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Your Right to Know

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BANGLADESH
UPDATE665
New cases in 24hrs9,455
Total cases177
Deaths177
RecoveriesGLOBAL
UPDATE245,584
Deaths3,514,030
Total cases

BANGLADESHI MIGRANTS IN KSA

10 lakh face deportation

May happen over next 3 to 5 years due to coronavirus fallout, policy in Gulf state, says mission in Riyadh

JAMIL MAHMUD and RASHIDUL HASAN

The coronavirus fallout and slumping oil prices may lead to the deportation of up to 10 lakh Bangladeshi migrant workers from Saudi Arabia in the next three to five years, according to the Bangladesh mission there.

The Gulf country's policy to replace 70 percent of the foreign workers by its citizens within 2030 could be another reason for the deportation, mission officials fear.

The embassy in a report sent to the foreign ministry recently recommended the government seek alternative labour markets, possibly in African countries.

Officials say it might be possible to employ about 40 lakh Bangladeshis in farming, aquaculture, livestock and different factories in African countries.

Saudi Arabia, the most popular destination of Bangladeshi migrant workers, is home to more than 20 lakh Bangladeshis.

The embassy report said Saudi

authorities are introducing monthly fees for dependents of foreign workers and increasing the fees for iqamas or residency permits as they are implementing the "Saudiization policy" which was formulated in 2016.

According to the report, the recent record dip in oil prices would slow the development works in Saudi Arabia. "Many of the projects may get delayed or suspended."

The Bangladesh mission also cited automation and requirement of skilled workers as factors that could lead to deportation of Bangladeshi workers in the future.

In January and February this year, around 1.29 lakh Bangladeshis travelled abroad for employment. At least 95,385 or 73.87 percent of them went to Saudi Arabia, according to the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training.

Saudi Arabia is rapidly introducing

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Scores of vehicles are seen near the Kakoli intersection in the capital around 11:30am yesterday amid a countrywide shutdown. The government extended the shutdown till May 16 to curb the spread of the coronavirus. *Inset*, showing disregard for social distancing, people move around the Islampur wholesale market in Old Dhaka.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Climb up the curve continues

665 new cases reported;
2 more die

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The novel coronavirus appears to be getting a tight grip on the country as the number of infected people reported hit a new high in a single day.

Some 665 new cases were recorded. With them, the number of infected people is now 9,455.

Two people died of Covid-19 over the same period, bringing the number of fatalities to 177.

On April 29, Directorate General of Health Services recorded the highest 641 Covid-19 positive cases.

Of the two deceased, one was aged between 11 and 20, while the other was above 60. One of them was from Rangpur and another from Narayanganj, said Prof Nasima Sultana, additional director general (administration) of DGHS, while briefing journalists via video conference yesterday.

Some 5,368 samples were tested across the country since Saturday, Nasima said.

Sixty-one people have been isolated across the country in the 24 hours, she added.

The authorities reported the first three

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Factories to be shut if many get infected

Decides inter-ministerial meet; joint body to monitor health measures; Dhaka, N'ganj, Gazipur to be kept isolated

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Readymade garment factories that have resumed production will be shut down in case a significant number of workers get infected with Covid-19, Health Minister Zahid Maleque has said.

The decision came at an inter-ministerial meeting on "reopening industries and commerce on a limited scale" held at the health ministry yesterday -- two days after at least ten garment workers were tested Covid-19 positive in Savar industrial belt.

The minister, however, did not make it clear how many infections would make the authorities consider the number significant.

"By strictly maintaining the health rules, garment sector and [other] industries can be resumed. We have to take care of people's livelihood as well as their health," the health minister told journalists

in an online briefing following the meeting.

Earlier on April 26, the government announced that it would allow opening the garment factories on a limited scale.

Following the announcement, around 1,000 factories across Savar-Ashulia, Gazipur, Narayanganj and Chattogram industrial belts resumed production at a time.

Representatives from different ministries, law enforcement agencies, healthcare organisations, and RMG industry attended the meeting.

Earlier, several important decisions, including the shutdown mechanism for the resumed factories, were finalised at the meeting.

It also decided to form a joint-monitoring committee to monitor the health measures taken by the factories.

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Country lagging behind in genome sequencing

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Though countries around the world, including Bangladesh's South Asian neighbours, are unraveling and analysing the genome of the coronavirus to better know its nature and behaviour, the country is yet to embark on genome sequencing.

"We do not know how long the virus will stay in our country. We know that the virus behaved differently in different countries," said Mustak Ibn Ayub, assistant professor at the department of genetic engineering and biotechnology at the University of Dhaka.

"To understand the nature of the virus, we need genome sequencing."

A number of institutions in the country have the capacity to carry out genome sequencing of the virus, he said.

"A national committee can be formed for genome sequencing. We have resources and we have to use them."

A genome is the complete genetic material of an organism, in this case, the coronavirus.

Genome sequencing is a powerful tool for tracking diseases through a process called genomic prediction. It helps researchers identify the genetic changes

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TENGRATILA BLOWOUTS

Niko liable, must pay damages

Int'l tribunal verdict comes in favour of Bangladesh over the 2005 disaster

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY and REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Canadian company Niko Resources was negligent and thus liable for the blowout that took place at Chhatak gas field in Tengratila of Sunamganj in January 2005 while Niko's Bangladeshi subsidiary was carrying out drilling operations there, a World Bank tribunal found.

The tribunal formed under the Convention on the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) also concluded that Niko must compensate Bapex for direct loss and damage caused by the blowout.

The compensation owed by Niko to Bapex includes the gas that escaped from Chhatak 2 Well. Niko must also pay compensation for direct damages to environment and health of the people in the surrounding area.

The quantum of such compensation is to be determined at the next phase of the pending arbitration case.

Bangladesh, on the basis of reports from international experts, filed a claim for damages before ICSID in March 2016 seeking \$118 million for Bapex and \$896 million for Petrobangla and Bangladesh as compensation for the 2005 blowouts.

Although the tribunal gave the verdict on February 28, Nasrul Hamid Bipu, state minister for power, energy and mineral resources, disclosed it through a video conference with journalists yesterday.

The ministry had a plan to disclose the verdict in early March but the coronavirus outbreak delayed it, ministry sources said.

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29 Rohingyas sheltered in Bhashan Char

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

At least 29 Rohingyas, who had been in one of the two boats floating on the Indian Ocean, were sheltered at the Bhashan Char after they reached the shore of Teknaf early Saturday.

"The 29 Rohingyas were taken to Bhashan Char under the supervision of the Navy," Mahbub Alam Talukder, Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC), told The Daily Star yesterday.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen said the Rohingyas took small boats and swam to the coast of Teknaf. Some of them even fled when locals were rescuing them, he said.

A Rohingya broker said an international NGO gave them between Tk 90,000 and Tk 1 lakh for transporting the Rohingyas to Malaysia. As Malaysia denied to receive those Rohingyas the NGO again asked the brokers to get them back to Bangladesh,

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A man taking his wheelchair-bound wife home after visiting Agargaon Kidney Hospital in the capital. The couple, who live in the city's Mohakhali area, tried to hire a CNG-run auto-rickshaw at the hospital but none of the auto-rickshaw drivers agreed to take an ill passenger. The photo was taken on Begum Rokeya Sarani.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

MISSING JOURNO KAJOL

Found after 53 days, sent to jail

First sued for 'trespass', then held under CrPC section 54

STAR REPORT

Fifty-three days after his disappearance, missing photojournalist Shafiqul Islam Kajol was found in Benapole yesterday on World Press Freedom Day, but was subsequently arrested and sent to jail.

Soon after being found, he was arrested by Benapole police -- initially on charge of trespassing, and then later in the evening under section 54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure -- and sent to Central Jashore Prison to await trial.

The photojournalist went missing on the evening of March 10 after leaving his office in Hatirpool. Several days after his disappearance, his mobile phone was found active in Benapole, Sub-inspector Munshi Abdul Lokman, investigation officer of his disappearance case, told The Daily Star.

HOW HE WAS FOUND

The Raghunathpur unit of Border Guard Bangladesh claimed that they discovered Kajol in a paddy field in Raghunathpur village of Sadipur union.

The spot where he was found is directly adjacent to the border and the Benapole Land Port.

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