urge the concerned countries not to make any distinction between citizens and migrants as it would only jeopardise the health of their own population.

In most instances, migrant workers live in cramped, unhygienic condition. The fear is, if one is infected it will spread like wildfire. The government needs to engage with the authorities of destination countries so that appropriate measures are taken to minimise the risk. Current efforts of Bangladesh missions to disseminate information about safety in Bangla should be a continuous endeavour.

The impact of Covid-19 pandemic will differ significantly on the basis of gender. The Bangladesh missions should work out modalities with the authorities of destination countries to maintain unhindered communication with the female migrants working at home to ensure they remain safe

Responsibility of the BAIRA: The Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (BAIRA) should create an emergency fund through the contributions of its members, particularly those who are wealthy. It should immediately instruct the members to submit a list of migrants whom they have charged money to facilitate their migration. The Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment should demand such a list from the BAIRA.

BAIRA should also instruct its members to return money to workers in cases where the recruiting agencies have not started processing the documents. From the emergency fund, BAIRA should provide assistance to those

in the Overseas Employment Policy, 2016. Resources have to be allocated for emergency situations under the Guideline. Likewise, the Communicable Diseases (Prevention, Control and Eradication) Act, 2018 needs to incorporate the migrant issue with due importance.

Database of returnee migrants: Using the arrival data of civil aviation and immigration departments, the Ministry of Health has done an important work in identifying migrants who returned after the outbreak of Covid-19. This has created an opportunity for generation of a database of all returnee migrants through the coordination and collaboration of various ministries of the government, including home affairs, civil aviation and MEWOE.

Irregular migration and trafficking: In the aftermath of the pandemic, the scope and opportunity for migration through formal channels will substantially reduce. This will create conditions for the trafficking and human smuggling syndicates to prey on the aspirant migrants. The government should remain vigilant and take stern action against the kingpins, not merely the ground-level operatives of such nefarious trade; and in partnership with the civil society organisations, it should take measures to create awareness against irregular migration.

Responsibility of regional and international processes: In the post-pandemic phase, the member-states of Colombo Process, Abu Dhabi Dialogue and the Global Forum on Migration and Development should, taking lessons from the crisis, develop appropriate short and long-term strategies for protection of migrants during emergency. As the leading state of the much-celebrated Global Compact on Migration, Bangladesh should initiate discussions in these forums at the opportune moment.

Migrants are the lifeline of Bangladesh. All along during crisis situations, they stood by the country. At this critical time, we as a nation should do our best to support the vulnerable migrants and members of the left behind families. Such support to the migrants should be no less than what has been extended to others: business, formal-sector workers and agriculture. Migrant workers are eagerly waiting for an announcement to this effect.

RMMRU researchers Dr Tasneem Siddiqui and Dr Syeda Rozana Rashid of Dhaka University, Dr Mohammad Jalal Uddin Sikder of Daffodil International University, Sayed Nurulhaz Azad and C R Abrar contributed to this piece.



Migrant workers deserve better care during this time of great crisis.

STAR FILE PHOTO

and are provided with healthcare, should the need arise. Concerns of safety of the women working in other sectors should also receive equal attention.

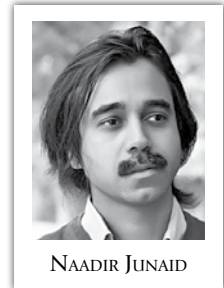
To keep its foreign exchange reserve buoyant, the government should consider giving additional financial incentives to the remittance senders. In some areas of destination countries, remittance transfer houses are not operating and migrants are unable to send remittances. The government should urge those countries to keep such facilities open so that migrants who still have earnings can send remittances.

migrant families whose papers were processed but could not secure flights due to the sudden outbreak of the pandemic. The government should ensure that the latter group of workers is given priority in deployment without having to pay any additional sum when labour migration resumes.

Mid-term measures

Guideline for serving migrants during emergency situations: There is no established guideline about how labour migrants should be dealt with in emergency situations. This crisis has created an opportunity to frame such a guideline that can be incorporated

Mindlessness as Food for the Mind?



AT a time when it is essential to maintain social distancing in order to remain safe amidst the Covid-19 outbreak, we see

many people displaying a reckless disregard for the need to stay indoors. Announcements explaining the necessity for physical distancing are regularly made in the media. Members of law enforcement agencies often try to reason with people who pay no heed to such announcements. But throughout the country, many people still seem reluctant to abide by the lockdown regulations, making us wonder if all the advice and requests about physical distancing have fallen on deaf ears. A few days ago, in Brahmanbaria, nearly one lakh people joined the funeral prayer of a religious leader. The police could not stop them from forming this huge gathering. If people do not understand how risky physical proximity can be at a time like this, it would be difficult to make them act sensibly merely by use of force.

Also in Brahmanbaria, defying the lockdown, rival groups recently took part in several bloody conflicts. In a video of one of the conflicts, participants of both groups are seen hurling spears and lances at each other on a swampy ground. During a clash

in Brahmanbaria, some men became so brutal that they chopped off the leg of a rival and performed a jubilant procession with the severed limb. In Feni, a man reportedly hacked his wife to death and he committed this ruthless murder live on Facebook. He did not hesitate to let people see his brutality. In Gazipur, a man died and another sustained gunshot injury when a police officer shot them. This officer was also a bodyguard of a minister. It was reported that he was suspicious about an illicit relationship between his wife and one of the men he shot.

When so many people tend to exhibit such irresponsible, reckless and violent behaviour at a time of great danger, we need to ponder about the likely causes behind this.

National Professor Abdur Razzaq once said that in order to know about the people of a country it is necessary to observe what food they eat and what books they read. For him, the bookstores of a country can reveal where the country is headed. To this, I would like to add that people's behavioural tendencies and temperaments are also shaped by the cultural goods such as movies and television dramas. Because of the proliferation of cable television and social media, television and social media content have a huge impact on the ways people think and behave. Thought-provoking, socially meaningful productions and cultural products showing glitzy and sensational elements definitely influence people differently. What type of films and television productions are

given priority in our country?

Every afternoon, several television channels show Bangladeshi mainstream movies. Common attributes of these films include: hero, heroine and villain, exaggerated acting, depiction of gory violence, garish song and dance scenes, puerile humour, tasteless dialogue, and of course, a



In our country, violence is often glamorised in films that present it as casual and at times pleasurable.

PHOTO: GATESOFPPOWER.COM

happy ending. Almost all of these films contain a predictable plot—the hero ultimately defeats the villain no matter how menacing he seems. In doing this, such films offer an unrealistic solution to social problems because, in real life, a larger-than-life hero who can singlehandedly fight and eliminate evil forces does not exist. In these movies,

heroes solve major problems through violence. In our country, crime and violence are also glamorised in various films made outside the dominant film industry even though alternative films are supposed to dispense with the ingredients of conventional cinema.

For instance, a 2019 Bangladeshi film titled *Sincerely Yours, Dhaka*

bumps into her boyfriend in a bar, she hits him over the head with a bottle. A young man named Jibon puts a pistol against his opponent's chest and intimidates him. Carrying out the order of a local hoodlum, Jibon also shoots a man. A bank employee claims that he was framed by his boss. But instead of seeking the help of police, he says he does not have any other option but to kill his boss. Later, he kills his boss by shooting him at point-blank range. In these scenes of *Sincerely Yours, Dhaka*, violence appears as pleasurable and casual. It is unlikely that such scenes will make people loathe violence.

Gone are the days when TV dramas of our country used to make a positive impression by dint of their careful exploration of social situations, excellent acting, compelling dialogue and meaningful social messages. Unfortunately, most of today's dramas revolve around trifling problems of the romantic relationships of young couples. Overly sentimental and trivial dialogue, poor acting, and fatuous humour seem to be the defining traits of these dramas. With the vast majority of the people consuming such mindless and shallow entertainment as food for the mind for many years, can we expect them to have social awareness, good taste, and the capacity to think wisely and rationally?

To make their films more appealing, directors often glamorise violence that sends the message to the audience that violence is a means to achieving a particular objective. When many people in our country are so

frightfully imprudent as to take part in murderous fights and refuse to comply with lockdown rules at the time of a global pandemic, we need to think of the cultural and social elements that shape their mentality. It is unfortunate that there are no attempts to provide people with socially responsible, aesthetically pleasing films such as *Pather Panchali*, *Aparajito*, *Apur Sangshar*, *Titash Ekta Nodder Naam*, *Akaler Sandhane*, *Shurjo Dighal Bari*, *Matir Moina*, *Runway*, *Padma Nodder Majhi*, etc. Such films are rarely shown in our television channels these days. Most of these films are set in rural areas and deal with the lives of the common people as well as social problems. Therefore, they are relatable to most people.

Mentioning the name of eminent Russian dramatist and novelist Nikolai Gogol, Russian playwright Anton Chekhov once said, "You must not lower Gogol to the people, but raise the people to the level of Gogol." In our country, carefully planned measures are not taken to raise the level of intellectual maturity of the general public, hence the lack of good sense among many people. Cultural creations conveying mindlessness and superficiality only hamper people's mental development and do not invoke social consciousness. We must, therefore, present realistic, thought-provoking, culturally sensitive productions to make people conscious, rational and sensible.

Dr Naadir Junaid is Professor, Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, University of Dhaka.

QUOTABLE Quote

MARTIN LUTHER (1483-1546)
German theologian and religious reformer.

Even if I knew that tomorrow the world would go to pieces, I would still plant my apple tree.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Dr. visit
- 5 Game callers
- 9 Bugged down
- 11 Begat
- 13 Make amends
- 14 Self-contained
- 15 Plop down
- 16 Heist
- 18 Garden activity
- 20 History stretch
- 21 "Rob Roy" writer
- 22 Fight memento
- 23 "My country -- of thee"
- 24 Young fox
- 25 "Hold on!"
- 27 Short skirts

DOWN

- 1 Stockpile
- 2 Feels sorry for
- 3 Import opponent
- 4 Top rating
- 5 Putting to work
- 6 Fancy fur
- 7 Movie theater worker
- 8 Lady of Spain
- 10 Owed amounts
- 12 Exclude
- 17 Small worker
- 19 Encouraging words
- 22 Confession list
- 24 Face, in slang
- 25 Cuff site
- 26 Virgil hero
- 27 Demented
- 28 Justice Antonin
- 30 Move furtively
- 31 Patellae places
- 33 Poker payment
- 37 One of the Stooges

WRITE FOR US. SEND US YOUR OPINION PIECES TO dsopinion@gmail.com.

YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

T	A	C	O	T	A	C	K	S
A	M	O	U	R	A	L	O	N
P	I	N	T	A	R	E	C	O
E	G	G	M	O	O	C	O	W
D	O	O	W	O	P	O	N	E
T	I	D	E	T	O	N	A	S
W	O	N	S	I	P	S		
A	R	T	T	O	O	B	A	D
B	O	O	B	O	S	R	U	E
A	N	T	O	N	E	L	U	E
S	T	A	L	L	D	I	C	E
H	O	L	L	I	P	E	N	S

BEETLE BAILEY BY MORT WALKER

LT. FLAPIS TEACHING ZERO ABOUT THE BIRDS AND THE BEES

BABY BLUES BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

GIMME THE REMOTE! I HAD IT FIRST!

ARE YOU TWO FIGHTING AGAIN? MAYBE.

GREAT! MORE CONTENT FOR MY YOUTUBE CHANNEL!

NOW IT DOESN'T FEEL NATURAL. YEAH, TOO FORCED.

Ensure food security for their survival

SHYKH SERAJ

Dear readers, the COVID-19 pandemic has its biggest impact over people living across the world now, crippling the public health systems. It has not only affected people, but the world's most advanced economies as well. Progress of the deadly is taking toll on human lives. As a country Bangladesh heavily depends on RMG sector, remittance and of course the agriculture sector, where we need to focus more than ever.

However, Bangladesh must prepare to tackle the challenge in ensuring food security. To me, agriculture sector should get the highest priority among all the sectors since food is the centre point of our survival and agriculture is the most ancient profession which has helped people live for ages. I have been telling this in my programmes and articles since the outbreak of coronavirus in Bangladesh. For the past few weeks, it is truly appreciating that our Honourable Prime Minister has launched many initiatives including investments in the agriculture sector to tackle the challenge. To me, this sector has to be supported even more at the moment and then the health and RMG sector. If it is a case of supporting the sectors, at present we need to support the health and farming at the forefront.

We never thought this virus would fly far from China's Wuhan to the remote corners of the world. But, the reality is in front of us and we must face it with optimum awareness. Government had declared general holidays since March 26 and later extended it till May 5. However, we saw people around the country regarded it as a vacation and the social distancing is ignored. Till date, we are seeing people roaming outside their homes. And with true efforts from the doctors, law enforcers, armed forces and media, people are not just listening. I would like to notice the department of agricultural extension (DAE) in reference to harvesting paddy, maintaining social distances, which I would like to call 'physical' distance. Naturally farmers harvest paddy maintaining a good distance. But, they can do it easily maintaining six feet distance. I request the farmers to keep distance of at least five rows during harvest. One farmer will need to harvest five rows and if there is 25 rows in a field, only five farmers can do this keeping the physical distance.

DAE can work on this method and they should go for extensive training, new methodology and technology to better assist the farmers.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has requested the farmers not to keep their farmlands empty. It gives us a proper signal that we must grow diversified food, nutritious food and most importantly organic food. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina already issued a far-sighted 31-point directive in the wake of the novel coronavirus situation in the country where point 27 clearly mentions: the farmers will continue cultivation regularly and in this case government incentives will go on. So, I would stress for the input and crop damage assistance for the farmers. The crop insurance can work pretty well for the crop damage or loss. She additionally unveiled the government's plan to address the possible impact of coronavirus on the country's economy, declaring an allocation of Tk 72,750 crore (Approximately USD 8,564 million) under a set of stimulus packages. This really inspires us. She said of the allocation Tk 5,000 crore (Approximately USD 589 million) financial assistance to farmers in rural areas for boosting agricultural production.

A list of farmers should be properly chalked out so that they get the assistance. I have received news

Shykh Seraj is Bangladesh's pioneer development journalist. He received country's two highest civilian

honours, Swadhinata Puroshkar and Ekushey Padak, respectively. He is a BIDS, Ashoka and Bangla Academy Fellow. He also received highest award for agricultural journalism from the United Nations, FAO A.H. Boerma Award, Gusi Peace Prize (Philippines) and many other prestigious accolades at home and abroad. At Channel i, he's the Founder Director and Head of News. He's also Director and Host of Channel i's popular agro-documentary, Hridoye Mati O Manush.



Shykh Seraj advises a farmer about personal protection on field during coronavirus outbreak.

PHOTO: HRIDOYE MATI O MANUSH

that people who are not involved with farming, meaning who are not farmers, are taking the support at this time of disaster. The affected farmers should get the support of seeds, fertilizers and other inputs along with other necessary needs. The price of the agricultural goods have fallen down but the price of the agricultural inputs is on the rise. The government must set a strong agency to monitor this or else there will be more haphazard. The seed price is going up; we also need to import fertilizers and particularly pesticides. Our agricultural bodies need to keep a good communication so that we can stay safe while having all the input support at the time of need.

The uncertainty of coronavirus will probably lead us to some more challenges, especially the agricultural input production will probably be hindered. It would probably have a strike on fertilizers, veterinary medicines and other inputs. So the

battle between demand and supply of inputs will be on the table. Now it's important to focus on organic fertilizers like vermicomposting. The food production must go smooth and we need to ensure that before anything else. New agricultural practices, short-duration crops, intake of low-carb and increasing the nutrition diet is a must.

We have a natural disaster coming up, that is the flood, which is going to cripple the haor areas if much assistance is not provided. We must ensure farmers harvest the Boro paddy before the flood comes. DAE should send harvester machines and all modern equipment to the haor areas of our country as we all know how important. Since the inception of Hridoye Mati O Manush, I have repeatedly mentioned that youth should get involved in farming in my programme titled Firey Chol Mati Taney (Returning to Roots). It is really praiseworthy of the Prime Minister that she has urged the youth to

contribute to the sector in this time of need. I have been promoting rooftop farming for a long time and the honourable prime minister has also requested people to use their rooftops for production. As the lockdown progresses, both harvest and sowing time is at a precarious state and necessary stimulus, assistance should be on the field right away or else the post-harvest Boro productions, both main crops, fruits and vegetables will be at stake along with Aus and Aman paddy.

If we look at the world, USA President Donald Trump on Friday announced a USD 19 billion relief programme to help US farmers cope with the impact of the coronavirus, including USD 16 billion in direct payments to producers and mass purchases of meat, dairy, vegetables and other products. The agricultural labour force in the USA are the Mexicans and these people will need to play a vital role once again to keep

the sector moving onward amid the crisis. In Germany, the government has allowed 60,000 labours to come to the country but they will have to be quarantined for 15 days under the supervision of their farm owners. In that case the farm-labourers from the northern districts who will travel to the haor areas for Boro harvest are also immigrants and they need to be regarded the same way.

It is not the right time to ponder on GDP growth, the prior concentration should be on the farming sector, the farmers, and the food. A global problem requires a global response. Food markets must function properly where the information on prices, production, consumption and stocks of food is available to the stakeholders. It will reduce uncertainty and allow producers, consumers, traders and processors to make well informed decisions which will naturally hold panic in global food markets. In a country like Bangladesh, there is no better option than informing farmers more and more on the coronavirus and how they can stay away from it. They should be alerted through media and all the other necessary means of communication.

Armed forces, police, doctors and media professionals along with different bodies of the government is really working hard to aware people in wiping out coronavirus out of the country. Ministry of food, agriculture and the social welfare can jointly come up with a mission with the help of the local administration to ensure that farmers' vegetables and crops are getting sold at a common place and at a fair price. Armed forces, local police and other authorities can assist the farmers to sell their products at a central point. The farmers will definitely need the support of transport and a selling place. Many farmers called me up and said their vegetables are getting ruined as they couldn't sell, so they are distributing among the poor farmers. It is a noble job for sure. A programme could be taken in hand by the government to ensure prices of goods. Also, if some of these products are given to the relief programmes, many other people will be benefited. We must work with solidarity to avoid the greatest humanitarian disaster. And, we must believe in the saying, 'United we stand, divided we fall.' And surely then, we will win the battle against coronavirus.

A beggar's love for the destitute

Nozim Uddin donates Tk 10,000 to UNO's fund to help poor in Covid-19 crisis

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A 70-year-old beggar in Sherpur has donated his three-year savings to the UNO's relief fund to support poor amid the countrywide shutdown to combat Covid-19.

Jhenaigati Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Rubel Mahmud took an initiative to help the poor in the crisis time. Due to this, a bank account and a bKash number were opened to receive aid. Twelve members of a local club named 'The Pacific Club' also joined the initiative as volunteers.

Club president Abu Raihan Jewel, also a filmmaker, said on Tuesday, one of their members Rokibul Islam Rokon went to Gandhigaon village in the upazila to make a list of poor people who need relief.

When he visited the house of Nozim Uddin to collect his name for relief, the latter who lives on a portion of forest land asked Rokon to take him to the UNO office as he wanted to talk to the UNO, said Jewel.

When Nozim was taken to the UNO office at noon, he donated Tk 10,000 to the relief fund. He saved the money in the last three years to repair his thatched house.

Emotional Nozim said he earned the money from begging and now he wants to return the amount to those people who have been passing days unfed or half-fed in the trying time.

Contacted, the UNO said he never experienced such an incident during his eight-year-long career.

Nozim Uddin will be supported from the government's social safety net programme in future, he said.

Total Tk 450,000 including Tk 10,000 given by Nozim has been deposited to the relief fund so far, he added.

The UNO said as the prime minister (PM) noticed the news of Nozim Uddin's contribution to serve the poor, she asked her private secretary-1 Mohammad Salahuddin to look into the matter to reach immediate help for Nozim.

The secretary asked for an estimate and a design to build a house for Nozim from special allocation of the prime minister, he said.



Nozim Uddin hands over Tk 10,000 to the UNO's fund to help poor during Covid-19 crisis in Sherpur's Jhenaigati upazila.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

"We have already prepared two designs estimating Tk 8.50 lakh and Tk 12 lakh and the estimate was sent to Deputy Commissioner of Sherpur Anar Koli Mahbub on Wednesday," said the UNO.

The government will also provide all facilities including food and treatment to Nozim during his life

time, said the UNO, adding that Nozim's wife will also get the facilities.

A grocery shop will also be arranged for Nozim so that he can lead a decent life, said the UNO.

Expressing his gratitude to the prime minister, Nozim said he has never thought of a concrete house but it has been made possible because of the PM.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Ministry of Education
Secondary and Higher Education Division
Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education
Secondary Education Sector Investment Program
www.sesip.gov.bd

Memo: DSHE/SESIP/SPSU/1-438/PVIP/GD-50/a/2019/944 Date: 21 April, 2020

CORRIGENDUM No. 2

This is being notified to all concerned that the following amendments are made to the Invitation for Bids and Bidding Documents of Tender Package: GD-50a for procurement of equipment for Pre-vocational and Vocational Program (PVIP) (Lot 2: General Electrical Works; Lot 3: General Electronics; Lot 4: General Mechanics) (Invitation ref. no. DSHE/SESIP/SPSU/1-438/PVIP/GD-50/a)2019/910; Dated:12 March 2020).

This Addendum is being issued pursuant to ITB Clause-8 of the Bidding Documents:

SL	Subject to be Amended	Current Contents (Including corrigendum no.1)	Amended Contents (Contents to be read as)
1	Pre-Tender Meeting Date and Time	Pre-Bid Meeting time scheduled as 06.04.2020 at 11 Hrs. BST	Pre-Bid meeting will not be held.
2	Tender Last Selling Date and Time	26.04.2020 up to 17 Hrs. BST	12.05.2020 up to 17 Hrs. BST
3	Tender Submission Date and Time (ITB 24.1)	27.04.2020, at or before 14:00 Hrs. BST	13.05.2020, at or before 14:00 Hrs. BST
4	Tender Opening Date and Time (ITB 27.1)	27.04.2020, at 14:30 Hrs. BST	13.05.2020, at 14:30 Hrs. BST

NOTE: All other Terms and Conditions shall remain unchanged. This CORRIGENDUM No. 2 shall form an integral part of the Bidding Document.

21.04.2020
Professor Dr. Shamsun Naher
Joint Program Director (R.C.)
Secondary Education Sector Investment Program
Tel. 01816316842

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Ministry of Education
Secondary and Higher Education Division
Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education
Secondary Education Sector Investment Program
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Memo: DSHE/SESIP/SPSU/1-439/PVIP/GD-50/b/2019/945 Date: 21 April, 2020

CORRIGENDUM No. 2

This is being notified to all concerned that the following amendments are made to the Invitation for Bids and Bidding Documents of Tender Package: GD-50b for procurement of equipment for Pre-vocational and Vocational Program (PVIP) (Lot 1: Civil Construction; Lot 4: Refrigeration and Air Conditioning; Lot 5: Plumbing and Pipe Fittings) (Invitation ref. no. DSHE/SESIP/SPSU/1-439/PVIP/GD-50/b)2019/911; Dated:12 March 2020).

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3	Tender Submission Date and Time (ITB 24.1)	28.04.2020, at or before 14:00 Hrs. BST	14.05.2020, at or before 14:00 Hrs. BST
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Joint Program Director (R.C.)
Secondary Education Sector Investment Program
Tel. 01816316842



Mahabub Harun captained the national team for the first time in the All India Surjit Singh Memorial Hockey Tournament in 1992. Bangladesh team members (R) during 1993 Asia Cup in Japan.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

Two former stars look back at hockey's glory days

ANISUR RAHMAN

After the Liberation War, hockey was tipped as the sport holding the most potential after the ever-popular football. While, unlike football, hockey was not played in every district, it also had hundreds of thousand followers across the country as Bangladesh were not much behind other Asian giants in terms of standard with the performance of former hockey players still etched in the minds of supporters. In times of social distancing, like everyone else those celebrity performers are also counting the days in home quarantine and in the absence of any action, they have taken a trip down memory lane by turning over pages of old albums filled with sweet moments of their playing career in international hockey.

This reporter approached former national players Mahabub Harun and Rafiqul Islam Kamal to learn of their cherished moments in their international career. Kamal joined the national team in 1993, while Mahabub Harun's international career started in 1988 and ended in 1999, two years before Kamal called time from international hockey in 2001.

"As I am confined to house with no tasks, I often browse through old albums which takes me back to the beautiful past of my playing career," was the humble admission from Mahabub Harun, who is still involved with hockey as a coach.

Bangladesh had some memorable results

against Pakistan, South Korea and Italy and often gave big teams like India, Japan and others a run for their money, and the words "remember '93" still drives Harun to recall the sweet memory of their Asia Cup encounter against South Korea.

"A few days back, I saw the picture of defender Robiuddin and that took me back to the memory of the 1993 Asia Cup in Japan where we came from behind to hold Korea to a 1-1 draw with Robiuddin levelling the margin by converting a penalty corner. After that 1-1 draw, whenever we faced Korea, we always heard two words from South Korean players, who said 'remember 1993'," said Mahabub with a laugh, adding that the Indian coach Zafar Iqbal gave all Bangladesh players new sticks following the outcome.

Rafiqul Islam Kamal made his international debut in the 1993 Asia Cup and recalled the minor hardships they faced with Japanese cuisine before finding deliverance in the taste of conventional Bangladeshi food at an expatriate doctor's house.

"On Pohela Boishakh, one of my friends -- BKSP coach Jahidul Islam Raju -- sent me three pictures of the 1993 Asia Cup which took me back to our hardships when faced with food in Japan. It was my first tour with the senior national team but we were really in trouble with food at restaurants," said Kamal. "Many Bangladeshi expatriates came to watch our matches and of them, one doctor, I can't recall his name, came to learn that we could not take our

meals properly. One day he invited all of us [around 25 members] to his tiny apartment to serve us food like plane rice, mashed potato, eggplant, shutki, beef, fish bhuna and many other items."

The youngest member of that squad, Kamal recalled that all of them had finished the food in no time and some were still left wanting, forcing the doctor to silently shop afresh and cook again. "The way this unknown doctor treated us, I will never forget it, though I have since travelled a lot of places and attended official dinners during my international career," said player-turned-organiser Kamal. Just two years later, Bangladesh had another memorable result in the SAF Games where they surrendered the lead thrice to play out a 3-3 draw against the then world champions Pakistan, and Mahabub believed Bangladesh were deprived of an outstanding result against Pakistan in Madras, as Indian umpire Shakil awarded a penalty stroke apparently for no reason.

"We also played beyond Asia when we took part in the six-nation pre-qualifying round of the World Cup in 1996. We beat hosts and eventual group champions Italy 5-4 in the first match. After the triumph over Italy, whenever we went outside for dinner, shopping or other purposes, the local people appreciated us saying: you beat us [Italy]," recalled Mahabub. Mahabub and Kamal said that the Bangladesh youth (Under-21) team had

always been the stronger side, who even played the semifinals of the Junior Asia Cup in 1988 and beat India in the 1992 edition, but the promising boys could never carry their momentum to the national hockey team.

Mahabub believes the young players' early entry in the national team, faulty system of training by local coaches, having no foreign coaches and a lack of a concrete strategy from the federation were the main reasons behind the national team's dipping performance at international level.

"We worked hard a lot but not in a systematic way, which is now followed. If we had a foreign coach then, our hockey could have reached a strong point and there would have been less chances of going downhill," said Mahabub.

"I think we started going backwards in 1992 when, except Lulu Bhai, all senior players including Khaza Rahmatullah, Jummon Lusai, Barkatullah Bulu, Kanchan and many others were dropped from the national team and junior players [U-21 squad] were promoted to the senior squad to represent Bangladesh in a tournament in India. A big vacuum was created but never filled up. Since then, hockey has been falling behind but the combination of senior and youth players could have made the national team more balanced and stronger," opined player-turned-coach Mahabub, who guided the national hockey team several times since 2006.

Another delay impossible, says Mori

AFP, Tokyo



The Tokyo 2020 Olympics cannot be delayed beyond the year-long postponement already forced by the coronavirus outbreak, the organising committee's president has warned in comments published Thursday.

Tokyo 2020 president Yoshiro Mori said there is "absolutely no" chance of postponing the Games beyond their rescheduled July 23, 2021 opening, according to Kyodo News agency.

"Also thinking about athletes and issues over Games management, it is technically difficult to delay it by two years," Mori was quoted as saying.

Mori said he had earlier asked Prime Minister Shinzo Abe whether Japan should consider a two-year postponement but "the prime minister decided that one year is the way to go".

Under heavy pressure from athletes and sports associations, Japanese organisers and the International Olympic Committee in March agreed to a year-long postponement of the Games.

Organisers and Japanese officials have said the delayed Olympics will be a chance to showcase the world's triumph over the coronavirus, but questions have arisen about whether even a year's postponement is sufficient.



Earlier this week, a Japanese expert who has criticised the country's response to the coronavirus warned he is "very pessimistic" that the postponed Olympics can be held in 2021. "To be honest with you, I don't think the Olympics is likely to be held next year," said Kentaro Iwata, a professor of infectious diseases at Kobe University.

He said holding the Games would require not only Japan but also the rest of the world to have the virus under control. The organising committee itself has been hit by the virus, saying Wednesday that a staff member in his 30s working at its Tokyo headquarters had tested positive for the disease.

Postponing the Games is a massive logistical undertaking, and expected to incur significant additional costs. Kyodo News quoted Mori as saying the opening and closing ceremonies would need to undergo "drastic reviews" in order to cut costs, adding that organisers would ask the ceremonies' directors to consider including a message about the coronavirus crisis.

Of dashed dreams under a volcanic cloud

AFP, Berlin

Ten years ago this week, Barcelona limped home from a Champions League semifinal first-leg defeat blaming a volcano thousands of kilometres away and stoking the smouldering fires of Jose Mourinho's feud with the club and their coach.

The eruption of Eyjafjallajökull on Iceland had sent a plume of ash



drifting across Europe, grounding flights and wrecking havoc on sport.

In retrospect, that Barcelona team, perhaps their finest, could have won a third Champions League title on the trot had a volcanic eruption and Mourinho's pragmatic team not gotten in the way. The most volcanic encounter, however, began at San Siro on April 20.

Barcelona made a 1,000-kilometre trek to Milan over two days, spending a night en route in Cannes. Coach Pep Guardiola used the 14 hours on the bus to show his squad match videos but they also watched Invictus and Inglorious Basterds.

Meanwhile, in Milan, Mourinho schemed. He had seen Pep before, but only as a player. Guardiola was Barcelona's captain for most of Mourinho's time at the club.

Mourinho had joined Barca in 1996, when his mentor, Bobby Robson, became coach. Mourinho translated, but also organised training and played an increasing role in coaching, taking over the B team under Robson's successor, Louis van Gaal.

Barcelona were unhappy with their bus trip and unhappy that the hosts refused to water a scuffed pitch. Inter played like the away team, sitting back even after Pedro gave Barcelona a 16th-minute lead.

Wesley Sneijder levelled by half-time before Maicon and Diego Milito struck in the first 15 minutes of the second half to give Inter a 3-1 win.

"We want to follow a dream," Mourinho said. "But it's one thing to follow a dream and another to follow an obsession. For Barcelona it's an obsession. To have a Catalan flag in the Bernabeu is an obsession," Mourinho said, rubbing salt into Barcelona's wounds ahead the return leg.

Inter parked the bus at the Camp Nou and defended deep, even before Thiago Motta was sent off in the 28th

minute. Gerard Pique broke through late and scored four minutes from time to give Barca hope and history would have been different had Bojan Krkic's last-minute goal stood -- cancelled after the referee adjudged Yaya Toure to have handled the ball.

At the end, as Mourinho ran to the Inter fans to celebrate his "most beautiful defeat", the Barcelona sprinklers were turned on. Mourinho's side went on to win the treble that year and in 2010 his pragmatism had won.

He was back as coach of Real Madrid the following season, determined to bring down Barcelona again but, as their rivalry grew poisonous, Guardiola got his revenge in the 2011 semifinals as Barcelona won a treble.



Barcelona's Pep Guardiola juggles the ball during the second leg of the Champions League semifinal against Inter Milan in 2010. PHOTO: COLLECTED

I want to win World Cups: Rohit

ICC

One of the most impressive limited-over openers, India's Rohit Sharma is hungry for World Cup success.

Rohit experienced the thrill of being part of World Cup glory when India lifted the T20 World Cup in the inaugural 2007 edition in South Africa.

But having missed out on being a part of the 2011 fifty-over edition, Rohit hasn't experienced that delight in 13 years.

"Winning the World Cup is all of our dreams together," he told India Today. "I want to win World Cups. Of course, every time you go out there, you want to win every game. But the World Cup is something that you know is the pinnacle of everything. I want to win World Cups."

Rohit has forged a stellar career. Across ODIs and T20Is, he has scored 11,888 runs, averaging close to 50 in ODI and finishing as the top scorer in the 2019 World Cup.

But he has matured greatly in Test cricket too. His average overseas stands at a modest 26.32, but he is keen to set that right.

He has his eyes set on the Australia tour, which is slated to begin towards the end of 2020.

"I can't wait to go in Australia and test myself. Australia, in their own backyard and with those two guys, it will be a different ball game, I know that," Rohit said.



The Bundesliga was holding a meeting on Thursday to discuss the restart of the season, with plans reportedly in place to play spectator-free games in May. Meanwhile, yesterday was business as usual for Bavarian giants Bayern Munich, where players have been training since April 6.

PHOTO: AFP

CA, players in standoff over potential pay cuts

SMH



The crisis in Australian cricket is about to deepen with players unwilling to come to the negotiating table over pay until their demands for transparency are met by the governing body.

The discord between Cricket Australia (CA) and the players is poised to escalate on Friday, with a scheduled meeting between head office and the Australian Cricketers' Association set to be postponed.

The game cannot afford a repeat of the bitter feud of 2017, but there are already signs things could again get messy.

Reducing player pay is one of the four levers CA is pulling in order to cut costs

to safeguard the game against financial disaster should the coronavirus pandemic prevent India from taking part in Tests and one-day series worth \$300 million.

The players believe their pay model is hard-wired for current circumstances as their wages rise and fall depending on the revenue the game can generate.

CA chief Kevin Roberts called for "creative solutions" but the ACA said there is little point in meeting on Friday until the governing body opens its books.

Players, however, are prepared to meet over the weekend and next week once they are shown the numbers.

Time is ticking as, under the MoU, CA must provide the ACA with national contract lists, plus revenue estimates for 2020-21, by Thursday, April 30.



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'Long way to go' to end virus crisis

Says WHO chief as countries mull reopening; China to give world body \$30m more

AGENCIES

The global coronavirus crisis will not end any time soon, with many countries still in the early stages of the fight, health experts have warned as researchers revealed the first US deaths from the disease came weeks before the alarm was raised there.

The COVID-19 pandemic has killed more than 184,000 people and infected 2.6 million, and nations are struggling to check its spread with social distancing measures and lockdowns, while trying to repair their virus-ravaged economies.

Some have started to slowly ease restrictions as pressure mounts on governments to find ways to reopen their societies after tens of millions of jobs were wiped out.

But World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus on Wednesday cautioned that the struggle is far from over.

"Make no mistake: we have a long way to go. This virus will be with us for a long time," he said.

"Most countries are still in the early stages of their epidemics. And some that were affected early in the pandemic are now starting to see a resurgence in cases."

Meanwhile, China yesterday announced it will give another \$30 million to WHO to help in the global fight

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



People, including children, maintain physical distancing while waiting for lunch near Sadarghat Launch Terminal in the capital yesterday. Mojar Iskul (Fun School), an NGO that runs a school for street children, delivers over 300 lunches to people in need every day amid the coronavirus outbreak.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

4 of a family found dead at home

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Police yesterday recovered throat-slit bodies of four members of a family from their home in Gazipur's Sreepur upazila.

The victims are Fatema Begum, 40; her daughters Noora, 16, and Irin, 11; and son Fadi, 7; of Abdar area.

Fatema's husband Kajal Miah is an expatriate in Malaysia. She used to live at the house for around 20 years, said Arif, Fatema's brother-in-law.

According to Arif, Fatema called him over phone and asked him to deliver some essential commodities and kitchen items at her home on Wednesday evening.

Arif reached Fatema's place yesterday morning and knocked her door but none responded, he said, adding that he went back to the house again at 2:00pm but to no avail.

Worried, he entered the house using the roof of a neighbouring house and found the bodies lying on the floor, he said.

Liakat Ali, officer-in-charge of Sreepur Police

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

THEFT OF RELIEF MATERIALS

7 UP chairmen, 3 members suspended

UNB, Dhaka

The LGRD and cooperatives ministry has suspended seven more union parishad chairmen and three members over embezzlement of relief materials and irregularities in relief distribution amid the Covid-19 crisis.

With the latest suspensions, a total of 35 public representatives have been suspended so far.

A notification issued in this regard said the authorities have found various allegations brought against the public representatives to be true.

The allegations include embezzlement of relief materials, VGF rice and irregularities in relief distribution.

Besides, a public representative was suspended for traveling abroad breaching the government's instruction to stay in electoral areas. Another faced music for arranging a mass gathering defying social distancing rules.

The suspended chairmen are Noor-e Alam Bepari of Kedarpur UP in Barishal's Babujan upazila; Mizanur Rahman Khan of Rajapur UP in Bhola Sadar upazila; Monir Hossain Mridha of Kamalpur UP in Patuakhali Sadar upazila; Shah al Shafi Ansari of Rahanpur UP in Chapainawabganj's Gomastapur upazila; Siddiqur Rahman Mondol of Joshai UP under Rajbari's Pangsha upazila; Zarij Molla of Perli UP and Alauddin of Joynagar UP in Narail's Kalia upazila.

The suspended UP members are

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

No import of luxury goods



Rashid Ahmed, author of Mukti Sangram Bangladesh, presenting a copy of his book to Bangabandhu on April 18, 1972.

April 24, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

IMPORT POLICY ANNOUNCED

The country's first import policy for the January-June, 1972 shipping period is announced today. Explaining the salient features of the import policy, Commerce Minister MR Siddiqui says that there will be no import of luxury items for the period. Although the aim of the government is to arrange import through government agencies as far as practicable, it has been decided to allow import in the private sector since the government agencies are not fully equipped to handle all the import requirements and since there is also a need to rehabilitate the trading community engaged in import business. The government has also decided to induct newcomers in the import trade for a number of items. Preference will be given to those newcomers who suffered during the Liberation War including those whose shops and business establishment were damaged. The list of importable items contains essential consumer goods, industrial raw materials, spares and components.

TV CORPORATION ABOLISHED

The government of Bangladesh has decided to abolish Television

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

PRESS FREEDOM

Bangladesh drops one notch in world index

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh slipped one notch down in this year's World Press Freedom Index by Reporters Without Borders, also known as Reporters sans frontières (RSF).

Bangladesh has ranked 151st out of 180 countries while its position was 150th last year, according to the report released recently.

Norway topped the Index for the fourth year in a row in 2020, while Finland is again the runner-up. Denmark (up two to 3rd) is next as both Sweden (down one at 4th) and the Netherlands (down one at 5th) have fallen as a result of increases in cyber-harassment, the report said. India has ranked 142nd, Pakistan 145th, Bhutan 67th, the Maldives 79th, Nepal 112nd, Afghanistan 122nd and Sri Lanka 127th. North Korea is at the bottom of the list followed by Turkmenistan, Eritrea, and China.

In the chapter for Bangladesh, the report said,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

STAY HOME, STAY WELL

Watch over kids' screen time

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Coronavirus has disrupted the regular activities of mass people as most of them are now forced to stay at home to maintain social distancing.

At this time of shutdown, internet has become a source of essential information. It also connects netizens who are working from home.

Besides, internet has taken a place in children's lives at this time of crisis. As most of their schools are shut and they are denied access to outdoor activities and games, the amount of time they spend in front of screen increased.

According to experts, this increasing screen time can be harmful for the mental and physical development of children.

Allowing more time on screen may be a matter of survival for many parents but they can still take steps to mitigate the screens' impact, they said.

Chowdhury Rehnuma Tabassum, medical officer of pediatric neurology and autism department at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, said, "We need to think about screen time, video games and computers. It's not healthy to let children spend too much of time in front of screens for video game."

In fact, World Health Organization (WHO) has officially classified video game addiction as a disease in 2018.

The doctor suggested that parents should use this crisis time to develop a deeper connection with their children.

"In a busy life, we get very little time to spend with our kids. So, this leisure time can be utilised by talking and playing with them," she said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Afternoon heavy rain sweeps over Dhaka

UNB, Dhaka

Dhaka dwellers witnessed a brief but heavy rain coupled with thunder showers yesterday afternoon.

Met office recorded a wind speed of 74 kilometers per hour in the capital in the afternoon, said AKM Nazmul Haque, said an official at the weather office.

The met office earlier predicted that rain or thunder showers accompanied by temporary gust or squally wind was likely to occur over Rajshahi, Dhaka, Tangail, Faridpur, Madaripur, Cumilla, Noakhali and Sylhet during the next 6-8 hours starting at 3.30pm

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



PRAYER TIMING APRIL 24

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

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

As players and spectators remain indoors amid the shutdown enforced to fight the coronavirus outbreak, Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla Stadium in the capital has turned deserted. It, however, is being frequented by many unique visitors in the meantime. This photo of a red-vented bulbul perching on a wire there was taken a couple of days ago.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

JMI জেএমআই গ্রুপ ২৩ এপ্রিল ২০২০

দেশের সর্বস্তরের পেশাজীবী, শ্রমজীবী ও দেশ-বিদেশে অবস্থানরত ভাই-বোনদের প্রতি একটি মানবিক আবেদন

আসসালামুআলাইকুম।

আপনারা হতেই অবগত আছেন যে, জেএমআই গ্রুপ দেশের স্বাস্থ্যখাতের গুরুত্বপূর্ণ মেডিকেল ডিভিশনের একটি বিরাট অংশ সরবরাহ করে থাকে। বর্তমানে স্বাস্থ্য অধিদপ্তর, কেন্দ্রীয় ঔষধাগার, বিভিন্ন সরকারি-বেসরকারি হাসপাতাল প্রতিদিনই আমাদের কাছে মাছ ও গোষ্ঠাসহ এই সমস্তের জরুরি পণ্য-সামগ্রী সরবরাহের অনুরোধ করে যাচ্ছে। আমরা সরকারের নির্দেশনার আলোকে এক মানবিক বিবেচনা ও সামাজিক দায়বদ্ধতার কারণে, আমাদের কর্মীদের বহু কষ্টে দেশ ও জাতির স্বার্থে সার্বক্ষণিকভাবে কাজে নিয়োজিত করছি। আমাদের অনেক কর্মকর্তা-কর্মচারীরা দুঃ-স্বস্তি থেকে চলাচলের অসুবিধাসহ, কেউ কেউ গ্রামে অবস্থান করার কারণে যে স্বল্প সংখ্যক কর্মী উপস্থিত আছেন তাদেরকে বহু কষ্ট করে উৎপাদনের ধারা অক্ষুণ্ণ রাখতে যাচ্ছে। আমাদের কর্মীরা দেশের স্বার্থে বহু কষ্ট স্বীকার করে কারখানা চকুরে অবস্থান করে বেয়ে না বেয়ে দিনরাত অমানুষিক পরিশ্রম করে স্বাস্থ্যখাতের চাহিদা মেটানোর জন্য কাজ করে যাচ্ছে। এ বিষয়গুলো ও সর্বশ্রেষ্ঠ সকলের মানবিক বিবেচনার দাবি রাখে।

দেশের মানুষের স্বাস্থ্য সেবায় নিয়োজিত এই কঠিন সময়ের বীর স্বেচ্ছা ভক্তের নার্সিং এ বরসের সেবা খাতের সাথে যারা সম্পূর্ণ আপনাদের সকলের প্রতি আমার অনুরোধ, একটি স্বার্থহীন মনঃ গুণব চড়িয়েই যাচ্ছে। দয়া করে এসব গুণব কান দেবেন না, কারণ আমাদের চেয়ে আপনরাই আমাদের সম্পর্কে বেশি ভালো জানেন। আপনারা সাহসের সঙ্গে এ দুর্ভোগ মোকাবেলা করুন। আমরা জেএমআই গ্রুপ আপনারদের পাশে আছি এবং ভবিষ্যতেও থাকব ইনশাআল্লাহ।

পরিশেষে, সর্বশ্রেষ্ঠ সকলকে আবারও অনুরোধ করছি, দয়া করে আমাদের মনোবল চেপে দিবেন না। কারণ, মনোবল হারিয়ে যদি এই মুহুর্তে স্বাস্থ্যখাতকে আমরা বা আমাদের দিন-রাত পরিশ্রম করা কর্মীরা সহায়তা করতে না পারে তাহলে এই রোগে আমরা আরো পিছিয়ে যাবো; আর এই অপদাকালীন সময়ে অকিঞ্চন হবে দেশ ও জাতি, যা কারোই কামা নহে। দয়া করে আমাদের গুণব আশ্রয় রাখুন। আমাদের ২১ বছরের এই সুনামকে অনিচ্ছাকৃত ভুল দিয়ে বিবেচনা করবেন না। বিভিন্ন অনলাইন এন্থিটিটি ও গণমাধ্যমকর্মী ভাই-বোনদের প্রতি অনুরোধ, প্রয়োজনে দেশের দুর্ভোগ কেটে যাওয়ার পর আমাদের কারখানা পরিদর্শন করেন এবং তত্ত্ববদ্ধ বিষয়টিসহ অন্য কোনো প্রকার অনিয়ম পাওয়া যায় কিনা খতিয়ে দেখুন। কারো দ্বারা প্ররোচিত হয়ে কোনো বিহীনিকর তথ্য প্রকাশ করা থেকে বিরত থাকবেন আশা করছি। ভাই আসুন, এই মুহুর্তে ঐক্যবদ্ধভাবে সশক্তে রক্ষা করি। আমরা জেএমআই গ্রুপ মানসম্মত পণ্য নিয়ে আপনারদের পাশে সবসময় থাকবো, ইনশাআল্লাহ। মহান রাব্বুল আলামিন আমাদের সহায় হোন।

মোঃ আবদুর রাস্মাক
ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক