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DENGUE AMID COVID-19 OUTBREAK

# With rain comes risk

Experts urge authorities to act now as Dhaka may see rise in Aedes population

HELEMI ALAM and TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

When the whole country is fighting to check Covid-19 spread, the current spell of rain may increase the density of Aedes population in the absence of enough anti-mosquito drives in the capital, say experts.

If the authorities fail to take necessary steps to control Aedes mosquitoes, the city may witness a surge in the number of dengue patients and re-emergence of the disease, which would be more dangerous amid this coronavirus outbreak, they add.

Against the backdrop, the government has decided to form a "Dengue Monitoring Cell" to combat the vector-borne disease in the city and the LGRD and cooperatives ministry is going to hold a crucial meeting on this tomorrow.

Since January 1, at least 292 dengue patients were admitted to different hospitals across the country till Sunday, said Aysha Akhtar, an assistant director of Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Sixty-five of the patients were from outside Dhaka. Last year, 1,01,354 dengue cases were reported; of them, 49,544 were outside Dhaka. The number of deaths from dengue was 179 the same year, she added.

The government announced closure of most of the public and private offices from March 26 to May 5 to slow

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This photo taken on Manik Mia Avenue yesterday evening shows three children peeping out of the closed gate of their colony with downcast expressions. With schools shut since March 17 and the nation in the midst of a shutdown since March 26, children have been confined to limited spaces.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## 'Criminal' killed in 'gunfight' in Gazipur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

A suspected criminal was killed in a "gunfight" with members of the Rapid Action Battalion in Gazipur city early yesterday.

The dead was identified as Rabiul Islam Rabi, 32, from Tongi. He had been accused in at least 14 cases filed with different police stations on the charges of murder, robbery and illegal arms sale, said MD Kamruzzaman, assistant director of Rab-1 in Gazipur.

A patrol team of Rab-1 came under fire from a gang of criminals in Pubail-Satpota area around 1:00am yesterday. The Rab personnel retaliated with gunfire, leaving Rabiul dead on the spot, he told this newspaper.

The other gang members managed to escape. Two foreign pistols, a locally made gun and 3,840 yaba pills were seized from the spot, Kamruzzaman said. The body was sent to

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## Ban on flights extended till May 7

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh yesterday extended the ongoing ban on schedule passenger flight operations with all countries, except for China, until May 7 to contain the transmission of Covid-19 in the country.

The countries are Bahrain, Bhutan, Hong Kong, India, Kuwait, Malaysia, the Maldives, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Thailand, Turkey, the UAE and the UK, said a CAAB press release.

Flight operations on domestic route will also remain suspended until May 7, the release added.

However, cargo flight, air ambulance, emergency landing, special flight, and relief carrying flight will be outside the purview of the restriction, the release said.

This is the fourth time Bangladesh extended flight suspension period as the government earlier stretched it thrice from March 31 to April 7, from April 8 to 14 and then from April 15 to 30, while the ban on some international flights first began on March 16.

Meanwhile, different countries, including the US, the UK, Canada, Turkey, Australia, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, Bhutan, and different European

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## Left in the lurch

With no income, little govt support, hijras find it difficult to survive amid shutdown

NILIMA JAHAN

The dark clouds of April's nor'westers loom large over Lara's tomorrow.

With no income for almost a month and an eviction notice hanging over her head, the 27-year-old doesn't know where to take shelter when the rain comes.

"My landlord ordered me to vacate the house immediately, without paying last month's rent," said Lara, a member of the capital's third gender community known as hijra.

Her earnings have been zero since the middle of last month, as the coronavirus outbreak forced the country into shutdown. She couldn't pay Tk 4,000 in rent for March.

"I told my landlord about my problems, but he didn't pay any heed. I requested him to allow me to stay here for at least three more months, as nobody will rent out a room to me in this crisis," she told this correspondent over the phone on April 14.

"I don't even have the capability to pay the rent for a new room," wailed Lara, who lives alone in the capital's Jurain.

Like her, many other hijra community members in the city are worried about getting evicted from their homes for failing to pay rent, found a study.

Innovation Consulting Ltd, a private research organisation, talked to 51 hijras

of different areas of the capital earlier this month about the impact of Covid-19 on their lives.

Among those interviewed, 98 percent live in rented houses and 61 percent share rent with an average of six persons. The average rent of a unit per month is Tk 4,176, which is about 33 percent of the respondent's monthly income.

Since the virus outbreak began, income of most hijras decreased drastically.

They usually make a living by extorting money from commuters or shopkeepers, doing sex work, other casual jobs or performing Badhaai, a custom of conferring blessings on a newborn by singing and dancing.

Of the respondents of Innovation's study, 82 percent did not earn anything, while 18 percent said they only made an average of Tk 1,444 during the last two weeks of March.

A survey conducted by Brac over the phone between March 31 and April 1 on 22 hijras in the capital found similar results. Hijra sex worker Tina, who took part in the survey, used to go out for her work at night. She said her client number was dwindling from early March and since the lockdown her income became zero, as she is staying home all the time.

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## Pandemic far from over

Warns WHO as countries ease restrictions

AGENCIES

The head of the World Health Organization yesterday warned that the new coronavirus pandemic was far from over and said that he was "deeply concerned" about the impact of the disruption of normal health services, especially on children.

"The pandemic is far from over," said WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, adding that the body was concerned about increasing trends in Africa, eastern Europe, Latin America and some Asian countries. "We have a long road ahead of us and a lot of work to do," he said.

He added that shortages of vaccines against other diseases were being reported in 21 countries as a result of border restrictions linked to the pandemic, citing the GAVI global vaccine alliance.

"The number of malaria cases in sub-Saharan Africa could double," he said. "That doesn't have to happen, we are working with countries to support them."

He said that the agency had sounded the highest level of alarm over the novel coronavirus early on, but lamented that not all countries had heeded its advice.

Tedros pointed out that the WHO

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

### '4 principles compatible with teachings of Holy Prophet'



Bangabandhu addressing a gathering on the occasion of Eid-e-Miladunnabi at Baitul Mukarram.

April 28, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

BANGABANDHU'S EID-E-MILADUNNABI SPEECH

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman declares that his government will no more permit religion to be used for any political purposes, to accumulate wealth by a small group at the cost of the poor and the exploitation of the common people of Bangladesh. Addressing a Seratunnabi gathering at Baitul Mukarram, Bangabandhu says that the four basic

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## Lockdown eases in China, parts of Europe

NZ PM claims win over virus

AFP, London

Children in China's two most important cities went back to school yesterday after more than three months at home, as coronavirus restrictions eased and governments around the world began charting a path out of the pandemic lockdown.

Europe's four worst-affected countries all reported marked drops in their daily death tolls, offering hope that the outbreak may have peaked in some places -- at least for now.

But leaders and experts remain divided on how quickly to revive shuttered economies while maintaining a delicate balance between freedom and safety.

Italy and New York laid out partial reopening plans, with France and Spain to follow suit this week, while tens of thousands of final-year students returned to school in Shanghai and Beijing after months of closures.

"I'm glad, it's been too long since I've seen my classmates," 18-year-old Hang Huan said in Shanghai. "I've missed them a lot."

Students in Beijing must have their temperatures checked at school gates and show "green" health codes on an app that calculates a person's infection risk, according to the education ministry.



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Hundreds of watermelons dumped on the Kirtonkhola river. Due to the countrywide shutdown to curb the spread of coronavirus, sales of watermelon among many other seasonal items have been hit hard. Traders threw away the melons as they could not find buyers in time and the fruits had gone bad. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: TITU DAS



### PRAYER TIMING APRIL 28

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha  
AZAN 4-02 12-45 4-45 6-29 8-00  
JAMAAT 4-12 1-15 5-00 6-39 8-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



### SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING

RAMADAN APRIL SEHRI IFTAR	SEHRI	IFTAR
4	28	6:29
5	29	4:01 6:30
6	30	4:00 6:30