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BANGLADESH UPDATE

564 New cases in 24hrs

7,667 Total cases

168 Deaths

160 Recoveries

GLOBAL UPDATE

229,833 Deaths

3,251,660 Total cases

URBAN POOR HIT BY OUTBREAK Tk 2k to each of 50 lakh families

Govt to disburse cash this month

STAR REPORT

The government will provide Tk 2,000 this month to each of 50 lakh urban families clobbered by the shutdown of the economy.

The families engaged in the informal labour sector -- mostly manual labourers, mechanics, construction workers, rickshaw and cart pullers, newspaper delivery persons, street vendors and restaurant employees -- will be eligible for the fund, said Shah Kamal, senior secretary at the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief.

"Our ministry has prepared a list of the people based on information collected by the DC, UNO offices and city corporations across the country. We will submit the list to the Prime Minister's Office on May 4," he added.

The PMO will then take the next steps, he told The Daily Star yesterday, adding that Tk 1,000 crore has been allocated for the programme.

The initiative is part of an effort to help the most vulnerable people stay home during the coronavirus outbreak.

Families in which the breadwinner has become unemployed due to the shutdown will be the beneficiaries, he added.

The government also has plans to provide food assistance to a total of 1.25 crore families under various programmes, Kamal said. Officials hope that over five crore people will be fed under the programmes.

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Without maintaining social distancing, people crowd in front of a Covid-19 testing facility of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) in the capital's Shahbagh area around 11:00am yesterday. This photojournalist of The Daily Star, who visits the area frequently, also reported that the number of those seeking to get tested at the facility was increasing every day.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Test seekers swamping BSMMU

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Twenty-five-year old Farzana Aktar has been suffering from fever, cough, sore throat, and muscle pain for the last five days.

Suspecting that she was infected with the novel coronavirus, Farzana called IEDCR hotline several times for collecting her samples. She described her problems in details, but the IEDCR did not collect her samples.

Frustrated, she then went to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University's fever unit for test.

"With fever and cough, I came here on Wednesday but failed to get tested as the authorities said they could not collect samples anymore that day. Then I came again at 7:00am today [yesterday]," Farzana told this correspondent standing in a queue.

When Farzana was sharing her experience, it was 11:00am and she was yet to get the ticket for testing Covid-19.

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RMG units reopening haphazardly

Many owners violate schedule agreed upon at high-profile meet 5 days ago

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Nearly a thousand garment factories outside the capital, which resumed operation haphazardly since April 26, didn't follow the reopening schedule agreed upon at a high-profile meeting five days ago, spurring a huge influx of workers to Dhaka and elsewhere amid coronavirus risks.

The factories were supposed to reopen in phases and zone-wise in line with the schedule, prepared by Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, as decided by government high-ups, leaders of trade bodies of the garment sector, experts and economists at a meeting on April 25.

As per the decision, all the apparel factories that were closed in the second week of this month would follow the reopening schedule and ensure health safety measures for workers.

According to the BGMEA schedule, only the garment factories in Dhaka metropolitan area would reopen on April 26 and those outside in phases.

But many factories in the industrial belts in Savar, Manikganj, Narayanganj, Gazipur, Narsingdi, Mymensingh and

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It has spread to all districts but one

On 53rd day since first detection, five more people die, 564 fresh cases reported

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The deadly coronavirus has wormed its way into every part of the country, except Rangamati, on the 53rd day since the first case was reported, claiming 168 lives until yesterday.

Five deaths were reported yesterday with 564 infections, taking the number of positive cases to 7,667, Prof Nasima Sultana, additional director general (administration) of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), said during yesterday's briefing.

Of the deceased, three were male and two were female, Prof Nasima informed, mentioning that two were above 60 years old and three between 41 and 50.

Four of the deceased were from Dhaka, she said.

In the last 24 hours until 2:30pm yesterday, samples of 4,965 people were tested in 29 laboratories across the country.

Dhaka continued to be the worst affected region with 83.3 percent of total positive cases belong to this division.

According to Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) website, 3,751 cases were detected in Dhaka city while 1,992 in the 12 other districts in the division.

Narayanganj has the second-highest rate of infection with 923 cases reported as of yesterday.

The two districts have also witnessed the highest number of deaths due to coronavirus -- Dhaka 89 and Narayanganj 39.

"We see the cases are becoming double in every three days. Thanks to the weak healthcare system, we will not be able to resist bigger number of deaths in the days to come," Prof Saif Ullah Munshi, chairman of virology department at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) told The Daily Star yesterday.

"Many Covid-19 deaths will remain unknown due to the inadequate number of tests," he added.

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RAPID TEST KIT Gonosshasthaya finally gets nod for validation

PORIMAL PALMA

In a dramatic development, the Directorate General of Drug Administration has allowed Gonosshasthaya Kendra to submit its home-grown rapid test kits for Covid-19 to BSMMU or icddr,b for validation.

"The drug administration has written to us saying we can either submit our kits to icddr,b or Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University [BSMMU]," said Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury, founder and trustee of Gonosshasthaya Kendra.

"This is a very welcome development," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

The DGDA has also written to BSMMU and icddr,b, requesting them to cooperate in the validation process of the kit -- Rapid Dot Blot -- that can test for both antibody and antigen in human blood.

He said Gonosshasthaya also contacted BSMMU, where it wants to submit the kits developed by a team of its scientists -- Bijon Kumar Sil, Nihad

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Are these right masks?

As supply of US-made N95 stops, giving proper respirators to health professionals now big challenge

MOHAMMAD AL MASUM MOLLA

The authorities were only able to provide an insignificant number of American N95 masks to healthcare professionals fighting Covid-19 in the country. Now they have supplies of imported masks "equivalent" to N95 respirators, mostly from China.

Besides, counterfeit and low-quality masks are also entering Bangladesh, creating potential health risks for those using it, especially healthcare professionals.

The N95 mask is considered a protective equipment of the gold standard, filtering out airborne particles of 0.3 micron by up to 95 percent.

Across the globe, this is one of the key personal protective equipment (PPE) for healthcare professionals treating Covid-19 patients in hospitals and collecting or testing samples.

On the other hand, health experts and professionals question the quality of other masks available in the market. In March, the Dutch government sent back a shipment of KN95 masks from a Chinese manufacturer after determining that those did not meet quality standards.

"We got some N95 masks [made in US] from the WHO but after that we did not get any N95 masks. We are now providing health professionals with masks equivalent to the N95," Abul Kalam Azad, director general of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), told The Daily Star.

The government has been importing respiratory masks equivalent to the N95, through listed vendors, mostly from China, he added.

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MAY DAY TODAY

Large number of children work in tea estates

Unicef study finds almost 30pc in Habiganj are kids

MINTU DESHWARA

After her mother passed away, her father remarried and moved elsewhere, and so attending school became a luxury for 12-year-old Sheuly Munda.

Along with her grandmother Belmoni, a registered tea-garden worker, Sheuly now plucks leaves at a tea garden in Moulvibazar district's Srimongol upazila.

"I wanted to continue my study, but my grandmother said she could not bear my

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HOLIDAY

The Daily Star offices will remain closed today on the occasion of May Day. Therefore, the newspaper will not come out tomorrow.

CONDOLENCES



Amanullah Chowdhury

02 January, 1947- 30 April, 2020

It is with a heavy heart and great sorrow, we are informing you of the passing of **Mr. Amanullah Chowdhury, Vice Chairman and founding director of Rangs Group.** (Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un)

Mr. Aman was a proficient business professional and has been with this organization through thick and thin. His contribution in the development of this company crosses all boundaries and as a result he has left us an enduring legacy to behold. He is survived by his wife and two daughters.

During this tragic period we, the RANCON family, would like to stand together and convey our deepest condolences to the members of the bereaved family and pray to Allah for the salvation of the departed soul.

May Allah grant his family the strength to bear this irreplaceable loss.

RANCON

OBITUARY



AMANULLAH CHOWDHURY

Born: 02 January 1947

Death: 30 April 2020

Mr. Amanullah Chowdhury, Vice Chairman of Rangs Group, Joint Managing Director of Sea Resources Group Ltd., has passed away on April 30, 2020, Thursday due to aging. He was under treatment at a hospital in Dhaka and breathed his last at around 2:00 pm. (Inna Lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un) He was the Managing Director of Deep Sea Fishers Group Ltd., Director of Rangs Pharmaceuticals Ltd. and Reliance Insurance Ltd. He was founding Chairman of ASAP Healthy Food Ltd. He was one of the sponsor Director of Bank Asia Ltd. He was Director of Bank Asia Foundation and he was also a Heroic freedom fighter. He was the younger brother of Mr. A Rouf Chowdhury, Chairman of Rangs Group & Bank Asia Ltd.

The Namaz-e-Janaza of Mr. Amanullah Chowdhury, will be held today (May 01, 2020) after Jumah Prayers at Malikhanagar Jame Mosque, Sirajdikhan, Munshiganj. He will be buried next to his mother in the family graveyard. His family members, relatives and well-wishers are requested to pray for the salvation of the departed soul. He has left behind two daughters, a host of relatives, friends and well-wishers.