# The Daily Star

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**BANGLADESH UPDATE**

| 641 New cases in 24hrs | 7,103 Total cases | 163 Deaths | 150 Recoveries |
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**GLOBAL UPDATE**

| 219,513 Deaths | 3,165,235 Total cases |
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## RMG WORKERS

# Thousands rush in, raise fear of spread

*Tuhin Shubhra Adhikary, Rashidul Hasan and Wasim Bin Habib*

Thousands of garment workers yesterday returned to work in industrial belts in Dhaka and elsewhere amid the nationwide shutdown, raising fears of a rapid spread of the novel coronavirus.

The influx of workers, desperate to reach the factories permitted to resume operation, happened a day after Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan said no one would be allowed to enter the capital from outside for work.

In the absence of public transport, they travelled by pickup vans and battery-run autorickshaws, paying two to three times the usual fare to reach their workplaces.

Of the 7,602 garment factories across the country, 2,356 ran operation yesterday. Of those, 443 are in Dhaka, 638 in Gazipur, 605 in Chattogram, 301 in Narayanganj, 80 in Mymensingh and 289 in Khulna, said the Industrial Police.

After a meeting with garment factory owners on Tuesday, the home minister said garment workers would not be allowed to enter the capital from outside as apparel factories would run on a limited scale with workers now staying in the city.

Contacted yesterday, the minister said he was worried to see garment workers returning to Dhaka.

"I don't know why the workers are coming back to Dhaka," he told The Daily Star.

"Garment owners yesterday [on Tuesday] assured me that they would not ask any worker outside Dhaka to join work. We will ask the owners why and how workers are coming to Dhaka."

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Hundreds of Dhaka-bound passengers, many of them garment workers, crowd to get off a ferry at Shimulia ferry terminal in Munshiganj yesterday disregarding social distancing guidelines.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## CLOSED FACTORIES

# Pay workers 60pc of gross salary for April

*Govt asks owners; unions want 100pc*

*Refayet Ullah Mirdha*

In a bid to avert job cuts and temporary closures during Covid-19 outbreak, the government yesterday directed ready-made garment factory owners to pay their workers' salary by 60 percent for April.

The decision came two days after union leaders and factory management sat for a tripartite meeting with State Minister for Labour and Employment Begum Monnojan Sufian in the chair at Sramabhaban in the capital.

The union leaders, however, demanded full payment for all the workers.

The government decision came against the backdrop of unrest caused by layoffs in RMG factories and temporary shutdowns in different industrial belts in and outside Dhaka after reopening from April 26

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## Dhaka, Delhi will work together to tackle food crisis

*Modi calls Hasina; Swedish PM assures no garment orders will be cancelled*

*UNB, Dhaka*

Bangladesh and India yesterday decided to work together to increase food production to face the possible food crisis due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Their pledge to work together came when Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi phoned Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

During the 12-minute conversation that started at 5:50pm, both the leaders mentioned that their governments have taken initiatives to boost food production to face the possible food crisis.

PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim told UNB that the two leaders agreed to work together to this end, if needed.

Hasina said various international organisations, including the UN, have expressed apprehension that the situation may linger. "So, all the countries of the region will have to work in unison to deal with the situation."

Hasina and Modi appreciated the

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## Mugda hospital now at capacity

*It's turning away Covid-19 patients with no beds for males empty*

*Md Anisur Rahman and Zyma Islam*

Coronavirus patients seeking admission had to be sent back from the gate of Mugda General Hospital yesterday as the public hospital in the capital was bursting at the seams.

"Currently, 254 beds are full. We have no beds left for male patients, and only a few beds for female patients are available. I have to keep 39 beds in hand for patients requiring dialysis and postoperative care," said Dr Shah Golam Tuhin, principal of Mugda Medical College.

The hospital has 300 beds dedicated for Covid-19 patients. A photojournalist of The Daily Star, who was stationed there for five hours from 10:00am, saw many desperately trying to get a bed, but in vain.

Referred by doctors at Dhaka Medical College Hospital, Saburunnessa, a 85-year-old woman who recently tested coronavirus positive, was taken to the hospital around 9:00am by her two grandsons. Unable to secure a seat inside, she lay on a metal trolley near the hospital's gate until 3:00pm.

Her grandson said, "Doctors here told us they have no capacity anymore to take elderly patients like her, and so we are going to Railway General Hospital to see if they are willing to take her."

The two then took Saburunnessa inside a CNG-run auto-rickshaw and headed towards the hospital in Kamalapur.

Md Delwar Hossain, 35, came all the way from Narayanganj in an ambulance around 10:00am. After around three hours, he too boarded a CNG-run auto-rickshaw and then headed towards home, unable to find a bed.

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## 3 upscale pvt hospitals get testing permits

*Mohammad Al-Masum Molla*

More than one and a half months after the detection of first Covid-19 case in Bangladesh, the government on Tuesday gave nods to three private hospitals for conducting coronavirus diagnosis tests on a limited scale.

The upscale hospitals in the capital -- Square Hospitals, United hospital and Evercare Hospital (formerly known as Apollo Hospitals) -- will soon start performing coronavirus tests only on the patients admitted to these hospitals, health ministry officials said.

The government has fixed Tk 3,500 as the maximum limit the hospitals can charge for a test.

Health experts and many private hospitals authorities have demanded testing facilities in private hospitals following the outbreak, but the government was reluctant to move forward until recent days.

"We have sent letters to all the private hospitals to inform us whether they are capable of performing corona test. Those who have the capacity and fulfil the criteria will be permitted to test Covid-19," Dr Nasima Sultana, additional director

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## Ramp up the response now

*Nat'l advisory committee recommends; 641 new cases, eight more die*

*Moudud Ahmmed Sujan*

As the number of confirmed coronavirus cases passed the 7,000 mark with record 641 new infections reported yesterday, the National Technical Advisory Committee has recommended scaling up case detection, isolation and treatment measures to tackle the crisis.

The committee came up with the recommendation at its second meeting on Tuesday.

**NUMBER OF CASES ROSE BY 3,000 IN A WEEK**

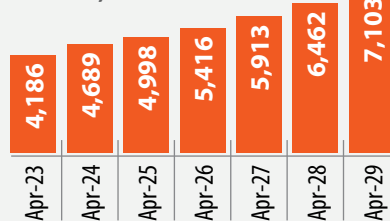| Apr-23 | Apr-24 | Apr-25 | Apr-26 | Apr-27 | Apr-28 | Apr-29 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4,186 | 4,689 | 4,998 | 5,416 | 5,913 | 6,462 | 7,103 |

"We have put forward some specific recommendations considering the current coronavirus situation. Now, we have to emphasize on ramping up the activities in Dhaka city and Dhaka division. Root of the problem lies here," Prof Nazrul Islam, a member of the committee, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Earlier in the day, the authorities reported the highest number of new cases -- 641 -- for a single day. With it, the total number of confirmed coronavirus cases in the country hit 7,103.

In 24 hours till 2:30pm yesterday, eight people died of Covid-19 infections, taking the death toll to 163, Prof Nasima Sultana, additional

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## Coronavirus claims first journo, cop in Bangladesh

*Staff Correspondent*

A senior journalist and a policeman, who were infected with coronavirus, died in city hospitals on Tuesday night.

These are the first deaths in the respective communities that have been working during the outbreak.

Humayun Kabir Khokon, 47, was the chief reporter of Dainik Somoyer Alo, while Jasim Uddin, 40, was a constable of Wari Police Station of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

Humayun had been suffering from cough and breathing problems for the last couple of days. As his condition deteriorated, he was rushed to Regent Hospital in Uttara around 7:00pm on Tuesday in an unconscious state.

He was declared dead at the hospital's ICU about 9:45pm, say his colleagues and family.

His samples were collected and sent to IEDCR for tests later.

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**Anticlockwise from top,** a patient who tested positive for coronavirus at Dhaka Medical College Hospital is brought in by a fire service ambulance to Mugda General Hospital yesterday, but due to a lack of beds, he had to wait for two and a half hours outside the facility before deciding to go back home in Fatullah of Narayanganj.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## PROCUREMENT DELAYS

# Boro farmers of Sylhet in trouble

*Mintu Deshwara*

Delay in government procurement is forcing desperate farmers to sell their paddy at lower prices to rice mill owners and hoarders in Sylhet region.

The authorities earlier announced that procurement of boro paddy would begin from April 26. But officials are now saying that the farmers' list needed for the procurement will not be prepared until another week.

"We have not received the farmers' list from the district-level officials. We will start purchasing after getting the lists," Azizur Rahman, assistant sub inspector at Sylhet Division Food Office, told The Daily Star.

The government will buy 8 lakh tonnes of paddy from farmers across the country for Tk 26 a kg this season.

Rahman said 4,278 tonnes would be bought in Sylhet division.

Meanwhile, cash-strapped farmer Jisan Mia said he has in the last few days sold sacks of paddy for around half of what the government had announced.

The farmer of Hakaluki Haor in Moulvibazar's Kulaura added that there were many others like him.

Makhan Lal Das, a farmer in Sunamganj's Shalla, said it cost him around Tk 750 to 800 to produce each mound of paddy.

But rice mill owners were not offering him any more than Tk 600 a mound against the government announced rate of Tk 1,042.

"I need money right now to repay the village lenders and buy essentials for the family," he said.

Abu Sufian, a freedom fighter and acting president of Sunamganj Haor Bachao Andolan, said the food department must act quickly.

"Any more delay would mean more profit for the

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