



The Daily Star



REGD. No. DA 781 | Vol. XXX No. 111 | BAISHAKH 23, 1427 BS | **Your Right to Know** | RAMADAN 12, 1441 HIJRI | 12 PAGES PRICE: Tk 12.00

BANGLADESH UPDATE **786** New cases in 24hrs **10,929** Total cases **183** Deaths **1,403** Recoveries **GLOBAL UPDATE** **254,283** Deaths **3,680,210** Total cases

Rethink reopening

Nat'l technical advisory committee on Covid-19 recommends, as the govt move could lead to further spread

WASIM BIN HABIB, MOUJUD AHMED SUJAN and TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The national technical advisory committee on Covid-19 has recommended reconsidering the government's decision of reopening shopping malls and other businesses, saying such a move could lead to further transmission of the deadly coronavirus.

It also recommended that all decisions -- be it on reopening industries or relaxing the shutdown -- should be taken on the basis of opinions from epidemiologists.

The committee made the recommendations during a meeting with Health Minister Zahid Maleque at his office in the secretariat yesterday.

"Reopening of shopping malls in any place means a kind of easing of the lockdown. Our position is that the transmission will increase if the lockdown is relaxed," Prof Mohammad Shahidullah, who is leading the committee, told The Daily Star.

"We have recommended that the decision on easing the lockdown be made based on opinions of epidemiologists," he said.

The government on Monday issued a gazette announcing its decision to reopen shopping malls, all types of shops and other businesses from May 10 on a limited

"Normally, we can assume that the number of infection will go up after the reopening of markets, garments and shops. We have to try our best to keep it under control."

HEALTH MINISTER ZAHID MALEQUE

scale ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr. The move came around a week after it allowed readymade garment factories to resume production.

The decisions came when the virus is apparently having a tight grip on the country, infecting hundreds of people everyday.

The country reached the grim milestone of 10,000-plus coronavirus cases on Monday. The health authorities recorded the highest single-day cases -- 786 -- yesterday, which brought the total number of confirmed cases to 10,929.

One more Covid-19 patient died in the 24 hours till 2:30pm yesterday, taking the death toll to 183.

It is at this crucial juncture that the



The Mitford Road in Old Dhaka is packed with vehicles and people around 2:00pm yesterday. The country is under a shutdown to slow the spread of Covid-19 but nobody there seems to care about maintaining social distancing. Locals say traffic on the road has been almost normal in the last few days.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Schools, colleges to stay closed till May 30

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

All educational institutions will remain closed until May 30 on the occasions of Ramadan, Jumatul Wida, Shab-e-Qadr, and Eid-ul-Fitr, said Mahbob Hossain, secondary and higher education division secretary.

"We will issue an order to this end soon," he told The Daily Star yesterday. All educational institutions have been closed since March 17, and the government has now extended the closure until May 16 to stem the further spread of Covid-19.

On April 27, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said all educational institutions may stay closed until September if the situation caused by the coronavirus outbreak does not improve.

Directorate of Primary Education sources said according to their academic calendar, all primary schools will remain closed until June 6 for Ramadan and Eid-ul-Fitr and summer vacations.

Educational activities of about four crore students are being hampered due to coronavirus crisis. Publishing of SSC exam results and holding of HSC exams have been deferred for an indefinite period. First-term exams of primary schools also

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UNTAPPED when needed most

With no coordination, many labs and experts still unutilised in anti-coronavirus fight

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

Due to a lack of coordination and support from the health ministry, a good number of laboratories and experts based in universities and government research institutions remain unutilised in the country's Covid-19 response.

At present, people are being screened for coronavirus in 33 designated centres equipped with real-time polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) instruments. Over 3,000 samples can be tested in the span of 24 hours at these centres.

In addition, there are some 26 RT-PCR instruments in 17 public institutions and 46 in 37 private ones, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

At these institutions, there are hundreds of scientists and technicians who have specialised knowledge and expertise in handling highly contagious pathogens like Covid-19 and using the RT-PCR machines.

But so far, out of the 17 public institutions equipped with RT-PCR, only three have started Covid-19 screening. They are Jashore University of Science and Technology (JUST), Chattogram Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (CVASU) and Bangladesh Livestock Research Institute.

And seven non-government hospitals and institutions are conducting the coronavirus tests. Experts point out the lack of coordination and support from the health ministry in underutilising available manpower and facilities.

For instance, on March 28, the University of Dhaka formed a technical

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Govt recruits 2,000 docs to fight virus

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has appointed 2,000 doctors as assistant surgeons in the BCS (Health) Cadre to fight the ongoing Covid-19 crisis.

The Ministry of Public Administration issued a gazette notification on Monday night appointing the doctors in keeping with the urgent needs of the state upon recommendation of the Public Service Commission (PSC).

The doctors have been asked to join the workplaces that the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) will assign them on May 12. If they do not get any instruction from the DGHS, they will have to join the directorate on May 12.

"If he or she does not join the job on the due date, s/he will be deemed as not agreeing to join the job and this temporary appointment will be

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BATTLING COVID-19

Are we leaving too much to chance?

AL-AMIN

In a desperate attempt to get the economy back on track, the government has reopened factories that remained closed for around a month in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak.

It has also decided to open shopping malls and markets on a limited scale from May 10 so that people can engage in economic activities centring the Eid-ul-Fitr to be celebrated later this month.

While reopening those key economic fronts, the government set out guidelines for social distancing and safety of workers and consumers alike.

Given that millions of workers are in economic hardship amid fears of job losses and businesses on the verge of collapse, it appears to be a pressing decision.

But is it a pragmatic decision when the virus cases are still on the rise in Bangladesh?

The country yesterday recorded 786 positive cases, the highest in a single day, as the total number of Covid-19 infections crossed the 10,000-mark on Monday.

In no certain terms do we know when

the pandemic, which has so far claimed over 2.5 lakh lives and infected over 3.5 million people worldwide, would reach its peak in Bangladesh.

With an ill-equipped healthcare set-up and very limited testing abilities, a country of 160 million people is still not sure where it stands at the moment in terms of combating Covid-19 and how to flatten the curve.

Ever since the first coronavirus patient was detected on March 7, the number grew slowly for a period. But now the country is seeing an explosion of cases and a fluctuating number of deaths on a daily basis.

Five Covid-19 patients died on Monday, taking the death toll to 182.

Quoting experts and health officials, this newspaper in yesterday's issue reported that it was difficult to predict the course of the pandemic.

"The virus is on course to reach the peak slowly. However, we cannot say exactly when it will peak," the report said quoting Mushtaq Hossain, epidemiologist and consultant at the Institute of Epidemiology,

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CTTC wants Kajol arrested under DSA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime unit of Dhaka Metropolitan Police has filed a petition with Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Court in Dhaka seeking its permission to show photojournalist Shafiqul Islam Kajol arrested in a case filed under the Digital Security Act.

Motlubur Rahman, inspector at CTTC and also the investigation officer in the case, submitted the application on Monday.

In response, Metropolitan Magistrate Baki Billah asked the jail authorities in Jashore to produce Kajol before it on June 1 when the court would decide on the appeal.

The case in question was filed by Saifuzzaman Shikhor, a ruling party lawmaker from Magura-1, with Sher-E-Bangla Nagar Police Station on March 9.

Two more cases under the same act were subsequently filed on

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Holding food packets in their hands, two underprivileged children scale an iron fence of the High Court in the capital yesterday, risking injuries. Some, including the two, received food aid from a few city residents inside the court compound.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

'Stepping down for sake of love'

Says Kishore Kumar Das about why he resigned as head of Bidyanando that faces torrents of abuse over his religious identity

SHARIFUL HASAN

In a surprising development, Bidyanondo Foundation founder chairperson Kishore Kumar Das announced his resignation yesterday. The notice of his resignation appeared on the organisation's official Facebook page.

But why did he do so all of a sudden?

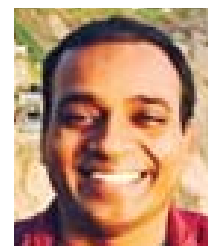
Kishore, who is currently living in Peru, was contacted over phone and he gave an interview to The Daily Star about why he had left his position.

He said, "If anybody asks me what my most favourite thing in the world is at this moment, I would say that it is Bidyanondo Foundation. But sometimes a person needs to make sacrifices for the sake of people, for the sake of love. That is why I am resigning as the chairperson of the organisation."

A graduate of computer science from Chattogram University of Engineering Technology, Kishore is currently working as an entrepreneur in Peru.

Kishore informed that Bidyanondo was formed in 2013 with an aim to provide education to underprivileged children. Currently, more than 2,000 children receive basic literacy and food aid through its 12 branches. They

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Prof Muntasar Mamun's condition improves

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Noted historian Prof Muntasar Mamun, who was hospitalised with Covid-19, has been shifted from the intensive care unit (ICU) to the cabin at Mugda Medical College Hospital in Dhaka.

Prof Monilal Aich Litu, president of the hospital's Covid-19 dedicated doctors' committee, said they have shifted Prof Mamun to the cabin as his condition is stable now.

A six-member medical board was formed yesterday for his treatment following the prime minister's directives.

Prof Monilal said the PM has been inquiring about Prof Mamun's condition. Her office requested to form a board on Monday evening, he added.

The 69-year-old Dhaka University professor was admitted to the hospital on Sunday evening with Covid-19 symptoms.

He tested positive on Monday. After his health deteriorated, the professor was shifted to the ICU.

Family sources said test sample from Prof Mamun was collected 10 days ago, as he came in touch with his mother, who had earlier tested positive for the virus.



Social distancing protocols and the fear of being infected with Covid-19 are distant problems for countless people in the capital, who have no roof over their head, and now -- due to the nationwide shutdown -- no way to earn their bread. Men of various ages, most of them homeless and destitute, wait patiently in a congested yet disciplined queue for several hours near Doyel Chattar, knowing some samaritan will come along with food for them before iftar. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Primary students' stipends increased finally, after 18yrs

Disbursement resumes; each to receive pending amount before Eid

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has approved the disbursement and increment of stipends, and extension of Primary Education Stipend Project (PESP), paving the way for financially assisting 1.37 crore elementary students, which was halted for over six months.

After PM's approval, from now on, the amount of stipend will increase by 50 per cent, and each primary student will receive a yearly amount of Tk 1,000 for buying school supplies like uniforms and bags, said PESP officials.

The government increased the stipend after 18 years, despite the erosion of real value over the period. The amount was fixed in 2002 and has not been revised since then, officials added.

"The PM approved extension of our project for 18 months and increased the stipend amount on Monday," Yusuf Ali, project director of PESP's third phase, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Officials had requested for extension of the project in December last year, but due to the pandemic, decisions were kept pending and so did disbursement of stipends.

He said authorities will disburse pending instalment of October last year within a week, according to the old stipend amount. They will disburse instalments of January and April, according to the increased amount, before Eid-ul-Fitr.

The government sends the money directly to students' mothers through mobile banking services four times a year -- in April, July, October and January.

To qualify for the stipend, selected students must have 85 per cent monthly attendance. They also need to take all school examinations and attain a minimum of 33 per cent marks for each subject.

According to the old stipend amount, each student

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Sale of unauthorised Covid-19 home test kits rampant online

MUNTAKIM SAAD

In spite of disapproval by the drug administration, unauthorised rapid Covid-19 test kits are being sold online through e-commerce sites and social media.

According to World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines, Bangladesh is only using Real Time PCR testing method, as opposed to Rapid Diagnostic Test (RDT) kits. WHO says the accuracy of the latter's diagnosis is questionable.

However, RDT kits are being imported illegally by these sellers without the knowledge of the Directorate General of Drug Administration (DGDA). Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) said they are being imported through international courier services.

These kits are being advertised on Facebook pages and free classified advertising sites, seeking both wholesale and retail buyers.

Recently, police and Rab have seized 1,475 rapid testing kits from the capital's Banglamotor, Shahidbagh and Nikunja areas in separate drives.

"Good News! Now you can test coronavirus sitting at your home with 80 percent accuracy! It's almost the same as a diabetes test," read an advertisement on Facebook by Looks International Ltd on April 9. The advertisement cited their location at Dhaka's Karwan Bazar.

It included a contact number, and said a minimum of 1,000 test kits have to be ordered. The post was deleted right after

Rab's drive.

Called, a staffer of the company picked up. He said they had initially imported these kits but later halted sales after the law enforcers' action.

"No lab visits, no doctors. Just one finger prick of blood!" read another Facebook post, saying its diagnosis comes in 10 to 15 minutes, with a staggering 92 percent accuracy.

Each box contains 25 test kits. The wholesale price of each kit is around Tk 450 while the retail price is from Tk 1,000 to Tk 1,600, the post mentioned.

In a Facebook group, one Suman Saha posted, "If anyone is looking for business opportunities, contact me. I have ready stocks, including Covid-19 test kits."

Earlier, a scandal occurred as the Gazipur city corporation mayor self-financed import of 50,000 unauthorised testing kits. He even distributed some of those to a few hospitals and upazilas.

Major Imad Uddin Laskar, company commander of Rab-3, said people who are worried about Covid-19 symptoms generally search for kits on e-commerce sites and Facebook for self-testing.

Rab said they will continue drives against the unauthorised testing kits stocked with the sellers.

Currently, WHO does not recommend the use of antigen or antibody detecting rapid diagnostic tests. Rapid diagnostic

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17 'JMB men' held in capital

They were planning to migrate to Saudi Arabia for 'jihad': CTTC

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

The Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit of police claimed to have arrested 17 members of JMB from the capital's Kakrail area, who were planning to join a so-called jihad after migrating into Saudi Arabia.

On information, police conducted a drive in front of Public Health Office, opposite Kakrail Mosque, around 7:15pm on Monday and made the arrests, Towhidul Islam, additional deputy commissioner of CTTC unit, told The Daily Star yesterday.

The arrestees are Haider Ali, Mahmudul Hasan alias Masum, Jamirul Islam, Billal Hossain, Sheikh Arafat alias Johnny, Imrul Hasan alias Emon, Saiful Islam, Mozammel Haque, Md Shahjalal, Md Akhtaruzzaman, Mahmudul Hasan alias Sabir, Abid ul Mahmud alias Abid, Sohail Sardar, Obaidul Islam alias Sumon, Mahmud Hasan alias Sharif, Majedul Islam alias Mukul and Sohag Hasan.

CTTC unit seized 19 cell phones, Tk 2.34 lakh and \$922 from their possession.

"In primary interrogation, all the arrestees admitted that they are members of mainstream JMB," said ADC Towhidul.

Towhidul, who led the operation, said an engineer named Syed Mostaq bin Arman, left Bangladesh for Saudi Arabia in 2017 and is still staying in the country. Mostaq released some audio speeches and videos on his YouTube channel, inviting others to join "jihad" at a place called Ghazwat-ul-Hind in Saudia Arabia as a soldier of Imam Mahdi, he added.

"Inspired by this audio and video clip, the arrestees communicated with Mostaq and tried to go to Saudi Arabia to prepare for war as Imam Mahdi's soldiers," said Towhidul, adding that they left home in mid-March.

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The long wait for test reports

Slow Covid-19 diagnosis worry patients in Ctg as hospitals struggle with backlog of samples

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

After a teacher of Chittagong University caught a fever with a mild cough, she was rightly concerned, and went to Bangladesh Institute of Tropical and Infectious Diseases (BITID) for Covid-19 test last Wednesday.

A staffer collected her sample and asked her to contact them after seven days for the report. When asked why it would take so long to get the report, he could not say anything. "You just have to collect the report after a week," he said.

Like this teacher, many people are worried about not getting the test results in time, while they continue to show symptoms of coronavirus infection.

"As we can't confirm whether it's Covid-19 or not, we don't know what step to take next, or prepare for self-isolation," said the worried father of another suspected Covid-19 patient.

"I have read that the PCR test requires several hours but BITID cannot deliver the report before a week passes," he added.

Testing for coronavirus began at BITID on March 25. It was the only centre for testing at Chattogram at the time, while another testing facility was launched at Chattogram Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (CVASU) on April 21.

The two centres can test around 260 samples a day. For example, a total of 183 samples were tested in BITID while a total of 83 samples were tested in CVASU on Sunday. The two centres test samples collected from at least five districts of Chattogram division, said sources.

Citizens and health experts have urged the authorities to increase the number of testing facilities in Chattogram for the sake of patients.

"We collect 300-350 samples a day from five districts but our lab has the capacity of carrying out around 150 tests a day," said Prof Dr Shakil Ahmed, in-charge of BITID laboratory, adding, "We are testing over 180 samples a day and we sent some 80 to 90 samples to CVASU laboratory for testing."

"CVASU does not collect any sample by their own source rather they just test samples collected and prepared by us in their lab," he explained the reason behind the delay.

"We have to work under tremendous pressure till midnight in lab," said Prof Shakil. "Still we have around 450 samples in stock. How will we deliver reports in a day or two?"

"But we are now delivering reports in four days on average," he said.

Asked whether the quality of samples would fall if left for days, Prof Shakil said it is true that quality of samples fall gradually but those can be preserved in minus 20 degree Celsius temperature.

"We preserve the sample in standard method and there should be no doubt about the accuracy of the result," he said.

Prof Shakil also stressed on increasing the testing facilities in Chattogram. "Patients will be benefited if testing starts in Chattogram Medical College (CMC) lab," he said.

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Nepotism in OMS rice enlistment process protested in Barishal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, BARISHAL

Protesting mismanagement and nepotism in the enlistment process of the special open market sale (OMS) list, a citizens' platform handed over a memorandum to the district administration yesterday noon.

The "United Platform of Barishal to Resist Covid-19" alleged that enlistments are being done by considering political identity.

Manisha Chakrabarty, coordinator of the platform, said, "We have received at least 200 complaints from 10 wards across five areas of Barishal City Corporation. We demand proper investigation and fare enlistment of the ultra poor."

"We received these complaints from Chadmari, Rupatali, Bhatikhana, Nazir Mahalla and Palashpur areas, some of the poorest neighbourhoods of the city," added Manisha, also a leader of left-leaning political party Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal (BSD).

Faruk Hossain, resident of Chadmari slum area under ward 10, alleged that his name was not included in the list as he does not have political connections with the ruling party.

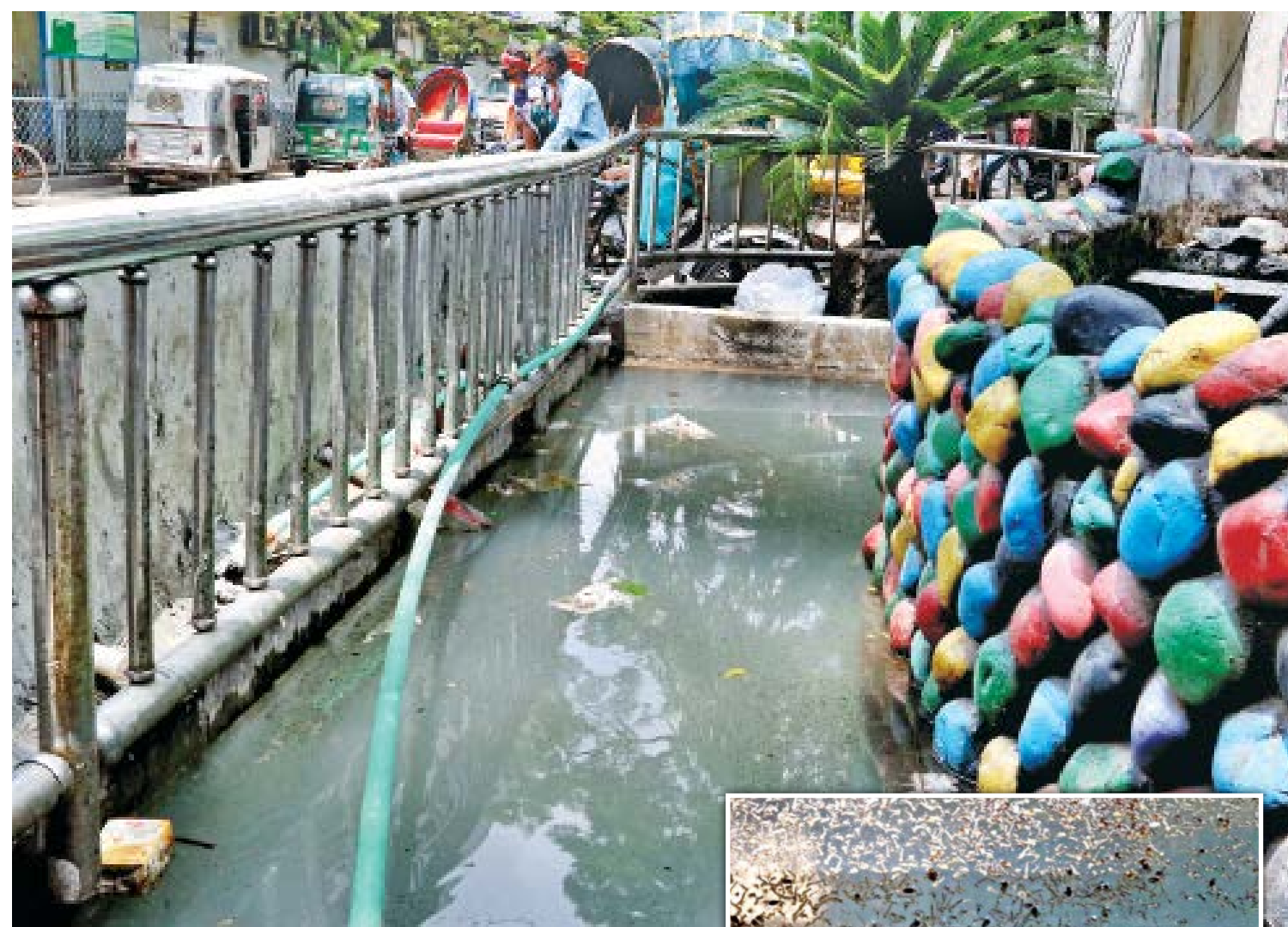
Rickshaw-puller Shahid, resident of Palashpur Slum area under ward 5, alleged the same while speaking to this correspondent.

Faruk Hossain Shikder, regional controller of food at Barishal, said there are five committees to scrutinise the lists. "We are yet to receive any such allegation," he told this newspaper.

"It's an ongoing process. If we find any fault in the enlistment, we will cancel the entrant after investigation," he added. However, he did not mention what to do regarding those who have allegedly been left out of the list.

Deputy Commissioner SM Ajar Rahman said, "We have received the memorandum and the allegations will be investigated. We will not accept any enlistment based on political identities."

According to the regional controller, the special OMS programme will sell 20kg of rice for Tk 10 per kg to enlisted card-holders.



This fountain near Dhaka Medical College Hospital's burn unit no longer serves its original purpose of beautification. Left unattended for months, it has rather become a prime breeding ground for mosquitoes. Inset, mosquito larvae are visible under the still water. This is especially concerning amid the coronavirus outbreak, and the government has been served a legal notice to take action against mosquito menace as "dengue season" is approaching. The photos were taken recently.



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

DENGUE IN DHAKA Legal notice served on city mayors, DGHS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A resident of Dhaka city yesterday sent legal notice to mayors of both city corporations, health secretary and director general of Directorate General of Health Services, requesting them to take necessary steps in 24 hours to kill Aedes mosquitoes.

Fahima Ferdous served the legal notice through emails, saying if the respondents do not take measures within the period, she will take appropriate legal action.

The mosquito menace in Dhaka is currently proliferating alongside the Covid-19 outbreak. A total of 80 people died and 5,600 were infected by dengue fever at this time last year, she said in the notice.

She also said the government has taken measures to tackle the pandemic but the two mayors have not taken necessary steps to tackle the mosquito menace, although they are constitutionally responsible for ensuring residents' good health.

Fahima told The Daily Star that she will move a writ petition before the High Court, seeking necessary orders if steps are not taken.

Reopening plan may be disastrous if not handled right

Govt should tighten safety rules, expand testing to support reopening

AS economic pain from the coronavirus lockdown increasingly bites the country, the government has decided to reopen the economy partially. Starting May 10, shopping malls, all types of shops and other businesses will be allowed to function from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm every day. The directives came hours after the government extended the ongoing general "holiday" from May 7 to May 16. This is the first step in unwinding the countrywide lockdown initiatives introduced on March 26. The economic argument of the decision is hard to ignore: we are in the midst of what the IMF has described as the "Great Lockdown" that could create the worst global recession in nearly a century. For Bangladesh, this has had a debilitating effect so far: over a crore people have arguably lost their income opportunities. A vast number of individuals and families are facing risks of starvation or worse. So, some sort of a plan to phase into a reopening was expected.

But from a medical point of view, if not followed with supportive measures, the reopening plan may spell disaster for us. Experts say the health cost of a reopening could be huge, especially at a time when Bangladesh is about to enter the peak period of the coronavirus infection. The number of confirmed cases in the country has already crossed 10,000. The numbers of deaths and new infections are rising by leaps and bounds, and we have already seen that after reopening of some factories, some workers tested Covid-19 positive. What will happen if large numbers of people across the country come out on the streets and visit potential hubs of the outbreak, such as shopping centres, or join work at factories? Caution must be taken before we jump the gun to ease the lockdown. Unfortunately, the government's decision seems broad-based as instead of reopening the economy bit by bit, city by city, and business by business, it allows all establishments to reopen. Also, it doesn't provide any solution to cushion the fallout of a reopening such as mass gatherings, neither does it address concerns about the gross violations of social distancing regulations that we are already witnessing.

If the economy must reopen, a sensible decision will be to take supportive measures such as enforcing specific guidelines for each kind of business—and criminalising violations by business/factory owners—as well as having special directives for at-risk zones. More importantly, given the spike in new cases it is likely to cause, the government should ramp up testing and isolation measures. Countries that have gone for easing lockdowns so far, did so only after a significant drop in coronavirus cases. The opposite happened in our case. We must remain extremely vigilant.

Pandemic and the unscrupulous

Govt's economic incentive must not be exploited

ONE notices a malicious tendency in some unprincipled and dishonest people to exploit and misuse relief measures of the government, particularly during times of crisis. We have seen how food grains meant for the poor have been misappropriated for profiteering. How, allegedly, PPE masks procured by the government failed to meet the required medical standards. And now we have the unscrupulous businessmen scampering for loans, taking advantage of a government policy.

The government as part of its incentive package to the businesses and industrial sector during these hard times, had announced the stay of all interest on loans between April 1 and May 31. This is in addition to the decision of the government not to declare any borrower a defaulter for being unable to pay back the loan, till June 1. But as soon as this was announced, there was a glut of applications for loans, which is in stark contrast to the situation in the previous month when all kinds of investments by the business sector were put on hold in the face of the present economic fallout and of a very uncertain future. And interestingly, many of those seeking loans are previous defaulters.

We believe that such a timely measure is meant to help those industries and businesses that have been thrust in very dire straits during the pandemic. And that includes the banking sector too, who are struggling with the downturn in borrowing in recent times. Therefore, banks must exercise strict scrutiny to ensure that those who are habitual defaulters and who thrive on bank loans—and, from time to time on the central bank's magnanimity to either reschedule or get a most favourable term of repayment of loans—do not exploit a noble measure of the government meant exclusively to overcome the crisis period. We are glad that a caveat has been imposed as a result of the sudden rush for loans, which requires the banks to provide the credit support to the borrowers, given their outstanding loans are until March 31. This must be honestly followed.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Proper use of PPE

Are we using PPE in the right manner? I have heard from my peers who are serving as doctors in various hospitals that their authorities are compelling them to reuse PPE due to scarcity. But if that is done—despite it being disinfected—it beats the actual purpose of preventing the spread of the virus. As a result, a large number of doctors are purchasing their own gear from various online stores, and we are not even sure whether those PPE meet the actual safety standards. Also, there are no proper instructions about the disposal of contaminated PPE. It is time we took the proper use and disposal of PPE seriously, or else the consequences can be severe.

Sohel Ahmed, by email



MIZAN R KHAN

CORONAVIRUS is razing the world to the ground, continuing to claim human lives—the latest count exceeds well over 200,000, with the number of infected running over three million. The deadly virus is reported to be mutating, with no prospect yet of getting it under control. The comity of nations, both mighty and weak, stand helplessly before a mortal threat. The US as the most powerful country, militarily and economically, is suffering the most. This virus has condemned the whole human machine to a juddering halt.

Is this moment not apposite for questioning the conventional security paradigm? If security means freedom from want and from fear, for citizens and nation-states alike, we all have to agree that humanity is facing its greatest insecurity in modern times. What is the value of the global defence establishment worth trillions of dollars, engaging the best brains to invent and produce lethal weapons that can obliterate nations and civilisations? Now the military might is meant for establishing supremacy/hegemony, although in crises like this, the military usually helps the civil authorities in many ways. But, at what cost?

The latest trend shows global defence spending is rising by almost 4 percent a year since the last decade. In 2019, the US remained the largest defence spender, with a yearly spending of USD 732 billion. The defence budget increase in the US of almost 7 percent was the largest in ten years, and has increased ever since Trump took office. US investments in weapons procurement and weapons research and development alone were larger than China's total defence budget of USD 260 billion, followed by India (USD 71 billion). Knowing full well these limits, even many low-income economies invest much more in military security than in education or health.

Such military spending, most of which is unproductive, happens at a time when the world witnesses unseen levels of inequality, environmental degradation and climate destabilisation. There are new surges in nationalism, populism, conflict, trade wars, and mounting public health threats. The pre Covid-19 preoccupations with narrowly conceived traditional issues like state security, state/non-state

terrorism, or economic competition, are not unimportant, but we have entered into a "new normal" in our individual and collective lives. This is the time for some collective soul-searching on what national and global priorities should be, with limited resources. If security means primarily the provision of human wellbeing, and protection from different vulnerabilities, what kind of a security paradigm can supply these desired ends?

A report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) claims that climate change affects the social and environmental determinants of health. Climate change is now increasingly recognised by major national security agencies as a preeminent security threat,

health shocks have in common: they hit the poorest and the most vulnerable, the hardest. Acting as a poverty multiplier, they push families into extreme poverty when they cannot afford health care. At least half of the world's population does not enjoy full coverage for the most basic health services. When health disasters hit, which would occur more frequently in a world scarred by climate change, global inequality is reinforced. The poor would be much more adept in coping with and recovering from the lasting effects of storms and floods, if they have a resilient and well-resourced health system in place. Against this fact, the Trump administration has aggressively rolled back not just on the pledge to reduce

cannot help us to deal with emerging global challenges. For this, we have to get multilateralism back on a firm saddle. Political scientist Joseph Nye cogently argues that while the US has led in the production of global public goods since World War II, now global cooperation is needed, because power has become a positive-sum game for achieving global goals.

Second, the change in mindsets may not come overnight, even after this pandemic. So we need increased investments in liberal, health, environment and ethics education. In a democracy, leaders are elected by voters with an average understanding of societal issues. So the task should be to enhance the level of knowledge and awareness and to inform the average voters better, as cosmopolitan citizens.

Third, coronavirus has caught the global health systems totally unaware. All nations must now invest adequately in preparedness and prevention of pandemics. This will require more medical research and development. Promoting universal health coverage must be an effective way to reduce the long-term health impacts from future pandemics, and increase our resilience and adaptive capacity to climate change.

Fourth, the USD 100 billion pledge by the rich countries as climate finance should be realised by this year, with 50 percent of the money going for adaptation for the most vulnerable. As Dr Saleemul Huq argued in a column in this daily, the stimulus packages flowing in trillions now, all over the world, should focus on supporting the poor and most vulnerable in society to enhance their resilience, and to invest in cleaner production to reduce all kinds of pollution. In other words, the support to resuscitate the economy after the pandemic should promote health, equity, and environmental protection. We must recognise that restoring climate stability is our ultimate security.

For all these measures, at this time of economic crisis, no new money can be mobilised. But a chunk of the massive budgets for yearly military spending can be sliced off easily to invest in productive sectors, to ensure and enhance real human, national and global security. At this critical moment, we only need willing leaders to effect such a security paradigm.

Mizan R Khan is Deputy Director of ICCCAD at Independent University, Bangladesh and Programme Director of LDC Universities Consortium on Climate Change (LUCCC).



PHOTO: COLLECTED

precisely due to its role as a "threat multiplier" that increases the risks of social disruption, conflict, water and food insecurity, economic crisis, displacement of millions and future pandemics, by amplifying disease vectors. In a hard-hitting report published by medical journal The Lancet, scientists and health experts concluded that increasing climate impacts—from heat waves to worsening storms, floods and fires, already threaten to overwhelm our health systems. Another research shows rising carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere are reducing nutrients in cereal crops, raising the risk of malnutrition even for those who get enough to eat.

There is one thing that almost all

carbon emissions, but has axed the National Security Council's global health security office, sought to cut funding to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, and has now threatened to cut funding for the World Health Organization.

However, coronavirus has opened a portal into a new world, presenting opportunities to reframe our vision. The following are a few areas I feel can be remoulded into the "new normal" world. First, we need a change in mindset of national and global political and military leaders in reframing the new security paradigm. Holding on to centuries-old lens of sovereignty predicated on a zero-sum game in inter-state relations

Holding the next global climate change talks

POLITICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE



SALEEMUL HUQ

I had written in a previous column about the fact that the next Conference of Parties (COP26) under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which was to have been held in November 2020 in Glasgow, Scotland with the United Kingdom as COP26 President, had to be postponed to 2021 due to the global Covid-19 pandemic. I would now like to provide some ideas for the COP26 presidency as well for Bangladesh to consider undertaking, so that even though COP26 is postponed, it doesn't necessarily mean a loss of momentum.

The first point is that despite the best of intentions, it is unlikely that COP26 will be held in early 2021 or even in the middle of the year, as the situation has to get back to normal not just in the UK but all around the world, from where the delegates will be flying into Glasgow. Hence, we need to be looking for ways to make progress by using virtual meetings as much as possible.

While using virtual meeting platforms as well as social media are proving quite effective in certain things, such as sharing information and campaigning, it is not a suitable format for decision-making across nearly 200 governments. Much of the way that the negotiations are conducted to get successful outcomes at every COP involves informal meetings on the side between some key delegates and countries to resolve a contentious issue, which can then be brought back to the plenary session for formal adoption.

The formal plenary sessions are only used for delegates from each country to make their statement without resolving their differences. The real negotiations take place in informal meetings where contentious issues get hammered out by contending parties. Without the opportunity for such informal meetings on the side, there is almost no likelihood of agreements being reached on major contentious issues. For the formal part of the negotiations, we will almost certainly have to wait for when the delegates from all countries are able to meet in Glasgow next year.

However, not everything needs to be

put on hold until they do meet. Many issues related to the implementation of previous agreements and decisions need not be further negotiated, but can go straight into implementation without waiting for the COP. It should be mentioned that the Paris Agreement made in COP21 in 2015 in Paris has already given all countries the blueprint for taking actions on both mitigation as well as adaptation.

On mitigation, ambitions have to be enhanced to try to reach the agreed goal of keeping global temperatures below two degrees centigrade and if possible,

adaptation can also be taken forward in practice at multiple levels—from vulnerable regions of the world like the Pacific Ocean, South Asia and Africa to the level of individual countries and, within each country, at the local level in the most vulnerable communities. The UNFCCC has already initiated the process for all countries to undertake National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and share their experiences with each other. This process does not have to wait for the COP but can be carried out at local and national levels, even under the current lockdown conditions.

of the CVF during COP26 and there is a great opportunity to discuss how the UK, as host of COP26, could collaborate with Bangladesh to enable vulnerable countries to get a high level platform at the COP. Perhaps a joint meeting with Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on the opening day of the COP26 could be arranged.

It is interesting to recall that under the chairmanship of President Hilda Heine of the Marshall Islands, the CVF held their meeting as a virtual summit, rolling across the globe with different heads of state coming online in their own time



A balloon in the shape of the Earth is pictured during a mass climate protest during the COP25 summit in Madrid, December 6, 2019.

PHOTO AFP/CRISTINA QUICLER

under 1.5 degrees. While the latter target is getting out of reach with each passing day, it is still possible if all countries take appropriate actions to wean themselves off of fossil fuels, such as coal and petroleum. The current crisis due to the Covid-19 pandemic is already slowing the use of such fossil fuels and ways to return to normal without these fuels have to be explored immediately.

The other part of the Paris Agreement on developing a global goal on

In this context, it is good to note that Bangladesh is about to undertake the NAP for Bangladesh after a delayed start. We thus have another opportunity to develop an outstanding product based on our extensive experience in adaptation already.

Finally, we can also initiate the activities of the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF), which Bangladesh will chair for the next two years. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will be the chair

zone for a couple of hours each. Some of the pre-COP26 meetings may choose to emulate this example if they wish.

The bottom line is that tackling climate change remains an important global issue, despite the current Covid-19 pandemic, and ways have to be found to tackle both at the same time using some out of the box thinking.

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

Covid-19 and the doubly disadvantaged

Ensuring protection of ethnic and linguistic minorities



ALMOST all communities across the world are now facing the adverse impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. While

in their lived experiences in the Covid-19 reality, the vast majority of the members of the three communities are tied by their feelings of vulnerability. They have no work, no income, no savings to fall back on, and face starvation and malnutrition, making themselves and their loved ones susceptible to diseases, at a time when they confront the deadly virus. They are in dire need of support to maintain their subsistence.

While virologists and the pharmaceutical industry race against time to discover the right vaccine to bring the contagion under control; governments, public representatives, community leaders and civil society activists are grappling to minimise its negative outfall on the people. With no sign of receding in the foreseeable future, the pandemic has begun to take a disproportionate toll on those who live on the margins of society.

The official policy of lockdown to ensure "social distancing" has hit hard those who live hand to mouth and depend on wage labour. The announcement of the extension of the lockdown has triggered protests from those who face starvation and have largely remained outside the ambit of the government's humanitarian assistance programmes.

On April 20, hundreds of people from the Shaotal community of Chilagazi Union of Dinajpur Sadar upazila, who lost employment opportunities as a result of the pandemic, blocked roads and staged protests demanding government assistance. Days later in a similar protest, more than a hundred members of the Urdu speaking community took position in front of the Government's Women College in the capital's Pallabi area. The mask wearing protestors, including women and children, held placards that read "Help Murapara camp residents".

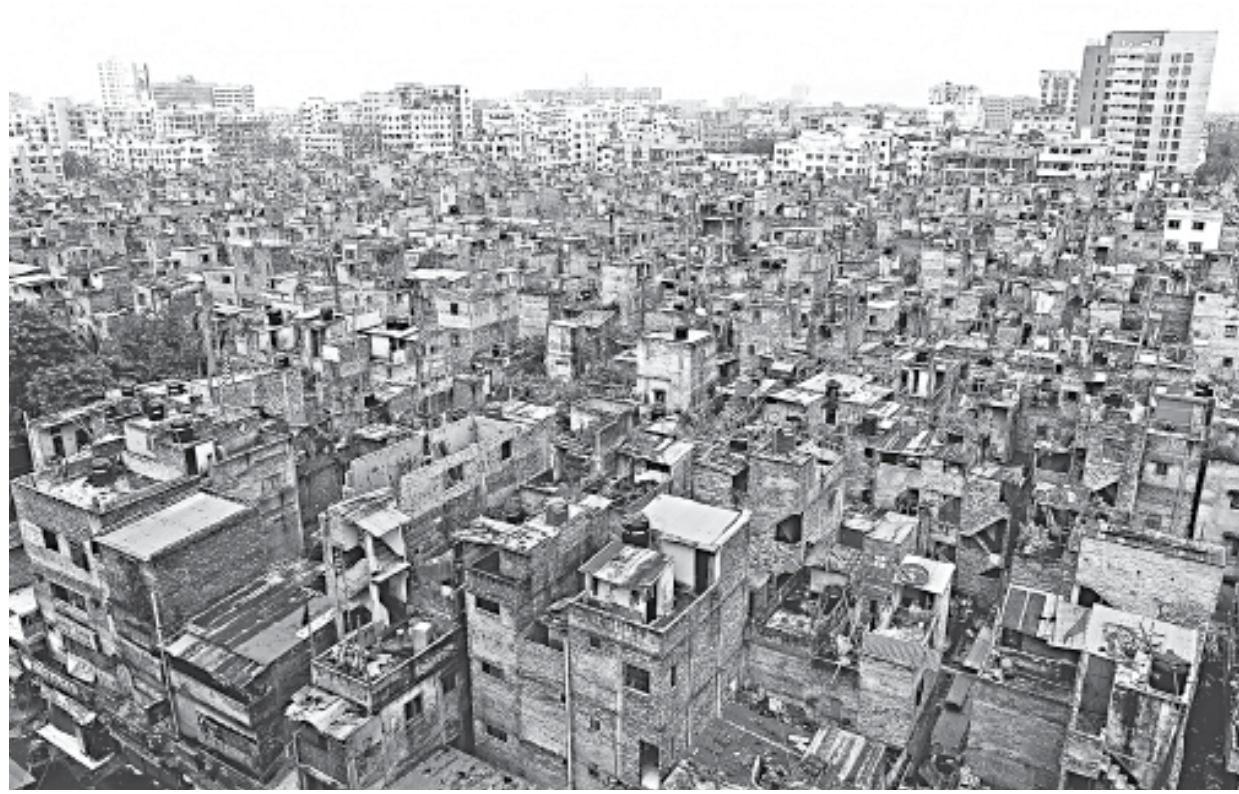
On April 30, at a meeting of elders of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) presided over by the Chakma Raja, it was noted that despite efforts of the government, "contextual needs of remote and marginalised communities remained unfulfilled".

The above snippets of discontent are essentially manifestations of concern of three different minority groups located in the northern, central and south-eastern parts of the country. Despite the dissimilarities

Reports from the hill districts reveal that people are particularly hard hit, as the lean months of April and May were preceded by poor harvests in two successive years. This made them susceptible to intense food insecurity. News reports note that many poor Mro, Khumi, Tripura and Marma households are surviving only on potatoes. The extension of the lockdown exacerbated the plight of the pineapple and watermelon growers. Their dreams of making a copious profit from the bumper yield of the year has suddenly come crashing down. Weeks earlier, a pair of pineapples that was sold at Tk 30-40 now fetches a meagre Tk 10-15. The additional worry for many is how they would repay or service the loans that they have incurred, often at high interest.

The outbreak of measles in a number of areas has already taken a toll on children. On March 28, the Bangladesh Indigenous Peoples Forum and Kapaeng Foundation reported hundreds of children were affected in the Sajek valley of Rangamati, the Lama region of Bandarban and Dighinala of Khagrachhari. Community leaders allege that these children were left out of the government vaccination programme. In response, the civil surgeon and the local administration claimed that it was the local people's "superstition" that held up the vaccination programme.

Allegations have been made that public assistance in the CHT has mainly reached those who live next to main roads and riverways, and not many efforts have been made to reach those in remote areas. Activists note that although health is the subject matter of the Hill District Council, the Councils have been effectively ignored by the Deputy Commissioner's office. Their apex body, the CHT Regional Council, was not assigned with a meaningful role.



This aerial view of Geneva Camp shows how difficult social distancing can be in such a congested space.

PHOTO: RASHED SUMON

Lack of coordination among agencies involved in humanitarian assistance has also been identified as a problem.

The pandemic has gravely affected the indigenous peoples of the plains as well. Along with their peers in other *adibashi* communities, members of the Garo community of Madhupur and Fulbaria upazilas of Mymensingh and of Srimongol of Sylhet; Shaotals of Gobindaganj, Gaibandha; Orao and Pahraria in Rajshahi, Banais of Netrokona, Sherpur; Hajangs of northeast Bangladesh and Mundas of Sundarbans in Shatkhira district have been left without any earnings since the outbreak of the pandemic. In normal circumstances, these communities can barely maintain their subsistence by working as wage labourers in the construction sector or brick kilns, pulling rickshaws or collecting and selling crabs, snails and fish. The suspension of economic activities and restrictions on movement imposed in the aftermath of Covid-19 has effectively wiped out their scope for earning. The actuality of the pandemic becomes patent when even beggars are deprived of alms for fear of the contagion.

A near universal grievance is the absence of any assistance from government and non-government quarters. Shaotals of Dinajpur alleged that they did not receive any assistance despite the fact that the local Union Council authorities have collected photocopies of their national identity cards.

The situation is no better for linguistic minorities—the camp dwelling, Urdu speaking community. The 116 camps and settlements located in different parts of the country house 300,000-400,000 people, the largest being the so-called Geneva camp in Mohammadpur with 30,000 residents. Residents of the camps work as barbers, butchers, rickshaw-pullers, carpenters, mechanics and in handicrafts. The relatively enterprising ones are engaged in running shops and small businesses. The suspension of economic activities has brought immense suffering to these people. The services of those who worked as domestic help, mostly women, have been terminated without compensation. Urdu poet Shamim Zamanvi of Al-Falah Bangladesh

lamented—"for the first time I see camp dwellers begging". Camp dwellers have been robbed of their last precious possession by Covid-19, their sense of dignity.

Press reports highlight the propensity of camp dwellers to not abide by the shutdown guidelines such as staying indoors, wearing masks or regularly washing hands. The reality is that those affected by the shutdown, mostly men, have little option but to loiter in the streets. Their dwellings are too small and congested to stay indoors. "Maintaining social distance is a dream for us; we have so little space to live in," notes one resident of Geneva camp. The summer heat makes it more difficult. Masks costs money. Another resident asks: "how can we protect ourselves if we cannot afford to buy masks, sanitisers and gloves?" Each tap of running water services hundreds of camp residents, if not thousands.

The camps continue to remain largely outside the purview of government and NGO assistance. "There's no one to help us, it's Allah on whom we depend",

bemoans an elderly lady in Town Hall camp. In some camps, the residents vehemently protest local commissioners' claims that they provided assistance. "If indeed such distribution had taken place, then the only beneficiaries must have been those who worked for his election," noted a community worker.

The camps are in dismal conditions. On an average, six to eight people live in 10x12 feet structures. Experts note that if precautionary measures are not taken, the camps could be hotspots for the spread of the virus. Recently, in a single week, 11 people have been reported to have died with conditions similar to coronavirus: fever, cough and asthma.

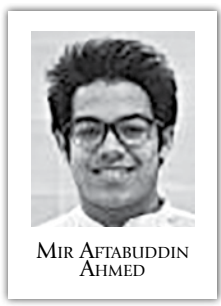
Lack of seriousness in controlling the spread of the virus is palpably demonstrated in a case involving two patients, residents of Block B and C of the Geneva Camp, who tested positive for coronavirus. In a report by the Gulf Today, lawyer-activist Khalid Hussain of the Council of Minorities asserted that two facilities, including the IEDCR which is dedicated to treat coronavirus cases, refused to admit them, declaring their condition "not critical".

All three minority groups discussed here meet the vulnerability criteria set by the Working Group on Regional Risk Communication and Community Engagement. They depend heavily on the informal economy; occupy areas prone to shocks; have inadequate access to social services or political influence; have limited capacities and opportunities to cope and adapt and have limited or no access to technologies. There is an urgent need to "give them priority assistance, and engage them in decision-making processes for response, recovery, preparedness, and risk reduction".

Covid-19 poses a serious challenge to those involved in framing policies and implementing programmes. Along with gearing up awareness programmes, there is an urgent need to acknowledge the special vulnerability of these minority groups and provide cash assistance to the neediest, set up adequate testing and treatment facilities in their close vicinity, and create conditions for their safe return to work.

C R Abrar is an academic.

Mobilising the spirit of Ramadan in the fight against Covid-19



FROM a religious perspective, Ramadan has always been a time of self-reflection, restraint and altruism—and given the struggles being faced by daily wage earners

and, in reality, a majority of Bangladeshis today, we have a unique opportunity to invest in our faith to collectively tackle the challenges posed by Covid-19. It goes without saying that this special month of fasting, prayer and community is going to be very different in 2020, compared to past instances—social distancing measures mean that the festive nature of Ramadan will be absent in its traditional form. Nevertheless, with Ramadan calling Muslims to reflect on their faith, we have a moral obligation to stand by the most vulnerable in our society, on a scale larger than perhaps any other time in our lifetimes. Let us think of this as an opportunity to serve our faith, at a time when it matters the most.

In Islam, the idea of *Ithaar* translates to altruism—in simpler terms, the concept begs us as Muslims to prefer others over one self. Giving precedence to the other person, over individual wants, is something that is unrelentingly encouraged. In fact, specific occasions, like Ramadan, bring out the very best of Islamic altruism. And then of course, the concept of *Zakaat* comes into play—one of the five pillars of Islam, *Zakaat* is second only to *Salat* (Prayer) with respect to Quranic ranking of the pillars. In simpler words, the religious duty of alms-giving is treated as a civic obligation, and Muslims are expected to provide 2.5 percent of their total savings and wealth to the marginalised, poor and needy. This forms the very cornerstone of Islamic theology—and is a key duty which is promoted during Ramadan. Based on a person's total value of possessions, one could evaluate *Zakaat* as a form of mandatory taxation—a kind of individualised and discretionary fiscal policy measure used to enhance equitable wealth distribution within communities. When it comes to supporting measures to alleviate hunger and poverty, either through charitable measures or mandatory *Zakaat* initiatives, Muslims tend to be more altruistic during

the month of Ramadan—and during this unique phase when congregations are discouraged, personal restraint encouraged, and physical interactions with community members barred, our entire focus as Muslims must be directed towards supporting the fight against Covid-19, while practicing our faith.

In fairness however, religious obligations often carry greater traction with older members of families—Ramadan has been no different in the past. Nevertheless, given the accentuation of digital technology and the eagerness of youth groups to support initiatives in the battle against the coronavirus phenomenon, younger generations have an equal opportunity to invest their time in a very different aspect of Islam—an aspect often underrepresented across the media.

On a personal note, I have joined a social movement called #BacharLorai (the fight to survive)—that is bringing together Bangladeshi expatriates (from Canada, Australia, USA and the UK), youth led initiatives, grassroots organisations and most importantly, Bangladeshi citizens, to do our bit in the fight against Covid-19. Our efforts are limited but directed towards Bangladesh, which is increasingly looking like a hotbed for disaster.

For some perspective, two months ago, two Bangladeshis came together to create Resource-Coordination Network Bangladesh (RCNB). During that time, a few of my expat friends and I were involved in a public beneficiary campaign called *BacharLorai*. A month into spreading public awareness, feeding daily wage earners, assisting vulnerable communities and standing together with the healthcare sector, the two groups came together as one organisation, RCNB, to start a social movement: #BacharLorai.

Looking back at our limited efforts, we successfully distributed healthcare masks to hospitals in Bangladesh, and raised funds for ongoing relief to feed daily wage earners who had lost their jobs to Covid-19 and for the penetration of public health messaging into rural communities. As we started to grow, the Network became stronger and #BacharLorai became dearer. From collaborations with reputed grassroots organisations to welcoming artists like Designify who contributed their talents to the cause, all our initiatives knowingly and unknowingly were operating in the very spirit of *Ithaar* as promoted in Islam.

As we near the end of the second phase of our approach, we are now placing a renewed focus on mosques, orphanages and the socioeconomically disadvantaged to diversify our efforts towards helping out our brothers and sisters in this time of need. RCNB and #BacharLorai is but a small speck amidst thousands of on-the-ground efforts by Bangladeshis to do their bit—and Ramadan provides an excellent segue for youth groups in particular, to fundraise in the name of prioritising our moral obligations.

This brings us to my last point—it is imperative that youth groups and those fundraising during this time, use the spirit of Ramadan as a positive leverage

Expatriate communities have the chance to give back to Bangladesh and recognise the privilege they have, by directing funds to organisations working in alleviating the struggles of communities at this time—sponsor iftars, support orphans or invest in any initiative you see fit. But contribute.

to acquiesce much needed tangible financial support, and direct these funds to communities which need it the most. Whether it be through *Zakaat* initiatives or charitable fundraisers, investing in messaging through the lens of Ramadan, in a country where religion has always played an important role, is perhaps the most credible mechanism via which we can raise funds. To put it in terms of numbers, only 15 percent of the total Bangladeshi workforce earn more than USD 6 per day. The lack of medical equipment across the board has been well covered by the media—the gross lack of appropriate policy-based focus on issues that matter, throughout our national history, including investing

in workers' insurance and an adept health infrastructure network, has made Bangladesh underprepared to face today's calamity. The Government cannot address Covid-19 on its own—and therefore, private citizens stepping up is the only way that we can ensure that our people have a future.

In hindsight, this very notion of giving and supporting one another, has made me feel closer to my faith than any other instances in my lifetime—Islamic teachings promote fundraising, charities and altruism, not as subsidiaries, but as fundamental aspects of our faith. I would urge youth groups in particular, to use the teachings of Islam and the values ingrained in Ramadan, to direct resources towards the most vulnerable in our society. Mobilising the spirit of Ramadan and tapping into positive religious sentiments may provide us with a collective ray of hope, in what is otherwise, a devastating situation. Furthermore, expatriate communities have the chance to give back to Bangladesh and recognise the privilege they have, by directing funds to organisations working in alleviating the struggles of communities at this time—sponsor iftars, support orphans or invest in any initiative you see fit. But contribute. Contribute as much as possible. And contribute in the name of your faith or an idea which motivates you. But contribute.

We tend to practice the ceremonial aspects of faith. Islam promotes an additional narrative as well—that of preaching. In my interactions with my late Grandfather, he used to remind me of the precedence of social welfare and how preaching involves carrying these very teachings of Islam to our communities—those words, especially now, seem timeless. Let us preach and practice social welfare together and fight Covid-19 to the best of our abilities.

I want to end by referring to a message of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), which carries great weight in today's context: "Give charity without delay, for it stands in the way of calamity" (*Al-Tirmidhi*)—a calamity is in motion, but we have an opportunity to ensure a future for many. Let us do so. Let us come together in this #BacharLorai.

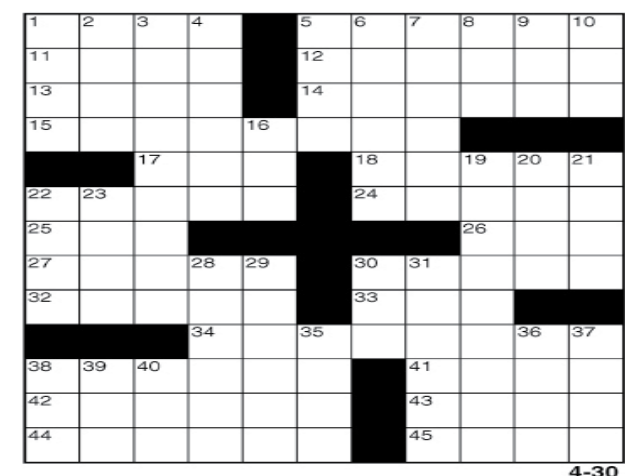
To support the #BacharLorai movement, please email: bacharlorai2020@gmail.com

Mir Aftabuddin Ahmed is a graduate in Economics and International Relations at The University of Toronto. He can be reached at aftab.ahmed@mail.utoronto.ca.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Capital of Italia
 - 5 Lily of "Grace and Frankie"
 - 11 Captain of fiction
 - 12 Galahad's mother
 - 13 Wee bites
 - 14 Number in a sum
 - 15 Issue a statement
 - 17 History section
 - 18 Accept without question
 - 22 Lingerie item
 - 24 Extra
 - 25 Earth-friendly prefix
 - 26 Contrived
 - 27 Closes
 - 30 Plentiful
 - 32 Sum
 - 33 Diner dessert
 - 34 Scheduling aid
 - 38 Entirely
 - 41 2017 Pixar film
 - 42 Judged
 - 43 Continental coin
 - 44 Not nervous
 - 45 Goblet part
 - 9 Road-house
 - 10 Composer
 - 16 Cove
 - 19 Broke
 - 20 River of Russia
 - 21 Singer Seeger
 - 22 Final, for one coin
 - 23 Bounce back
 - 28 Puget Sound city
 - 29 Lists of candidates
 - 30 Clumsy one
 - 31 Chops up
 - 35 Bonanza find
 - 36 Lot unit
 - 37 Hotel unit
 - 38 Writer Tarbell
 - 39 Pay stub line
 - 40 Driving site

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TUESDAY'S ANSWERS

A	V	I	D	S	Q	U	I	R	E
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KOOKABURRA'S ANTI-VIRUS BALL

Australian cricket ball manufacturer Kookaburra is developing a wax applicator that allows players to shine the ball without using saliva or sweat, minimising the risk of COVID-19 transmission.



Consolidating in the times of CORONAVIRUS

ABDULLAH AL MEHEDI

"There are times when we back into a corner with no place left to back into ... and then we go on attack and become mentally stronger," Mashrafe Bin Mortaza reminisced on his injury troubles -- seven knee surgeries and more -- during an online meet with Tamim Iqbal on Monday night.

The former ODI captain, however, was not keen on emphasising on the setbacks, instead he delved into a masterclass of where a captain's priorities lay. In essence, it was a hearty conversation between a great leader and his protégé, Tamim, the newly appointed ODI captain.

The former captain had fought tooth and nail to back his teammates during his tenure and the players will always remember the way Mashrafe stood up for them. Tamim underlined the emotion and respect by saying, 'for me, you will always be captain,' verifying Mash's contribution to the team.

"I don't know what I did or if it was something brazen or not, but I remember that you wrote in the bathroom with a marker the words 'you will score a ton after six months.' Why did you do such things with me?" asked Tamim. A chat between two friends gives a reminder of the work and motivation that goes into the making of a team.

These are things that Mashrafe has not only done for Tamim alone, but the rest of the squad. These acts galvanised the team and Mashrafe did that by strengthening the individuals.

The greatest challenge in Bangladesh cricket is to take on the mantle of leadership

you. On every matter we used to disagree but we will always be good friends," Mash revealed.

Whatever I tell you, I say from my heart. Whatever I have said is for the sake of the team. If I said things just for you, that will be selfish. For the team, I wanted you to score runs," he added.

When suggested that Tamim be dropped from the next match, Mashrafe's response was: "If that



happens, I will resign." That kind of act leaves a mark. "You've always saved us and been there during our lowest point," Tamim remembered.

with Mashrafe as a key example. Mashrafe has always inspired by helping people out and Tamim has come forward to help during the coronavirus crisis.

He has helped out sports personnel from other disciplines and brought about concerted effort from the national cricketers in order to fund those helping out in the crisis. He has also recognised that with little cricket going on, a cricketer also has to fulfil the requirement of being things will be evaluated through performances.

from a character of Mashrafe's stature and so far, Tamim has understood the essence of what he needs to accomplish.

In a time when cricket has come to a standstill, Tamim has not had the opportunity to naturally communicate his ideas with trainings and matches. Instead of sitting idle, he is consolidating the idea of togetherness under a new era



But there is the thing about process and Tamim is a believer in process over result. He also has Mashrafe's blessings in this regard. "You did not accept the leadership role too well in Sri Lanka but seeing your work and what you say now makes me believe you are on the right track," Mashrafe remarked and it is the biggest backing a protégé can hope for.

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Ziarul wants to go beyond South Asia

ANISUR RAHMAN

Despite winning a gold medal in the South Asian (SA) Games in Nepal last December, weightlifter Ziarul Islam could not grab headlines owing to the presence of Mbia Akter Simanta, who too won a gold medal on the same day to achieve a rate feat of clinching gold medals for Bangladesh in consecutive editions.

Now 25-year-old Ziarul, a weightlifter from Kishanbazar under Dinajpur, is determined to see himself beyond the south Asian region and achieve something no weightlifter from Bangladesh has succeeded in the past.

"A player can only be satisfied with his performance, so I don't feel any complacency after winning the SA Games gold medal, rather I am looking forward to producing medal winning performance in bigger stages than the SA Games," the Bangladesh Army athlete told The Daily Star over phone from Dinajpur where he is in home quarantine.

"I know well that a bronze medal in the Commonwealth Games is worth more than a gold medal in the SA Games. And it is also much harder and I want to prepare myself by setting the weight I need to win a medal in Commonwealth Games and Asian Games," said Ziarul, who was promoted to Lance Corporal on February 20 following his success in Nepal.

Ziarul lifted a total of 262 kilos in the 96kg category to win the gold medal, but he has long way to go to get success in Commonwealth Games or Asian Games.

In the last edition of the Commonwealth Games in Australia in 2018, India's Vikas Thakur lifted 351 kilos to ensure bronze medal in 94kg weight category (96kg category was absent) while Kari Steven of Papua New Guinea and Boady Santavy of Canada bagged gold and silver medals by lifting 370 kilos and 369 kilos respectively.

Ziarul is not only almost 100 kilos behind Vikas Thakur, but he is also overweight for Vikas's category.

The Bangladeshi weightlifter, however, believes he can improve gradually if he



is provided uninterrupted training under a good foreign coach despite the lack of proper practice facilities.

"We need equipments, which are not sufficient. We also don't have a good gymnasium where weightlifters can practise uninterruptedly. We also need foreign coaches, who can improve the players' technique and weight as they are have full knowledge regarding when the players have to give load and rest and what will be their diet chart," said Ziarul, who claims the overall knowledge of local coaches is limited to having practice and improvement.

"If we want to bring medal from a bigger stage, we need to have quality coaches and long-term training camp. We had only three to four months' training ahead of SA Games, but such short-term trainings won't help players at a bigger stage," said Ziarul.

Ziarul started weightlifting in late 2010 after being inspired by his neighbour Manoranjan Roy, who won a silver medal in the 2010 SA Games in Dhaka. In 2011, Ziarul took part in junior weightlifting championships where he won a bronze medal, paving the way for his inclusion in Bangladesh Army in 2013. Then he skipped all events before taking part in senior national championships in 2019 and bagged gold medal in 102kg weight category before being selected for the SA Games camp.



RETURN ON THE HORIZON? (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP) In Costa Rica, locker rooms were disinfected before games as local bodies attempt to enforce measures with the aim to restart local leagues. Bayern Munich players continued to train but Germany was rocked by the news that 10 players, including three at FC Cologne, had tested positive for coronavirus. Benfica's Brazilian forward Carlos Vinicius, meanwhile, was seen in an individual session in Seixal.

Kalou gets suspension for mocking guidelines

REUTERS

Bundesliga club Hertha Berlin has suspended forward Salomon Kalou after he posted a video on Facebook which showed him and teammates shaking hands and displaying a casual approach to COVID-19 guidelines.

The club also said in a statement that "this was the conduct of a single player" and denied that the squad do not take social distancing and hygiene rules seriously.

Hertha's general manager Michael Preetz said that Kalou had caused the club "a great deal of damage" and "created the impression that individual players are not taking the corona issue seriously."

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার. জেলা সমাজসেবা কার্যালয়. চুয়াডাঙ্গা. দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি. Table with columns for সর্ফিকার বিদ্যমান, সিউইউল, সিউইউল, সিউইউল, সিউইউল.

Korea sport season starts with baseball

AFP, Seoul

South Korea's professional sport returned to action with the opening of a new baseball season Tuesday, while football and golf will soon follow suit.

Friday will see the delayed start of football's K-League, and next week some of golf's leading women players will tee up in a domestic tournament as South Korea becomes a rare hotspot for live sport.

Fans were not allowed in for any of Tuesday's five opening baseball matches at the Munhak Baseball Stadium in Incheon.

CR7 back in Turin

AFP, Milan

Juventus star Cristiano Ronaldo flew back to Italy on Monday after almost two months in lockdown in his native Portugal.

Ronaldo and his family landed in Turin Airport just after 10.20pm local time, according to media reports in Italy.

The five-time Ballon d'Or winner arrived by private jet from Madeira and will spend two weeks in quarantine.

The 35-year-old played Juventus's last Serie A game, a 2-0 win over Inter Milan behind closed doors at the Allianz Stadium on March 8, before the Italian football season was suspended amid the COVID-19 pandemic which has killed over 29,000 people in the country.

Ronaldo returned to Madeira after the Inter Milan match to be close to his mother Dolores who had suffered a stroke.

Juventus has recalled 10 overseas players as Serie A clubs were given the green light to return to individual training on Monday.

The Italian interior ministry's go-ahead for players to return to club training facilities two weeks ahead of schedule has offered fans hope that the 2019-20 season might yet be salvaged.

Juventus are leading Serie A, one point ahead of Lazio, as they target a ninth consecutive Scudetto. The club has not yet given an official date for a return to training.

Juventus began carrying out tests at the club's medical centre in Turin on Monday. The first to arrive were Federico Bernardeschi, Juan Cuadrado, Carlo Pinsoglio, Leonardo Bonucci and Aaron Ramsey, all wearing face masks.

Juventus are also waiting the return to Turin of Dutch centre-back Matthijs de Ligt and midfielder Blaise Matuidi, who returned to France after recovering from the virus.

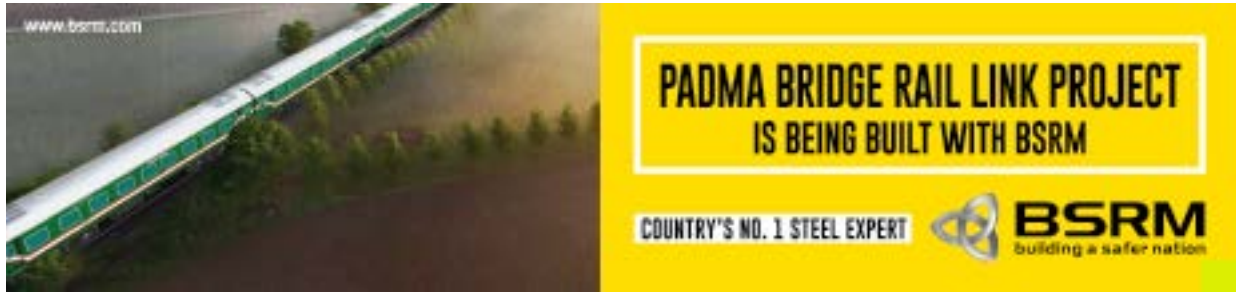
2020 lost, says Nadal

AFP, Madrid

Rafael Nadal has said he views the rest of this year as "practically lost" for tennis and would even be relieved if the sport returned as normal at the start of 2021.

Nadal believes chances of tennis restarting this year are slim. "I hope to play as soon as possible but if I think about it logically, we travel every week from one place to another, we are in contact with hotels, airports, all in different places," Nadal told newspaper ABC on Tuesday.

"If you gave me the ability to guarantee that in January 2021, a normal season like before will begin, I would sign for that now with my eyes closed."




Students serving free sehri, iftar

1,000 hungry people get food on DU campus every day

SAYYED MOHMUD ULLAH and ASIFUR RAHMAN

Hungry people, some with children, begin to gather near Raju sculpture on Dhaka University campus after midnight, and by 3:00am, there are almost 400 of them sitting down expectantly on the street.

Soon, DU student Tanbir Hasan Shaikat and four of his friends start handing out food packets among them.

"On the first day of the shutdown, I arranged some food for about 50 homeless people on campus. Then several professors, politicians, DU alumni members and my friends started chipping in and now we are feeding sehri and iftar to nearly 1,000 people each day," Shaikat, also a member of Dhaka University Central Students Union (Ducus), told The Daily Star last week.

Initiatives like this by individuals, associations, voluntary organisations, and student bodies are much needed because the nationwide shutdown

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Tanbir, a student of Dhaka University, raises a megaphone to ask some underprivileged people if all of them have received iftar packets. Tanbir and his four friends now provide sehri and iftar to about 1,000 underprivileged people daily to ease their sufferings caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. The photo was taken in the university's TSC area late last month.

PHOTO: SAYYED MOHMUD ULLAH

Air pollution raises risks, vulnerability

Researchers say about Covid-19 in Bangladesh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh extremely vulnerable to COVID-19 as thousands of Bangladeshis are already suffering from chronic diseases because of their past exposure to air pollution, according to the study conducted by Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA).

"Past air pollution exposure has made people much more vulnerable to COVID-19 and is now contributing to the death toll and the enormous pressure on healthcare systems from the disease", said Lauri Myllyvirta, the lead analyst of CREA citing multiple studies.

The research, titled 'Air Quality, Health and toxic impacts of the proposed coal power cluster in Payra, Bangladesh' released in a virtual press conference yesterday jointly organized by CREA – an independent research organization focused

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Govt active on TV only

Says BNP about Covid-19 response

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP yesterday alleged that the government completely failed to contain the spread of Covid-19 and it was only active on television.

"Where is the government? The government is not on the field. If you see carefully, you will find everybody is on television," said BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir.

Addressing a press conference at party Chairperson Khaleida Zia's Gulshan office, Fakhrul criticised the government for not responding to the BNP's call to form a taskforce comprising all political parties and renowned economists of the country to fight against coronavirus.

"We repeatedly asked but they [government] did not do it," he said, adding that the technical committee formed on

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

Ducusu honours Bangabandhu with lifetime membership



Bangabandhu signing the lifetime membership form of Ducusu at Dhaka University on May 6, 1972.

May 6, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

BANGABANDHU GIVEN LIFETIME DUCSU MEMBERSHIP

Prime Minister Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is today given lifetime membership of Dhaka University Central Students' Union (Ducusu). Addressing a large gathering of students at the Dhaka University premises, Bangabandhu says that imperialist forces and their local agents will never succeed in their attempts at damaging Bangladesh's friendship with the Soviet Union and India. He recalls with

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

STRANDED IN INDIA AMID SHUTDOWN

No plan yet to bring home 313 devotees

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As many as 313 Bangladeshi followers of Tablighi Jamaat, according to the religious organisation, are stuck in India and living in dire straits following a nationwide manhunt by the Indian authorities.

Many of them are living in fear of detention after Indian police arrested

several Bangladeshis from different states for the violation of the Foreigners Act and the Epidemic Diseases Act.

At least 9,000 people had participated at a congregation at the Nizamuddin Markaz Mosque in March, after which many travelled to various parts of India for missionary work. The Tablighi Jamaat event

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Probe early virus cases

WHO urges countries after French study

AGENCIES

The World Health Organization said yesterday that a report that Covid-19 had emerged in December in France, sooner than previously thought, was "not surprising", and urged countries to investigate any other early suspicious cases.

The disease later identified as Covid-19 was first reported by Chinese authorities to the WHO on 31 December and

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



A horse-drawn carriage on RK Mission Road in the capital yesterday carries 12-15 passengers on Gulistan-Jatrabari route. Such carriages are banned on the particular road but since traffic was light due to Covid-19 shutdown, it took a direct route. The passengers were crammed into the vehicle violating social distancing guidelines.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Buddha Purnima today

UNB, Dhaka

Buddha Purnima, the biggest religious festival of the Buddhist community, will be celebrated across the country today.

Buddha Purnima marks the birth, enlightenment, and death of Gautama Buddha. On this day in 563 BC, Buddha was born as Siddhartha Gautama in Kopilabostu at the foothill of the Himalayas.

He attained supreme enlightenment at the age of 35 and finally departed into "nirvana" at the age of 80 in 483 BC.

President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina issued separate messages greeting the Buddhist community on the occasion.

President Hamid called upon the Buddhists to celebrate their holy religious festival at their respective homes due to Covid-19 outbreak in the country.

Due to the coronavirus

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US forecast sees virus death surge

Researchers blame eased restrictions

AFP, Washington

The global death toll from the coronavirus pandemic topped a quarter of a million yesterday, with the US government predicting a further surge in fatalities as an international vaccine drive garnered \$8 billion in pledges.

The dire forecast from the United States came as much of the Western world emerged from weeks of lockdown, with hopes that the disease may have peaked in Europe after nearly two months of

confinement.

Financial markets saw a light at the end of a tunnel as businesses in Europe and the United States tentatively reopened, and stocks and oil prices rallied yesterday.

But the global progress did little to cool a war of words between the US and China -- fuelled by American claims the virus originated in a Chinese laboratory, a theory the World Health Organization (WHO) labelled "speculative."

Since the disease first surfaced in China

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PRAYER TIMING MAY 6

Fajr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 3:53	12:45	5:00	6:33	8:00
JAMAAT 4:03	1:15	5:15	6:43	8:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING

RAMADAN MAY SEHRI IFTAR	Time	Time
12	6	6:33
13	7	3:52 6:34
14	8	3:51 6:34



গগণবিজয়ন্তি

কোভিড-১৯ থেকে বাঁচতে হলে ঘরেই থাকি, সুস্থ থাকি

- করোনার সারা বিশ্ব আজ বিপর্যস্ত।
- মানুষ বাসা-বাড়ি থেকে বের না হলে সংক্রমণের ঝুঁকি কমাতে পারে।
- মনে রাখবেন, অস্বাস্থ্যকর হলে কেউ যে কোন সময় করোনা ভাইরাসে আক্রান্ত হতে পারে।

কাজেই ঘরেই থাকুন, সুস্থ থাকুন

- সামাজিক দূরত্ব বজায় রাখুন, পরস্পরের মধ্যে কমপক্ষে তিন (৩) ফুট দূরত্ব বজায় রাখুন।
- একান্ত প্রয়োজনে বাইরে গেলে অবশ্যই মাস্ক পড়ুন।
- স্বাস্থ্য অধিদপ্তর কর্তৃক প্রদত্ত সব স্বাস্থ্যবিধি অবশ্যই মেনে চলুন।
- বারবার সাবান পানি দিয়ে কমপক্ষে ২০ সেকেন্ড হাত ধোবেন। অপরিস্কৃত হাত দিয়ে মুখ, নাক ও চোখ ছোবেন না।
- ব্যক্তদের স্বাস্থ্য বিধি শিখান এবং তাদেরকে ঘরে রাখতে খেলাফুল, গল্প, ছড়া, শিক্ষা ও বিনোদনমূলক কাজের সাথে সম্পৃক্ত রাখুন।
- নিয়মিত কুসুম গরম পানি, আদা চা এবং গরম সূপ পান করুন। লবণ মিশ্রিত কুসুম গরম পানি দিয়ে দিনে ৩-৪ বার গড়গড়া করুন, নাকে মুখে গরম পানির ড্রপ দিন।
- জ্বর, সর্দি, কাশি, গলা ব্যথা হলে বাড়িতেই আলানা থেকে চিকিৎসা নিন।
- জ্বর কমানোর জন্য প্যারাসিটামল ও সর্দি-কাশির জন্য এন্টিবায়োটিক (যেমন ফ্লোক্সেসিট্রিন, ক্লোরফেনিরাইন ইত্যাদি) খেতে পারেন।

প্রয়োজনে করোনা বিষয়ক হটলাইনগুলোতে ফোন করুন: ১৬২৬৩; ৩৩৩; ১০৬৫৫; ০১৯৪৪৩৩৩২২২ অথবা নিকটস্থ স্বাস্থ্যকর্মী বা হাসপাতালে যোগাযোগ করুন।

মনে রাখবেন আপনার সুরক্ষা আপনারই হাতে

স্বাস্থ্য অধিদপ্তর

স্বাস্থ্য ও পরিবার কল্যাণ মন্ত্রণালয়