



# The Daily Star



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**BANGLADESH UPDATE** 549 New cases in 24hrs | 6,462 Total cases | 155 Deaths | 139 Recoveries | **GLOBAL UPDATE** 213,623 Deaths | 3,099,427 Total cases

## HOSPITALS FOR COVID-19 TREATMENT

# Not all ICUs functional

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

The intensive care units for coronavirus patients have yet to become functional in many of the 17 hospitals dedicated to Covid-19 treatment, even a month and a half after the authorities reported the first case in the country.

While ventilators have been installed in most of the hospitals, infrastructural development, oxygen supply and other necessary equipment are still required for the ICUs to be operational, according to a DGHS letter sent to the health ministry on April 18.

The Daily Star obtained a copy of the letter, which names the 17 hospitals, saying initiatives have been taken to set up the ICUs for treatment of Covid-19 patients at these facilities.

Though ventilators have been allocated for the hospitals, 12 types of equipment are needed for the smooth operations of the ICUs, it reads.

Contacted yesterday, Sirajul Islam, additional secretary (hospital) of the health ministry, said, "We received the letter and we have written to the Central Medical Store Depot (CMSD) to purchase the necessary equipment."

The CMSD runs under the ministry's Health Services Division and procures medicine and equipment through bidding.

The additional secretary further said the equipment needed for the ICUs will be installed soon. He, however, could not say exactly when that will be.

"Such equipment is not easily available but we are trying our best," he added.

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Breaching social distancing guidelines, transport workers crowd a road in the capital's Rayerbagh bus stop area yesterday to collect relief materials. The operator of Mayor Mohammad Hanif Flyover handed relief materials to more than 400 workers who have been without work for over a month.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

## Hundreds block roads demanding food aid

STAR REPORT

Several hundreds of people yesterday blocked two highways in Jashore and Savar demanding food aid.

They claimed that they had lost their sources of income since the countrywide shutdown imposed about a month ago, but no government officials or representatives were yet to give them a hand, leaving them to starve.

Later, they withdrew the blockades after local administrations convinced them that relief materials would soon be distributed.

In Jashore, hundreds took position at Bahadurpur Bazar point on Dhaka-Jashore highway around noon.

On information, officials of armed forces, police and civil administration rushed

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## FOOD AID FOR THE POOR

# Smart cards for 1.25cr families

Govt working to prepare database, plug loopholes to stop irregularities

MUHAMMAD ZAHIDUL ISLAM and SOHEL PARVEZ

The government is working to develop a database of nearly 1.25 crore beneficiary families to ensure proper distribution of food aid and plug the loopholes in the current distribution system, said officials at two ministries.

Each recipient would be handed a smart Quick Response (QR) card, the officials said, adding that the cards would be issued soon for the distribution of rice and other aid among poor and low income families, who are facing food insecurity and hunger in absence of income as the economy remains under severe strain for a month-long shutdown since March 26.

The database and the issuance of smart cards will help remove duplication, eliminate ghost lists and reduce corruption related to the government's safety net programs, said NM Zeaul Alam, senior secretary at Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Division under the Ministry of Posts, Telecommunications and Information Technology.

It is one of the two ministries that are working to develop the database to distribute the food aid in May and June, said the officials, adding that the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief was collecting information from other ministries such as the Ministry of Social Welfare in this regard.

Access to Information programme (a2i) under the ICT Division is helping develop the software for the database, they said.

The initiative comes at a time when the countrywide shutdown, enforced to fend off the coronavirus outbreak, has forced tens of thousands of people to remain half-fed or unfed and government officials are frequently seizing

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# Record surge in infections

Confirmed cases cross 6,000; 549 new cases, 3 deaths; experts worry over slackening of shutdown

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The number of coronavirus cases in Bangladesh crossed 6,000 yesterday as the authorities reported a record 549 infections in a single day.

The officials also reported three deaths yesterday, bringing the total number of fatalities to 155.

The continuous upsurge in the number of infection hits the country at a time when the government weighs in favour of reopening parts of the economy.

Amid the countrywide shutdown, the government allowed garment factories' owners to resume work on a limited scale, raising fears of deteriorating the spread of the disease.

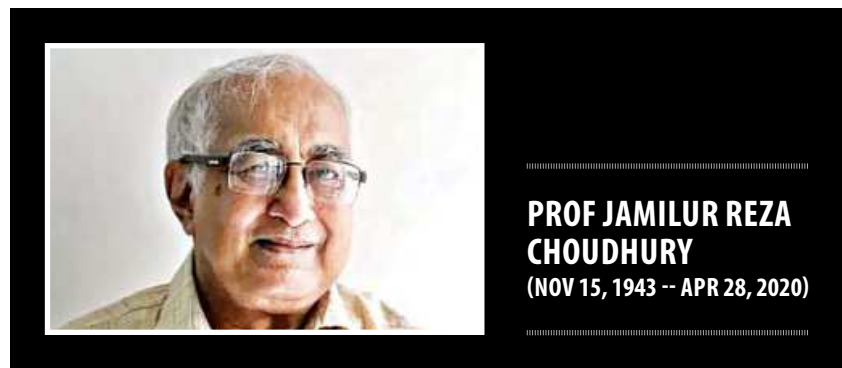
The factories in Dhaka and Chattogram reopened on Monday, spurring a huge influx of workers to the Covid-19 hotspots -- Dhaka Narayanganj and Gazipur -- from different districts.

Besides, restaurants in the capital were also allowed to sell takeaway iftar items yesterday.

Experts fear that the reopening of such a huge number of the garment factories may increase the risk of faster spreading of the virus.

Prof Ridwanur Rahman, a medicine and infectious disease specialist, said, "The garment workers will gather inside the factories. So, there will be transmission of the virus."

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PROF JAMILUR REZA CHOUDHURY (NOV 15, 1943 -- APR 28, 2020)

# A colossal loss for the nation

Litmus paper we have lost

ARCHITECT PROF NIZAMUDDIN AHMED

Tributes pour in for Prof Jamilur Reza Choudhury

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

National Professor Jamilur Reza Choudhury will be remembered for his extraordinary service to the nation.

He would be among the leading personalities of any country of the world.

His death was a colossal and irreparable loss for the nation. No one would be able to fill his place as he was second to none in the engineering field, eminent personalities told The Daily Star yesterday.

They also described him as a dedicated, talented, patriotic, honest, and cordial person, as a pall of gloom descended on them after hearing the news of their friend's and colleague's death.

Prof Jamilur was not only the most eminent personality in the country's engineering community

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Gifted with an enviable memory, supreme scholarly intelligence,

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1



Garment workers washing hands before entering an apparel factory in Savar's Ulail area yesterday. Before that, they had to walk through a disinfectant arch, inset. Over 3,000 garment factories reopened in industrial areas across the country this week amid concern over the rising number of Covid-19 cases.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## Nearly half of RMG factories reopen

ILO calls for action to minimise infection risk at workplaces

STAR REPORT

More than a thousand garment factories reopened yesterday amid coronavirus fears with many workers finding it difficult to reach workplaces for a lack of transport.

Some of them said they had to pay two to three times the usual fare.

Of the 7,602 apparel factories across the country, 2,916 resumed operation as of yesterday after remaining closed for around two weeks till April 26, according to the Industrial Police.

So far, 460 factories have reopened in Dhaka, 1,518 in Gazipur, 548 in Chattogram, 225 in Narayanganj, 79 in Mymensingh and 86 in Khulna, Mohammad Amzad Hossain, superintendent of police of the Industrial Police, told The Daily Star.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

## আমরা শোকাহত

বরেণ্য শিক্ষাবিদ  
 একুশে পদকপ্রাপ্ত জাতীয় অধ্যাপক  
 ইউনিভার্সিটি অব এশিয়া প্যাসিফিক এর  
 উপাচার্য  
 ড. জামিলুর রেজা চৌধুরী-র মৃত্যুতে  
 ইউএপি পরিবার গভীরভাবে শোকাহত

ইউনিভার্সিটি অব এশিয়া প্যাসিফিক











**TAMING CORONAVIRUS RAMPAGE**

# AC sellers in hot water

**JAGARAN CHAKMA**  
This was supposed to be a busy summer for the air conditioner manufacturers, what Bangladesh's tremendous growth momentum that is raising the purchasing capacity of the middle-class and getting better access to electricity and the mercury inching up every year.

Nearly 70 per cent of the ACs are sold during the April-June period as people start getting punched in the face with 30-degree weather. And this time last year, most of the manufacturers and sellers failed to keep pace with the demand. Total sales stood at around 4.5 lakh units last year, a jump from three lakh units in the previous year. Based on last year's experiences, market players had predicted that sales would cross six lakh units this year and set the sales target likewise.

But then came coronavirus, with its all-encompassing ferocity, leaving the AC sellers down in the dumps.

Thanks to the countrywide shutdown since March 26 to flatten the curve on coronavirus,

the AC sellers had to keep the shutters of their stores down. Some are selling the units online to salvage some of their peak selling season.

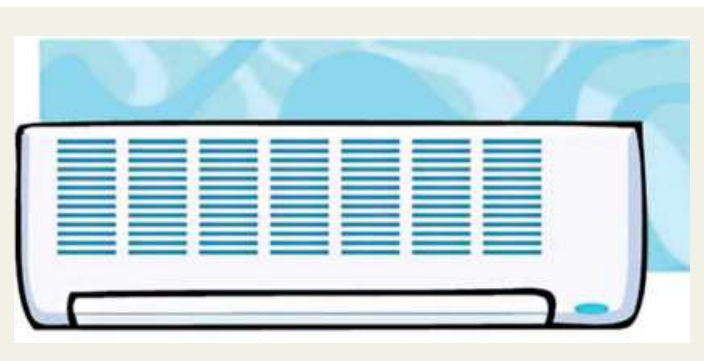
"But the number is very depressing," said Tanvir Rahman, chief executive officer of Walton, one of the top players in the industry.

Walton along with Transtec has managed to bring down the prices of ACs in Bangladesh, tempting the sizeable middle-class population to purchase the apparatus that blows out artificially chilled air.

The middle-class, who are in an uncertain state as the shutdown is taking a heavy toll on the economy and subsequently posing a threat to their incomes.

"Even if the pandemic subsides in the next one and a half months, the peak season for AC sales will be over. Besides, consumers don't purchase home appliance during in moments of crisis like this," Rahman said.

Walton has set a target to sell at least four lakh ACs this year as they sold more than 2.5 lakh units



Total sales in 2019: <b>4.5</b> lakh units	Market size in 2019: <b>Tk 4,000</b> cr	Market growth: <b>20</b> pc
Predicted sales in 2020: <b>6</b> lakh units	<b>70</b> pc sales come in Apr-Jun	Market leaders: General and Walton

last year.

"But we barely stand a chance of hitting the target," he added.

Saikat Azad, deputy general manager (marketing) at Transcom Digital, which owns Transtec brand and sells appliances of leading brands like Samsung, Panasonic, Philips, Hitachi, Sebec and Media, maintains an equally grim outlook.

Transcom Digital's e-store is open and the company is delivering products directly from their warehouses.

He fears negative growth in

sales this year due to the long-term impact of the coronavirus.

Besides, reports of coronavirus transmission through the AC airflow at a restaurant in Guangzhou, China have also struck fear in people's hearts.

Mahmudul Hasan, head of corporate brands at LG, said they have kept themselves afloat through online channels but demand is very low though they offer flexible payment options like equal monthly instalment.

"Sales may increase slightly in June if the pandemic ebbs," he added.

But Md Manzurul Karim, general manager of Esquire Electronics, the authorised sole distributor of Japanese electronics brands General and Sharp, is not that hopeful.

"Consumers will not splurge on luxury items like AC amid the uncertainty induced by the pandemic," he said, adding that Esquire Electronics has cancelled all import orders from Japan.

Karim forecasts that the manufacturers will not be able to reach even 50 per cent of their targets this year.

# DBH's profit streak held back for lower flat sales

**AHSAN HABIB**  
Delta Brac Housing Finance Corporation, or DBH, one of the leading listed non-bank financial institutions, logged in higher profits last year though its interest income dropped.

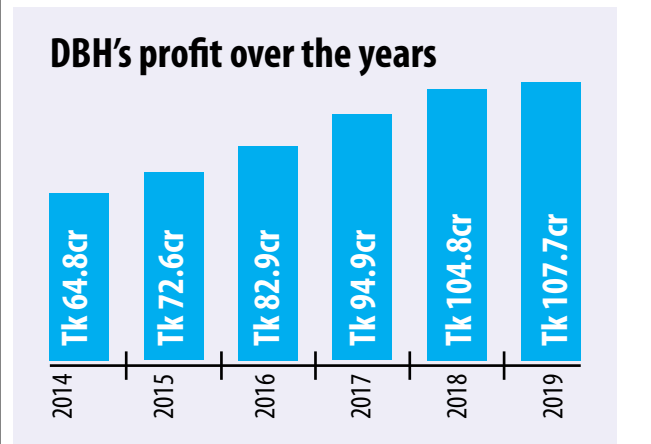
In 2019, the housing financier's profits rose 2.77 per cent year-on-year to Tk 107.69 crore. However, profit-before-tax dropped 3.59 per cent to Tk 155.59 crore.

The company's home loan book expanded at a meagre pace of 1.54 per cent to Tk 4,452 crore during the year.

The price of raw materials, particularly the price of rod and cement, went up during the year, as a result of which the price level of apartments increased further, DBH said in its annual report.

This hurt flat sales, so the home financier's fortunes were also squeezed, it added.

"Thanks to the liquidity crisis in the financial market we had to offer a higher interest rate on deposits. So, our net interest income fell," said QM Shariful Ala, managing director and chief executive officer of DBH.



At the close of 2019, DBH's deposit portfolio stood at Tk 4,341 crore, against which Tk 148 crore of interest is payable.

DBH's net interest income, which is its main income source, fell 4.57 per cent to Tk 171.07 crore, according to the annual report of 2019.

The NBF's income from the capital market also dropped 41.6 per cent to Tk 2.68 crore.

"We keep more provisions than what is stipulated by the central bank's guidelines, so our financial strength is very good."

The NBF's total classified loans reached Tk 20 crore, with its default loan ratio being 0.45 per cent at the end of 2019.

DBH is the only institution among all the banks and NBFs that has been getting AAA credit rating at a stretch, he said.

But Ala is not as sanguine about 2020.

"This is an abnormal year due to coronavirus, so there would be some negative impact on all companies' fortunes. But we will have to manage it," he added.

DBH, which got listed on 2008, traded at Tk 92.60 on March 25, the last trading day before the bourses shut for the countrywide general shutdown enforced to flatten the curve on coronavirus.

The company is providing 20 per cent cash and 15 per cent stock dividend to its shareholders for the year ended on December 31, 2019. It provided 25 per cent cash and 10 per cent stock dividends previously.

Sponsors and directors hold 51.32 per cent of DBH's shares, with rest in the hands of the public.

# Wanted: Tk 2,600cr

The promising motorcycle industry now seeking bailout

**JAGARAN CHAKMA**  
The global coronavirus pandemic has left no sector unscathed and stopped hardly any businesses from turning to the government for a pie of the stimulus package announced to mitigate the economic fallout.

Now, it is the motorcycle manufacturers and assemblers who are seeking Tk 2,060 crore in financial support from the government.

Of the support, Tk 2,000 crore is being sought from a Tk 30,000 crore stimulus package the government is offering to affected industries and service sector companies as working capital at 4.5 per cent interest.

The remaining Tk 60 crore is being sought at 2 per cent service charge for staff salaries to be paid over the shutdown period, which is expected to last for around three months.

Motorcycle sales had leapt to about 5 lakh units in 2019 from 1.5 lakh in 2017 with the aid of duty reductions facilitated by the government at the import stage.

This is said to have prompted market players to invest about Tk 8,000 crore, creating direct and indirect employment for around two lakh people.

The sector helped generate about Tk 2,000 crore in duties, taxes and VAT and about Tk 1,000 crore as registration fees in fiscal 2018-19.

There are 10 brands of motorcycles, namely Runner,



- ▶ Market investment: **Tk 8,000** cr
- ▶ Employment (direct and indirect): **2** lakh
- ▶ Import duty cuts prompted sales rise from **1.5** lakh in 2017 to **5** lakh units in 2019
- ▶ Registration fee generation: **Tk 1,000** cr
- ▶ Industry duties, taxes, VAT in FY19: **Tk 2,000** cr

Hero, Bajaj, Honda, TVS, Yamaha, Suzuki, Benelli, Zongshen and Lifan, being either manufactured or assembled in Bangladesh.

The sector could not make any of the Tk 600 crore in expected sales in April, Hafizur Rahman Khan, president of the Motorcycle Manufacturers & Exporters Association of Bangladesh, told The Daily Star.

To sail at full mast, like during last year, the motorcycle industry will have to absorb a loss of expected sales of about Tk 2,000 crore, he said.

All the manufacturers and assemblers are paying salaries and other benefits to employees from their capital as there is neither sales nor production, according to Khan.

It will take at least two years for the sector to balance out its fixed expenditure for the shutdown period.

"We already submitted a proposal to the government for providing support to us to tackle the crisis," he added.

Despite the revenue loss, the sector will announce no layoff, said Matiuir Rahman, president of the Bangladesh Motorcycle Assemblers and Manufacturers Association.

He demanded that the government waive value-added tax and reduce registration fees for customers and refrain from imposing advance income tax on the industry for at least six months.

**Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh**  
Local Government Engineering Department  
Office of the Executive Engineer  
District: Mymensingh  
www.lged.gov.bd

Memo No. 46.02.6100.000.07.001.20-1580  
Date: 28-04-2020

**e-Tender Notice: 56/2019-20**

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the Procurement of:

Sl. No.	Package No. & name of scheme	Tender ID	Last selling date & time	Closing/opening date & time	Tendering method
1	Package No. CHSMMP/MyM/TAR/SL-257/20/C-266 Construction of Muktiyuddho Smiti Soudho at Dadra Village of Kakna Union under Tarakanda Upazila District Mymensingh	437298	Date: 17-May-2020 Time: 17:00	Date: 18-May-2020 Time: 13:45	LTM
2	Package No. MyM/Resi-Nov Resi/Maint/2019-2020/W-01 1. Maintenance of Executive Engineer House Building Works. 2. Maintenance of Executive Engineer Office Building-01 Works & 3. Maintenance of Executive Engineer Office Building-02 & Training Hall Room Works at Mymensingh XEN Office LGED, Mymensingh	456312	Date: 17-May-2020 Time: 17:00	Date: 18-May-2020 Time: 13:45	LTM
3	e-Tender/LGED/MyM/GOBM/19-20/W-82 Rehabilitation of 14m Long RCC Girder Bridge on Balaipara-Mohespur Taltola Bazar Road at Ch. 7200m. under Muktagacha Upazila District Mymensingh. Road ID No. 361654133	456313	Date: 17-May-2020 Time: 17:00	Date: 18-May-2020 Time: 13:45	LTM
4	e-Tender/LGED/MyM/GOBM/19-20/W-83 Emergency Maintenance of Shambugonj bazar R&H-Ambikagorj GC Rd from Ch. 4300m-15600m. under Mymensingh-S Upazila District Mymensingh. Road ID No. 361522002	456314	Date: 17-May-2020 Time: 17:00	Date: 18-May-2020 Time: 13:45	LTM
5	e-Tender/LGED/MyM/GOBM/19-20/W-84 Emergency Maintenance of Porangonj UP-Ramvadrapur Bazar via Kachari Bazar Road from Ch. 00m-2000m. under Mymensingh-S Upazila District Mymensingh. Road ID No. 361523001	456315	Date: 17-May-2020 Time: 17:00	Date: 18-May-2020 Time: 13:45	LTM

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The e-Tender security submitted last date & time from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered banks branches **17-May-2020** respectively. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk ([helpdesk@eprocurement.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocurement.gov.bd)) also from e-mail: [xen.mymensingh@lged.gov.bd](mailto:xen.mymensingh@lged.gov.bd) or Call to 091-66376, 091-66110, 091-64365.

Interested persons can communicate with the undersigned during office hours.

**Md. Nur Hossain Bhuiyan**  
Executive Engineer  
LGED, Mymensingh  
[xen.mymensingh@lged.gov.bd](mailto:xen.mymensingh@lged.gov.bd)

GD-771

**Standard Bank Limited**  
Head Office: Metropolitan Chamber Building (3rd Floor)  
122-124, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000

**INVITATION FOR TENDER**

Standard Bank Limited shall procure following WAN Connectivity:

Sl.No	Name of the Items	Capacity	No of Node	Qty. (Unit)
1	Data Connectivity	1 Mbps	Branch	137
2	Data Connectivity	1 Mbps	ATM	24

Sealed tenders are hereby invited from the reputed WAN data provider company for supply and installation of WAN data connectivity at the branches. Tender schedule in detail will be available at the Head office, System & Operation Division (Islam Chamber, Level-6, 125/A, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000) of the bank from 03/05/2020 to 17/05/2020 during office hour upon payment of Tk.2000.00 (Two Thousand) in cash (non-refundable) for all sets. Tender should be submitted in a tender box kept at the System and Operation Division of the bank on or before 18.05.2020 within 12:00 PM and the same will be opened at 12:30 PM on the same day in presence of the representatives (if any) of the bidders. Only bonafide firms having long business track record and adequate support service will be qualified for this bidding. The Bank reserves the right to accept or reject any bid partially or fully without assigning any reason whatsoever.

VP & Head  
System & Operation Division

## Don't overlook dengue danger

City corporations must resume anti-mosquito and larvae destruction drives

AT a time when the country is seized with the virulent virus, the prospect of onset of dengue looms ominously on the horizon. In this very column not many weeks ago, we had alerted the administration, busy coping with Covid-19, to be also mindful of this seasonal disease that afflicts us regularly. The untimely rain this year has preponed its onset considerably, facilitating breeding of Aedes mosquitoes, the vector of the disease. Last year, the number of Aedes affected patients had crossed the six figure mark, half of them from Dhaka city itself. Of those, 179 died of the disease. And till Sunday, at least 292 dengue patients were admitted to different hospitals across the country since January 1, according to the Directorate General of Health Services.

The dengue hazard couldn't have come at a worst time. When the health system is up to its neck fighting Covid-19, dengue has become an additional burden to our distress. And it has been made even more complicated because of the virtual lockdown in order to prevent the spread of the virus. As a consequence, the anti-mosquito drive has all but stopped in the capital due to the shortage of manpower in the city corporations. One would have thought that the city corporation health workers provided essential services and should have been, as such, outside the ambit of the general prohibitory orders on movement.

We are happy to note that the government has decided to form a "Dengue Monitoring Cell" to fight the disease in the city. We believe that such a cell should be formed without delay. The health workers of the two city corporations should be provided with the necessary protective gears and employed in full swing. Failure to take timely and aggressive action may well prove right the dire prediction of the experts—that if the authorities failed to take necessary steps to control Aedes mosquitoes immediately, there might be a surge in the number of dengue patients, which would pose a serious danger in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic.

## Doctors at private hospitals left vulnerable

Why are the authorities not providing them with enough PPEs?

THERE appears to be no end to the crisis facing frontline workers in the fight against coronavirus. Earlier this week, we got confirmation from a report by this daily that Bangladesh might be the only country in the world where the Covid-19 death rate is higher than the recovery rate. This is largely due to the mismanagement in the treatment of patients as well as the authorities' failure to adequately deploy and equip the doctors, who are just as much a victim of this mismanagement as their patients. We get an idea of the personal risk facing the doctors from Bangladesh Doctors Foundation (BDF), an association of physicians, which said that an average of more than 30 doctors tested positive daily over the last week. Doctors at public and private sectors are equally at risk. According to BDF, at least 373 doctors have contracted the virus till Monday—179 from government hospitals, 84 from private hospitals, and the rest from different specialised hospitals.

Now an online survey by the BDF, conducted between April 20 and 26, reveals that more than one third of doctors at the private hospitals surveyed have not been provided with any personal protective equipment (PPE). We wonder why this is the case despite the government's assurance that there are enough PPEs for all health workers. Clearly, there is a disconnect between the official line and the reality on the ground. Currently, there are around 5,500 registered private hospitals and clinics across the country, according to the DGHS. Although no private hospital formally treats Covid-19 patients, the medical staff at these hospitals ensure the provision of vital healthcare services for general patients, and are hence equally exposed to the threats of the virus. There can be no excuse for treating them any differently when it comes to providing necessary safety gear.

Experts have repeatedly urged the government to solve the problems related to lack of PPEs as well as the supply of poor-quality safety gear—problems that are also driving the high infection rate among health workers. The need for an urgent intervention in this regard cannot be overemphasised as the number of confirmed coronavirus cases in the country crossed the 6,000 mark. The numbers of infections and deaths keep rising every day. If we want to fight this virus with any degree of success, we must urgently ensure that all staff, both at hospitals treating Covid-19 patients and non-Covid-19 hospitals, are equipped with proper PPEs so that they can lead the fight successfully.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

### Miss reading newspapers

Several newspaper outlets have been affected by the nationwide lockdown, and despite the selective newspapers which remain active, the physical paper is not reaching many readers, especially those outside the capital. As an avid reader of this daily, holding the newspaper in one's hands and turning through the pages is a feeling that the digital platform can never substitute and that I miss very much. If the paper is in circulation, why aren't we able to get them when other essentials are readily available? Especially in the rural regions, where "analogue" is still preferred over "digital", the newspaper is somewhat of an essential too. I hope the concerned authorities and publishers will look into this matter urgently.

Hussain Abu Musa, by email

# A renewed focus on social capital

Rethinking our dependency on financial capital for a post-pandemic world



POLITICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

SALEEMUL HUQ

ONE of the key revelations of the Covid-19 pandemic is that things that we held to be true in the past are now seen to have been myths, and as we transition from the old order into a new (and hopefully better) order going forward, we can build a better world by fixing much of what was wrong with the old world.

Today, I will share some thoughts on how we need to focus on enhancing social capital as a priority in place of our over-reliance on financial capital, which has dominated our thinking for so long.

Let me start by picking a few aspects of the prevalent financial capital paradigm that are proving to have been myths. First is to acknowledge that when money is needed, governments can produce it to save what they feel are high priorities. Hence, trillions of dollars are now being made available when we were told that there was no money to do the same things we have to do now. It is clear that lack of money was never the main constraint, but rather the priorities for which it was allocated. Investment in proper public health planning has been neglected, as has tackling climate change, with the excuse that there was no money available. At the same time, money for weapons never seemed to be in short supply. Today, we are seeing the most expensive machines of war, namely the aircraft carriers, being grounded by Covid-19.

A second myth that is being exposed is that the billionaires are the most valuable members of our society. They are now sitting at home while their food is being delivered by low paid delivery workers, making it apparent that the money that they have has nothing to do with their value to society. Indeed, every year there seems to be a competition amongst the billionaires to see how few of them can accumulate more money than the rest of the world. This upward flow of capital from everyone else to just a few billionaires needs to be rectified by adequate taxation.

A third fact that we are now recognising is that professionals like doctors, nurses, teachers and health workers are not paid anywhere near their value to society, even though they are the ones facing coronavirus to keep the rest of us safe. These people have invested time and worked hard to become professionals, not to become

high earners, but rather to help their fellow human beings. They need to be better recognised (which is happening now) but also better paid in future.

So as we move forward to deal with the current crisis in public health and then towards tackling the climate change crisis, we should look to invest in building social capital and not allow financial capital to dominate as much as it did before. This is not to say that money is not important, but rather to argue that those with the billions should no longer be allowed to decide where to invest. Investment strategies must be targeted at what society deems most

make this happen.

Unfortunately, while Bangladesh is good at adopting good policies on paper, we often fail to implement them in practice. Now is the time for the Prime Minister to ensure that her political followers, as well as her bureaucrats and the defence forces, are galvanised to work for the people against Covid-19 now, and against climate change after that.

The second major asset of social capital that we have are our NGOs, in which many thousands of professionals are working to help their poorer fellow citizens, and not only for their salaries.

Zafrullah Choudhury's Gonoshasthaya Kendra stepping forward with cheap tests for the virus.

A third aspect of substantial social capital in Bangladesh is our university and research sector, who are producing quality research that can help decision-makers at local, sectoral as well as national levels going forward. Finally, the people of Bangladesh themselves are our biggest social capital, if we can invest in educating and empowering them effectively. The health workers are the ones we need right now to tackle the public health crisis but our farmers, fishers and factory workers will all need



PHOTO: COLLECTED

valuable.

So how might this work in practice? The following are some suggestions in the context of Bangladesh, but these ideas are also applicable in other countries and indeed at a global level as well. We can start with two major assets that Bangladesh already has, and then suggest ways to build on them. The first asset is that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is already well convinced about the need to invest in Bangladesh's social capital and has put in place policies to

We have the biggest NGO in the world in BRAC, as well as the pioneer of micro-finance in Grameen Bank. Indeed, Professor Yunus was the person who showed us that the social capital of a group of women could replace the collateral that a traditional bank would require when giving a loan to anyone. These NGO workers are a major social capital that can be galvanised to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic as well as climate change going forward. On the Covid-19 front, we are also seeing Dr

to be brought into the struggle to tackle both Covid-19 and climate change.

What we need is a dynamic all-of-society approach to give us the necessary ability to link up all the different sectors of our society, enabling us to work together for a common purpose. Out of crisis also comes opportunity to make things better than before, but only if we take it.

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

# Supporting elderly people during the pandemic

MD ABDUL KARIM

BANGLADESH has an elderly population of about 13.5 million, which is increasing by about 4.41 percent every year. The World Population Forecast estimates that by 2050, about 20 percent of our total population will be elderly persons, compared to 21.5 percent globally. Although Bangladesh enjoys the demographic dividend with about 62 percent of our population being young, we are projected to have 43 million elderly people by 2050. Our government has formulated the National Policy for the Elderly, 2013, the Parents Maintenance Act, 2013 and other rules and regulations to ensure safe, dignified and poverty-free lives for our senior citizens, but we still need to plan different initiatives for ensuring their financial security, healthcare services, physical safety/security, recreational facilities etc. The immediate necessity is the adoption of appropriate measures for protection of this vulnerable group from the present global pandemic. All older people should be treated with dignity and respect during these trying times. Scientific data and evidence show that they are at the highest risk from Covid-19.

Older adults in Europe and Japan have been found to be extremely vulnerable to the global pandemic. About 95 percent of the Covid-19 related deaths in these countries/regions were of the age of 60 years or above. More than 50 percent of all fatalities involved people aged 80 years or above. However, authentic data about the actual number of coronavirus infections among the elderly population of Bangladesh is relatively scarce. It is extremely important to ensure compliance with WHO guidelines, along with the instructions issued by Bangladesh's health authorities, to protect and treat our older people. The Johns Hopkins Health Department has issued detailed instructions about treatment and caregiving for elderly persons. While general instructions of frequently washing hands, avoiding crowds, maintaining social distance, etc are equally applicable, ensuring social

and physical distancing for elderly persons is crucial. However, it might be difficult to convince a lot of the elderly population of how important this is. Faith communities are found to be a big part of their lives, and they may be persuaded by religious authorities to follow instructions. The highest authorities of the two holy mosques in Mecca and Medinah have urged Muslims to perform prayers at home alone. Even Jumma and Taraweeh prayers have been restricted in the holy mosques.

During these times, technology can

Maintaining a healthy lifestyle while in self-quarantine or in isolation is crucial for older persons. Even during normal times, they are often dependent on family members or caregivers in maintaining daily routines, eating balanced meals and staying active. Mental health is also a key consideration during the present pandemic. Many of our older people do not have access to a digital platform, which makes staying connected difficult.

The situation of elderly people in Bangladesh is worse than in developed countries because of resource constraints.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

be a useful tool to help isolated older adults stay connected to their near and dear ones. In developed countries, they have learnt to chat with others using their laptops, tablets or smartphones. If these devices are not available, telephone calls and notes from relatives can also help the elderly feel less lonely. In Bangladesh, it is extremely important to ensure adequate supply of food, medicines and other essential commodities to older people. Visits to doctors for minor problems should be kept to a minimum to reduce the risk of Covid-19 infection. However, physical distancing of quarantined elderly adults should not mean social isolation. Friends, relatives and family members should maintain contact with them through various means.

A vast majority of our elderly population live in deplorable conditions. Those living in climate vulnerable areas are often refused access to healthcare services and other basic human needs, and the pandemic has made them even more vulnerable. During their youth, they had contributed significantly towards nation building. Now is the time for us to assist and protect them from the pandemic. If elderly persons do become infected with coronavirus, we must make sure they are able to access healthcare. For this, we must also do what we can do to protect our frontline heroes—doctors, nurses and health workers—so they can continue to provide their essential medical services.

Caring for the elderly is an important religious obligation. The Holy Quran

says "My Lord! bestow on them (parents) thy Mercy even as they cherished me in childhood" (17:23-24). Similar instructions abound in other religious scriptures also. Ancient Hindu texts, the Holy Dharmasutras and Dharmashastras as well as the Hindu epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, preach instructions for taking appropriate care of parents and the elderly. The Holy Bible narrates—"You shall stand up before the grey head and honour the face of an old man, and you shall fear God: I am the Lord (Leviticus 19:32)".

But in spite of all religious and moral obligations, the elderly continue to be subjected to disease, discomfort, ignorance, oppression, insult and abuse all over the world. Societal degradation from material pursuits has contributed to their deprivation, dispossession and loneliness. According to HelpAge India, every second elderly person suffers abuse within the family. Many of them are coerced to work worse than domestic servants, in spite of the provisions of the Indian National Policy on Elderly Persons, 1999 and the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007. Every year, an estimated 2.1 million older Americans are reported to be the victims of abuse and neglect, according to the American Psychological Association.

The world has lost respect for the old; many societies now see their older generations as a burden. Due to strong family bonds and community culture, the situation may be better in a few Asian countries, but reliable data and statistics are not available about the actual plight of the elderly. The current Covid-19 pandemic has definitely worsened their plight and made them more susceptible to neglect. Many people are dying without proper care and treatment in the old-homes of Europe and America. Let us stand by our senior citizens, including those who are coronavirus patients, with all sincerity, dedication, and financial and material resources at our disposal.

MD Abdul Karim is a former civil servant and diplomat. He is currently Senior Adviser of BRAC Bangladesh and Chairman of IPDC Finance.



OBITUARY

# Dr Saadat Husain: a fearless, upright civil servant

SYED NAQUIB MUSLIM

**D**R Saadat Husain, a career civil servant of Bangladesh, passed away on April 22 at United Hospital after suffering from meningitis and renal complications. Born in 1946 in Noakhali, he earned a Master's degree in Economics from the University of Dhaka before joining the Civil Service of Pakistan in 1970.

While working as a probationary officer in the former Narail subdivision, he joined the Liberation War in 1971 and directly contributed to wartime efforts. His book *Muktijoddhader Din-Dinanto* is an authentic chronicle of the events of 1971 and about the contributions made by freedom fighters in that region.

Dr Saadat assumed the prestigious office of Cabinet Secretary from 2002 to 2005. In this capacity, he took up the task of reorganising and rationalising the division of work and formulating a fresh manual of officers' job descriptions, all of which were in shambles before he took up the task of rectifying this. Later, he was appointed the ninth Chairman of the Bangladesh Public Service Commission (PSC), a constitutional body that he turned into a highly professional recruiting agency of the government; and most

importantly, he made it corruption-free.

He was elementally a reformer; wherever he worked, he acted as an agent of change, bringing constructive changes in the public interest. Starting from his position as Registrar at the Department of Co-operatives up to Chairman of the PSC, he succeeded in making positive transformations from within and turning these institutions into dynamic, credible, and people-friendly ones.

After his retirement from the civil service, he was elected President of the Bangladesh Society for Training and Development (BSTD), which was created in 1980. He succeeded Sheikh Maqsood Ali, who was the founder-president of this society, and turned it into a seat of synergic union and collaboration between government organisations and NGOs for training officials and developing professionalism in their respective fields. Dr Saadat was noted for recruiting people for education and training purposes irrespective of caste, creed and political affiliation as President of BSTD, where he worked with zeal and commitment. He elevated this passive entity into a dynamic and popular human resources development centre, and under his enterprising and inspiring leadership, BSTD has



PHOTO: COLLECTED

been able to set up wide networks at the regional and global levels. He also headed two major public sector training institutes—the BCS (Admin) Academy and BARD, Comilla.

Dr Saadat was a vigilant and decisive supervisor, and at the same time, he was very supportive, friendly and protective of his junior colleagues, and he took his responsibility of instructing them with on-the-job training very seriously. As Cabinet Secretary, he intensively monitored the punctuality of the Deputy Commissioners (DC) of all 64 districts. When I was working as DC in Dhaka, he once phoned me at 8:55 am to check whether I was at

office and was very pleased to hear my voice; he believed in following the rules and doing the right thing—it was a way of life for him.

A committed educator and trainer, he believed every public servant must be ready to be a life-long learner and to share that learning with others to assume future leadership positions in the civil service. Wherever he worked, he displayed genuine professionalism as a leader and never practiced nepotism in inducting employees and trainees. As a guardian to junior colleagues, he used to provide unwavering support to those who faced undue harassment from disgruntled politicians. He was a fearless administrator, his courage blended with compassion, and it is a huge pity that some heads of public sector human resources centres showed a planned indifference towards him due to this perceived risk.

"Publish or perish" was his principle. In the civil service, there are many talkers but significantly few writers. Dr Saadat was one of these significant few. He was a prolific writer who produced a number of books and wrote many articles for newspapers, including *The Daily Star*, and regularly contributed columns in Kaler Kantho, a Bangla daily. His most recent publication

(2019) was *Nichu Shorey Uchu Kotha*, an anthology of 130 articles based on his own experiences. As an expert opinion frequently heard in the media, he earned a reputation as a straightforward and honest civil servant who was a spokesperson of the conscious, enlightened citizenry.

Father of one son and two daughters, he was very affectionate to his family members. A God-fearing person, he never used to miss his prayers five times a day, despite how much he worked. He was definitely a workaholic, and Dr Saadat was not careful about his own health. He did not enjoy respite for a single day after retirement from public service. He died in peace, without ever having been a source of pain to anyone. I'm reminded of the words of Elizabeth Koblér-Ross—"watching a peaceful death of a human being reminds us of a falling star; one of a million lights in a vast sky that flares up for a brief moment only to disappear into the endless night for ever."

He is no more among us, but his values and works will continue to inspire the present and future generations, and through this legacy, he will be remembered forever.

Dr Syed Naquib Muslim, PhD is a freelancer and retired Secretary to the Government of Bangladesh.

## Of panic and pandemic

*The devastating psychology at play*



IQRA L QAMARI

**R**EMEMBER that cruel, old joke about the bear and the two men—the one where upon being attacked, one of them, panicky, starts hurrying with the intention of outrunning the grizzly carnivore, while the other, appearing more relaxed, says to the other, "I don't have to outrun the bear, just you"? This year we saw this twisted, insensitive joke play out in real life. Pictures of rows of empty supermarket shelves and gallows humour filled the internet because people were hoarding non-perishable essentials at the cost of denying others a chance, and that too at the onset of a pandemic.

Panic-buying has been quite a recurring phenomenon throughout the history of pandemics—during the 1918 Spanish Flu, sales of Vicks VapoRub soared from 900,000 to almost 3 million within just a year and this time, curiously, it was toilet rolls. This bizarre reaction has (unfortunately) been deemed to be quite "human" by psychologists. When the illusion of control, otherwise maintained by our brain, shatters in a crisis mode, we do everything in our power to feel in charge again—stockpiling for instance. Other experts believe this behaviour to be a derivative of fear itself.

This is just the tip of the iceberg. The threat of such an aggressive outbreak can fall really heavy on the collective psyche of the entire human race. It can push the mind of the average person reeling towards a state of crippling anxiety, existential stress, depression and even suicidal tendencies—as attested by several grim reports showing a 30 percent increase in suicides among the elderly during the 2003 SARS epidemic. This time, tens of thousands of lives have already been lost, economies are kneecapped and so much more is at stake that the

contagion is being labelled as divine retribution. It is not only our immune systems the virus has permeated and jeopardised, but also our jobs, communal life, education, dreams—you name it. It has compelled societies to adopt new ways of operating as a trial run. Even before the pandemic, the world was inching towards digitisation but now after the outbreak, the process is almost getting cemented. There might be a shift in our working structures and that in itself is cause for more career anxiety among many.

The global arrangement of things, be it world politics or the interconnected web of trade and transnationalism,

their shoes next.

The only means of containing this outbreak or to "flatten the curve" for now is via mass lockdown, which, in turn, has sharpened the curves of unemployment, recession and homelessness. Since mass starvation is no longer a distant reality, it won't be long before we witness a rampant increase in theft and robbery. The only chance at respite from such horrors—being close to friends and loved ones—has also been lost for many. According to Anna Freud's famous study during World War II, the breakdown of relationships during a crisis is often the most jarring part. The increased

translational responsibilities—when Italy, the then hotbed of the virus, pleaded for medical assistance via the Emergency Response Coordination Centre from the other EU members, not a single country came forward, leaving Italy to its fate; two completely different scenarios of moral failure and yet a caricature of one another.

As the contagion rages on, another of its ugly manifestations is becoming more visible: a flaring xenophobia. It has been found that escalated fear during a pandemic distorts social attitude towards immigration as people become more tribalistic and conservative in nature. Studies surrounding the "Behavioural Immune System"—the psychological process of detecting an infected subject and preventing contact with it—show this is a "better safe than sorry" approach. Another interesting notion known as the "Parasite-stress Theory"—which explores how infectious diseases influence the psychology and sociology of humans—indicate the idea that foreigners who look different could have a different immune system and thus could be carriers of unfamiliar diseases. Or this racial discrimination could simply stem from sheer ignorance and deep-seated broad generalisations. The very name Covid-19 was chosen in a manner avoiding any sort of associations with geographical locations like in previous times—Ebola, Spanish flu (a misnomer in itself), or the Zika virus—to avoid social stigma. The need for WHO guidelines to remind us not to "attach the disease to any particular ethnicity or nationality" or to "be empathetic to all those who are affected, in and from any country" are a crude reminder that unlike the coronavirus which does not discriminate—based on ethnicity, skin colour, gender or economic status—we do.

The pandemic in a digital world is causing a different kind of psychological war. People's attentional capacity is dominated by a deluge of news and misinformation related to the coronavirus, leaving them dissonant

and traumatised. They get mentally exhausted despite not even getting much work done, which causes many to be laden with guilt for not achieving some sort of heroic quarantine productivity. Perhaps the situation has been best described by this woman in Pennsylvania—"I think of it like having a few large apps on my phone that are running and draining the battery, even when I'm not using them". We are repeatedly being forewarned by behavioural scientists about an unimaginable scale of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) cases that will result after the storm passes. And even though the world is holding its breath for a miraculous vaccine, its discovery is poised to be threatened by vaccine hesitancy. Our battle, it seems, has just begun.

This, however, is not about to end on a grave note because even though an semblance of normalcy is far-fetched and even if we are trapped, we are not powerless. According to Dr Steven Taylor, author of *The Psychology of Pandemics*, we will witness a rise of altruism and so far, he has been correct. Countless are responding with generous acts, humans and establishments alike—debt standstills are being implemented all over, millions of donations are being made, people are checking up on loved ones and the appreciation for frontline workers has reached a never-before-seen zenith. Never has there been such separation among humans which has prompted such solidarity. Never has there been such a synchronous global collaboration of the medical and scientific community for the salvation of humanity. One can only hope that the world leaders too will follow suit, that governments and citizens will unite and face this common, "biblical" enemy, head on and together. Despite this cataclysm we are going through right now, there is hope and we must outrageously hold onto that.

Iqra L Qamari is a program associate at Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) and a contributor to *The Daily Star*.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

has all been brought to a staggering halt, blow after blow. The contagion has ruthlessly laid bare the flaws in some of the alleged best healthcare systems. When the number of beds and ventilators available is outnumbered by the number of infected cases by a frightening margin, then fear and distrust of the government spreads faster than the virus itself. Thousands have not been able to give their loved ones a proper burial—the tremendous grief and sense of loss their minds are having to process might be difficult for others to register, and yet it hits so close to home because anyone could be in

social isolation, economic downturn and uncertainty about the future are the perfect mixture to successfully brew a rise in alcohol consumption and drug abuse. The air is filled with not just traces of the virus, but a palpable frustration that is already wreaking havoc on relationships—reports of domestic violence are soaring amid this lockdown. In our very little country, there have been harrowing accounts of families cutting off one of their own, suspecting him/her to be carriers, and just leaving them in the throes of death. Even nations, married in union, have shamefully failed to uphold their

**QUOTABLE Quote**

**ALDOUS HUXLEY**  
(1894-1963)  
British author

*The most valuable of all education is the ability to make yourself do the thing you have to do, when it has to be done, whether you like it or not.*

**CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH**

**ACROSS**

- 1 Lasagna or linguine
- 6 High-muck-a-muck
- 11 Rocker John
- 12 Dwelling
- 13 Isolated
- 14 Raised to the third power
- 15 Dragon fighter
- 17 Flower visitor
- 19 Status --
- 20 Notice
- 23 Skyliit court
- 25 Small fastener
- 26 Hamlet's creator
- 28 Paella base
- 29 Jeer from the stands
- 30 Tennis feat

**DOWN**

- 1 Soup sphere
- 2 The Matter-horn, for one
- 3 Belmont, e.g.
- 4 Of two minds
- 5 Collector's buy
- 6 Chip choice
- 7 Touch on
- 8 Move up and down
- 9 Shelley work
- 10 Nap site
- 16 Shamus
- 17 Iraqi port
- 18 Moral code
- 20 Leather type
- 21 Some nobles
- 22 Fencing swords
- 24 Mammie's husband
- 25 Brief time
- 27 Old Spanish money
- 31 Tatter
- 33 Surfer's ride
- 34 Tibetan monk
- 35 Potential pipe
- 36 New Haven student
- 37 Party staple
- 39 Stop
- 40 Tofu base

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**YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS**

D	A	M	O	N	H	I	S
E	R	O	D	E	T	O	S
C	A	L	E	B	E	L	L
I	B	I	S	P	A	T	E
D	I	E	T	O	P	S	E
E	A	R	T	H	D	A	Y
N	E	A	R	R	E	A	R
G	A	S	L	A	V	I	E
U	N	H	O	L	I	M	A
S	N	A	R	E	R	O	S
T	I	M	E	R	A	G	E
S	E	E	S	F	O	R	T

**BEETLE BAILEY** BY MORT WALKER

**BABY BLUES** BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

COVID-19 CRISIS

# Jhenidah flower growers bear the brunt

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

Hundreds of flower growers in Jhenidah are incurring losses because of transport disruption caused by Covid-19 shutdown.

They cannot sell flowers to different parts of the country due to lack of buyers and smooth inter-district transportation, said Kripangshu Shekhar Biswas, deputy director of the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) in Jhenidah.

He said some 204 hectares of land in six upazilas of the district have been brought under flower cultivation this year.

Farmers said they fell in great trouble due to the ongoing countrywide shutdown. The flower markets in different areas have worn a deserted look since the first day of the shutdown. On the other hand, the blooming flowers do not last long. Finding no other alternative, many growers have destroyed their flower fields. Most of them have taken loans from different NGOs and banks and they now do not know how they will repay the loan and maintain their families.

While visiting different areas, this correspondent found the growers plucking blooming flowers and throwing those out of the plot. If it is not plucked in time, the plants will die.

Anwar Hossain of Baliadanga village in Kaliganj upazila said he has cultivated

marigold, tube roses (rajanigandha) and gladiolus on three bighas of land spending Tk 2 lakh this year. He sold the blooming flowers at Tk one lakh before the shutdown imposed to curb spread of the virus.

Schoolteacher Khalilur Rahman of Shahpur-Ghighati village in the upazila said he cultivated flowers on eight bighas of land at a cost of Tk 5 lakh.

"I started to collect the blooming flowers from the field but in the meantime, coronavirus spread to the country and due to this, the flower markets remain closed. I have taken loan from Sonali Bank. Now I don't know how I will repay the loan," said Khalilur.

Sabdu Sheikh of Baliadanga village said he has cultivated flowers on 17 decimals of land this year, but his hope has been shattered due to coronavirus outbreak. He has already damaged his flower gardens due to the ongoing shutdown.

Flower trader Daud Hossain of Ganna Bazar in Sadar upazila said the farmers are in great danger during the harvesting season. If this situation persists for a long time, their misery will know no bound.

The DAE official said as the farmers cannot sell flowers due to the ongoing countrywide shutdown, they are destroying their fields although this farming plays an important role in the country's economy.



Jhenidah flower growers are incurring losses because of transport disruption caused by Covid-19 shutdown. Finding no other alternative, the farmers damage the garden in Kaliganj upazila of the district.

PHOTO: STAR

## COVID-19 LOCKDOWN

# Pumpkin growers upset as buyers scanty in Teesta sands of Lalmonirhat

### Hailstorm adds to woe of vegetable farmers in Habiganj's Madhabpur UZ

STAR COUNTRY DESK

Pumpkin farmers in Lalmonirhat's Teesta char (land emerged from riverbed) areas and Madhabpur upazila of Habiganj are facing odds due to transport problem amid the outbreak of Covid-19.

Our Lalmonirhat Correspondent reports: Kohinoor Begum, a farmer of Char Gobordhan in Lalmonirhat's Aditmari upazila, harvested about 5,000 pumpkins from four bighas of sandy land in the dried-up bed of the Teesta River.

The 47-year-old woman had planned to build a new tin-shed house as she expected to get over Tk 2.5 lakh by selling the popular vegetable but the adverse situation due to coronavirus outbreak has ruined her hope.

"In the third week of March, I sold pumpkin at Tk 10-12 per kg in the field but the price came down below half after the shutdown.

"A portion of my cultivation cost of Tk 75,000 was managed with loan taken from NGOs. I sold pumpkin worth only Tk 20,000 and facing problem with the rest due to lack of storage facilities. Now I am worried about recovery of the capital and payment of the loan," she said.

Nazrul Islam, 62, of the same area spent Tk 90,000 on cultivating pumpkin on five bighas of land but he has to sell the harvested pumpkin below the production cost as there is hardly any



Despite good yield, Kohinoor Begum looks worried at her pumpkin field in Char Gobordhan under Aditmari upazila of Lalmonirhat as price of the popular vegetable saw drastic fall due to the shutdown amid the spread of Covid-19. Below, a pumpkin field ravaged by Thursday's hailstorm in Madhabpur upazila of Habiganj.

PHOTO: STAR



buyers from different places including Dhaka.

Farmer Khabir Uddin, 58, of Char Kalmati of Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila said he is in trouble as there is no room in his house for storing thousands of pumpkins harvested from six bighas of char land.

Vegetable trader Quader Shamsul of Lalmonirhat town said he paid in advance to farmers for cultivating pumpkin in Teesta char but could not buy it for fair prices from them as

wholesale buyers from outside are not coming due to the coronavirus situation.

According to the Department of Agricultural Extension in Lalmonirhat, around 5,000 farmers have cultivated pumpkin on more than 30,000 bighas of land in Teesta's sandy char areas in the district this year.

Aditmari Upazila Agriculture Officer Ali Noor told The Daily Star that the seeds and technical support were provided free of cost for cultivating pumpkin on the sandy ground of the Teesta and yields have been good.

"But the price fall due to coronavirus situation frustrates farmers. However, if they can carefully preserve the pumpkin in the house as per our suggestion, they are expected to get good prices when the situation becomes normal," he said.

Our Moulvibazar Correspondent adds: A hailstorm on Thursday destroyed vegetables including huge quantities of pumpkin in Madhabpur upazila of Habiganj, adding to the woe of farmers, already affected due to the ongoing lockdown.

This season, different types of vegetables

including pumpkin have been cultivated on 1,100 hectares of land in the upazila, mostly in Shahjahanpur, Bahra, Choumuhani, Dharghar, Adair, Chhatain, Noapara, Baghasura, Bula and Jagdishpur areas.

But no one from outside is coming to buy vegetables during the outbreak of coronavirus, much to the worry of the cultivators of pumpkin and other vegetables.

"Despite low prices, I was selling my pumpkin in the local market as I was desperately trying to get back the capital. But Thursday's hailstorm dashed the hope," said Shahadat Mia, a vegetable farmer in the upazila.

Dilshad Mia of Dharghar area said he cultivated pumpkin with loan from an NGO but he is frustrated over the drop in sales of the produce due to the shutdown.

Upazila's agriculture officer Saiful Islam said, "Demand of pumpkin fell in the local markets due to lack of buyers from outside while most of the crops were destroyed by the hailstorm on Thursday. We will support the affected farmers if there is allocation from the government."



Farmers coming to sell a variety of vegetables at Boro Bazar in Nilphamari see only a few local customers as there is hardly any buyer from other areas including capital Dhaka during the countrywide shutdown imposed to contain the spread of Covid-19. The adverse situation has led to drastic price fall of the vegetables, much to the worry of growers dependent on the sale of the agricultural produces for livelihood.

PHOTO: EAM ASADUZZAMAN

Header section for the official notice, including logos of YAT Online and various government departments, and contact information for the Ministry of Agriculture.

Official notice regarding the suspension of the 2019-2020 input subsidy program for fertilizer and pesticides. It details the reasons for suspension and provides instructions for farmers.

Official notice regarding the suspension of the 2019-2020 input subsidy program for fertilizer and pesticides. It includes a table with 11 columns detailing the suspension of various agricultural inputs and their prices.

## Tsitsipas' birthday prank on Kyrgios

Stefanos Tsitsipas sent Nick Kyrgios an unwelcome gift through Instagram on Monday. The sixth-ranked Greek posted a picture of himself standing outside and holding up a home-made cardboard sign with a phone number and the words "call me" scrawled on it. Fans who excitedly rang it thinking it was the Greek star's number, found that the phone was turned off and quickly worked out that the number was Australian and linked to Kyrgios, who was celebrating his 25th birthday. That was confirmed when Kyrgios himself replied, "You are an absolute i\*\*\*\*", using stars for the last four letters and a series of laughing emojis.

—REUTERS



# 'An opportunity to strengthen our knowledge base'

While the coronavirus pandemic has put sports around the world in a state of cryo-sleep, it has become the duty of the individual sportsman to keep both their mind and body from falling away during this difficult time. Cricket, like all other major sports in the country has also come under the thumb of the virus that has caused the world to come to a standstill. During a two-part interview with The Daily Star, Nazmul Abedin Fahim, a brilliant cricketing mind and a mentor to many renowned cricketers in the country, talked about the self-improvement opportunities that lay in front of the players even in these uncertain times.

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

National stars like Shakib Al Hasan or Tamim Iqbal found Fahim by their side whenever they needed a technical intervention during their career. Fahim said that the current situation was a 'huge setback for everybody'. "Especially for those who earn their income from the Premier League, will suffer mentally," he added.

But he was also keen to look at the positive aspect in order to make the best of the current situation. The opportunity for everyone, not just cricketers, is to realign and reset themselves.

"Naturally the negative aspects take centre stage in such a scenario but if there is a positive, it's that those of us who are involved with cricket, be it coaching, as a trainer, physio or a player, it gives us a chance to organise ourselves during this break," he said.

The likes of Mushfiqur Rahim and Mahmudullah Riyad are quite regularly seen training at home in Facebook videos during the ongoing shutdown. Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has also sent the players fitness maintenance programmes. Fahim opined that now was the time for the players to get creative with their training. Personal structuralizing would help individual cricketers learn something about themselves and that, according to Fahim, would improve the 'knowledge base'. He would prioritise fitness but



there were other opportunities.

"The cricketers usually leave aspects of training to the trainers or the physios but now they are looking at ways of keeping themselves fit. The technical

side and tactical side too. Now they are looking at how they can do their drills and looking at how they can practise with the means they have. This creates an opportunity to get creative. Maybe

some are studying on various things, others may be asking various people for advice on what to accomplish. So, the knowledge base will improve a bit. If someone is not taking this opportunity,

they should be doing that," he said.

Even without matches to play and gain experience from, Fahim suggested other means to get creative with working out match scenarios.

"There are old matches to be seen on Youtube, TV or something else and they will have the opportunity now to see those matches. They can review situations and think of what they would have done in particular situations and how they can apply themselves when the opportunity arrives to play once more after the break.

"These are the things we can do to salvage things and get the most out of the situation.

"So, there are lots of things to improve fitness wise and tactically. Plus, studying and consulting with others will be important. As I said, it's about strengthening the knowledge base and in that regard, there is an opportunity to emphasise upon those things," he said.

For Fahim, while the 'lack of competitiveness' due to absence of sports is going to affect the players, the biggest setback was the young players not getting a chance to prove themselves. "Either at the U-19 level, or the Dhaka Premier League or others, there were a few boys who would shine every season. Without competition, they lost the chance to test themselves and it's a loss for them and also for our cricket," he said.

(Part two of this interview, due tomorrow, delves into the current standards of the country's cricketing structure and what must improve).

## Rafa thrills in virtual Madrid

REUTERS

Claycourt king Rafa Nadal suffered a fake injury, several players 'froze' and one match vanished into thin air as the Virtual Madrid Open made its debut on Monday.

With professional tennis tours closed down until mid July because of the coronavirus pandemic, an esports version of the event is being staged online.

Thirty two of the world's best players have swapped their rackets for Playstation controllers, courts for sofas, to contest the four-day event designed to offer players, and fans, some action during the lockdown.

Nadal claimed he was a computer game novice during an Instagram chat with Andy Murray last week, but the Spaniard showed impressive fingerwork to beat young Canadian Denis Shapovalov in his opening round-robin match on a digital representation of the Spanish capital's Manolo Santana Stadium.

Things did not start very well, however, with Nadal and Shapovalov, shown in small screens below the game action being broadcast live on Facebook Gaming, sitting frustrated as their computer characters were left bobbing around on the baseline as the game appeared to malfunction.

Andy Murray, tipped a favourite, got into the spirit of things -- grunting loudly after every 'virtual' shot as he beat Frenchman Benoit Paire.

## Shuttlers stand by farmers



Badminton player Mohammad Ammar and others helped farmers harvest paddy in the haor of Sunamganj.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

SPORTS REPORTER

In the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, stars from various sporting disciplines have come forward to help the needy people, who have been struggling to manage their daily meals due to the nationwide lockdown.

Now a group of badminton players have come forward with a slightly different initiative by providing physical labour on paddy grounds in Sylhet, harvesting paddy from the haor area of Sunamganj.

Thousands of farmers in haor areas are worried about timely harvesting of boro paddy due to a shortage of labourer due to the coronavirus pandemic. The situation has been made worse by the probability of advanced flooding.

"Under the banner of 'badminton players in service of mankind', we have already provided 15-days' food and medicine among 100 Bede families in Sunamganj and also distributed food among 200 families in Moulvibazar and Jashore.

"We have raised a fund with help from shuttlers, coaches, umpires, expatriates and general people. We are also helping shuttlers and umpires," Mohammad Ammar, who played in the national badminton championship for Sunamganj, told The Daily Star yesterday.

"In an effort to help people in the coronavirus pandemic and due to the prediction of advanced flooding in haor area, we, some 15 shuttlers, went to help the farmers in Dekhar haor and harvested paddy in nearly 4 to 5 bighas," Ammar said.



While athletes from around the globe, like Australia's star cricketer Steven Smith, are coming forward to help the global fight against the coronavirus pandemic being confined indoors, thousands of miles away from Smith's home, youths and cricket enthusiasts like the ones seen at the Gandogram village under Bogura Shajahanpur Upazila cannot keep themselves away from sports.

PHOTO: MOSTAFA SHABUJ/INSTAGRAM



## Argentina's season over

AFP, Buenos Aires

The Argentine football association will put an end to the 2019-20 season which has been interrupted since mid-March due to the coronavirus pandemic, its president Claudio Tapia said on Monday.

"We are going to end the tournaments so we can designate the teams qualified for continental competitions next year," Tapia said.

The Argentine FA also said there will be no relegation this season or next due to the disruption caused by the health crisis.

Gimnasia, the club coached by Diego Maradona, will remain in the top division as a result. Relegation is calculated by a complicated system of points taken over a three-year period.

Boca Juniors won the league championship with a 1-0 victory over Gimnasia on the final day at the start of March.

The Copa Superliga, a 24-team tournament scheduled to finish with a play-off at the end of May, has been scrapped after just one round of games.

Argentina has been in lockdown since March 20.

## Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Director  
National Institute of ENT  
Tejgaon, Dhaka

Memo No. NIENT/Admin/Tender (MSR)/2019-2020/492

Date: 28/04/2020

### Invitation for Re-Tender

KEY INFORMATION	
1. Ministry/Division	Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
2. Agency	Department of Health Services.
3. Procuring entity name	Director, National Institute of ENT.
4. Procuring entity district	Dhaka.
5. Invitation for	Procurement of Goods (MSR).
6. Invitation Ref No.	NIENT/Admin/Tender(MSR)/2019-2020/492
7. Date	28/04/2020
8. Procurement method	Open Tendering Method (OTM).
FUNDING INFORMATION	
9. Budget and source of funds	GOB (Revenue).
PARTICULAR INFORMATION	
10. Organization code	1270208
11. Organization name	National Institute of ENT, Tejgaon, Dhaka-1208.
12. Tender publication date	29/04/2020
13. Tender last selling date and time	09/05/2020 during office hours.
	Date Time
14. Tender closing date and time	10/05/2020 11.00am
15. Tender opening date and time	10/05/2020 12.00 Noon
16. Name & address of the office(s)	
(a) Selling tender document	Office of the Director, National Institute of ENT, Tejgaon, Dhaka.
(b) Receiving tender document	Office of the Director National Institute of ENT Tejgaon, Dhaka & Office of the Deputy Police Commissioner (North), Tejgaon Division (North) Shamoly, Dhaka (west to Shamoly Shishu Park).
(c) Opening tender document	Office of the Director, National Institute of ENT, Tejgaon, Dhaka-1208.
INFORMATION FOR TENDERER	
17. Eligibility of tenderer	The tenderer shall have a minimum of last 3 years of general/overall experience of the supply of similar goods to the govt./semi govt./autonomous institute/hospital under Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. Certificate must be submitted along with supplying document. The tenderer shall have a minimum of last 2 years of specific experience in the supply of related services to the govt./semi govt./autonomous institute/hospital under Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. Certificate must be submitted along with supplying document. Other requirement described in the tender document.
18. Brief description of goods	MSR item.
19. Pkg. No.	Identification of Pkg
	Tender security (Tk) (refundable)
	Price of tender document (Tk)
GD-03	Supplying of Chemical Re-agent
	Lot No. (1) Biochemistry, Blood Bank & Clinical pathology.
	Lot No. (2) Histopathology.
	Lot No. (3) Audiology.
	Lot No. (4) Radiology Imagine & others.
	60,000/-
	18,000/-
	18,000/-
	60,000/-
	1000/-
	Deposit on Code No. 1-2711-0000-2366 by Treasury Challan (with CTR) in favour of Director, National Institute of ENT, Tejgaon, Dhaka-1208.
PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS	
20. Name of official inviting tender	Prof. Dr. Md. Abu Hanif.
21. Designation of official inviting tender	Director, National Institute of ENT, Tejgaon, Dhaka-1208.
22. Address of official inviting tender	Tejgaon Industrial Area, Dhaka.
23. Contact details of official inviting tender	Tel. Phone: 8878155, Fax No. 8878150
24. Authority in not bound to accept the lowest tender/rate. Authority may cancel the whole tender/part of the tender without assigning any reason.	
25. Terms and conditions of the tender and other information will be available with the schedule.	
Note: If the date of selling, receiving & opening of tender is disturbed under any unavoidable circumstances, the next working day will be applicable for the same respectively.	
GD-773	Prof. Dr. Md. Abu Hanif Director cum Professor National Institute of ENT Tejgaon, Dhaka

**PADMA BRIDGE RAIL LINK PROJECT IS BEING BUILT WITH BSRM**

COUNTRY'S NO. 1 STEEL EXPERT **BSRM** building a safer nation

**GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS RECOGNIZES**

**SHAH CEMENT**

World's Largest VRM

**PSC finalises recruitment of 2,000 docs, 5,000 nurses**

SHARIFUL HASAN

Bangladesh Public Service Commission yesterday finalised its recommendation to recruit 2,000 doctors and 5,000 nurses to tackle the coronavirus crisis.

The doctors will be recruited from the waiting list of the 39th BCS while the nurses will be recruited from the waiting list of senior staff nurse recruitment examinations held in 2018.

The recommendation was finalised at a meeting of the Public Service Commission (PSC).



**A man sells iftar items at a shop on North South Road in the capital yesterday. Amid the countrywide shutdown, the authorities yesterday allowed restaurants to sell takeaway iftar items maintaining social distancing. Many shops were seen giving hand sanitizers to customers.**

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

**CROs vehicles of corruption**

Slams Zafrullah; says local bodies can validate Gonoshasthaya's test kits

PORIMOL PALMA

Gonoshasthaya Kendra Founder and Trustee Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury has made it clear that they are not going to submit their rapid test kits to the drug administration through any contract research organisation (CRO).

"CROs are a vehicle of corruption. It also means a rise in the cost of the test kit, which goes against public interest," he told The Daily Star yesterday, amid a row between the Directorate General of Drug Administration (DGDA) and

**WHO warns on supply disruption**

Seeks more flight capacity to step up shipment of protective equipment; cases top 3m

AGENCIES

The World Health Organization (WHO) yesterday appealed for more flight capacity to step up shipments of diagnostic tests and protective equipment to areas where Covid-19 is spreading, especially Latin America.

Paul Molinaro, chief of WHO operations support and logistics, said global vaccine shipments were disrupted in April and if this continued into May there would be gaps in routine immunisations and campaigns against other disease outbreaks.

The UN's World Food Programme has reported the first disruptions in some food supply chains that "could bite deep", he said.

"We saw the international air transport system on which we are quite

**FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH: BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES**

**Prime ministers will decide water-sharing issue**

April 29, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

**FOREIGN TROOPS SHOULD QUIT VIETNAM: BANGABANDHU**

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman today says in Dhaka that foreign troops should be withdrawn immediately from the soil of Vietnam. Talking to BSS, the prime minister says that the people of Vietnam

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

**PRAYER TIMING APRIL 29**

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4:01	12:45	4:45	6:30	8:00
JAMAAT 4:11	1:15	5:00	6:40	8:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

**SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING**

RAMADAN	APRIL	SEHRI	IFTAR
5	29	4:00	6:30
6	30	4:00	6:30
7	MAY 1	3:59	6:31

**রাজধানী উন্নয়ন কর্তৃপক্ষ**

রাজউক ভবন, ঢাকা

**ডেঙ্গু ও চিকুনগুনিয়া প্রতিরোধ জরুরি বিজ্ঞপ্তি**

এতদ্বারা রাজউকের আওতাধীন এলাকার সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, আসন্ন বর্ষা মৌসুমের শুরুতেই এডিস মশার বংশ বিস্তারের সম্ভাবনা দেখা যাচ্ছে। ফুলের টব, টায়ার, ডাবের খোসা, প্রাস্টিকের খালি বোতল, নির্মিত/নির্মাণাধীন ভবনের ছাদে জমে থাকা পানি ইত্যাদি কারণে এডিস মশার বংশ বিস্তার ঘটে। এডিস মশার বংশ বিস্তারের কারণে ডেঙ্গু ও চিকুনগুনিয়া রোগের প্রাদুর্ভাব রোধকল্পেঃ

- নির্মাণাধীন ভবনের কিউরিং চলাকালীন সময়ে পানি জমিয়ে না রেখে ২(দুই) দিন পরপর পানি পরিবর্তন করুন;
- নির্মিত/নির্মাণাধীন ভবন এবং এর আশেপাশের চৌবাচ্চার পানি পরিবর্তন করুন;
- সরকারি ব্যবস্থাপনায়/ডেভেলপার/সমবায়/মালিক কর্তৃক নির্মিত/নির্মাণাধীন ভবনের ভিতরে ও বাহিরে সব সময় পরিষ্কার পরিচ্ছন্ন রাখুন;

সংশ্লিষ্ট কর্তৃপক্ষ পরিদর্শনকালে ব্যত্যয়/ব্যতিক্রম পরিলক্ষিত হলে আইন অনুযায়ী ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণ করা হবে।

প্রকৌশলী মোঃ মোবারক হোসেন  
পরিচালক (উন্নয়ন নিয়ন্ত্রণ-১) (চঃ দাঃ)  
রাজধানী উন্নয়ন কর্তৃপক্ষ, ঢাকা

জিডি-৭৬৬

**যে ক্ষতি নেই পূরণে দৃঢ় রবে আজীবন মননে**

অন্যকোনোভাবে উল্লেখ্যে দেশকে যিনি নিয়ে গেছেন এক অনন্য উজ্জ্বলতা; স্বচ্ছতা জন কাম্যীয় অধ্যাপক, সাবেক তত্ত্বাবধায়ক সরকারের উপদেষ্টা ও দেশসেবা শিক্ষাবিদ, গবেষক, বিজ্ঞানী ও একেইশাশী জননব জামিলুর রেজা চৌধুরীর চিত্রলেখ্যানে তাঁকে অবদান করছি বিনয় শ্রদ্ধায়।

আমরা তাঁর বিদেহী আত্মার মঙ্গলকাম্য ও শান্তি কামনা করছি এবং শোকসন্তপ্ত পরিবারের প্রতি গভীর সমবেদনা প্রকাশ করছি।

**CROWN CEMENT** | **GPH ispat**

bKash would like to pay its tribute to late National Professor Dr. Jamilur Reza Choudhury, who has been an inspiration for his tremendous contribution to the infrastructural development of Bangladesh as well as shaping the minds of the young generations.

He was an Independent Member of bKash's Board in its formative years and provided invaluable guidance.

**National Professor Dr. Jamilur Reza Choudhury**  
(1943 – 2020)

**bKash**