



THE DAILY

Star

ON FRIDAY



www.thedailystar.net

REGD. NO. DA 781 | Vol. XXX No. 113 | BAISHAKH 25, 1427 BS | Your Right to Know | RAMADAN 14, 1441 HIJRI | 12 PAGES PLUS TOGGLE PRICE: Tk 12.00

BANGLADESH UPDATE

706 New cases in 24hrs

12,425 Total cases

199 Deaths

1,910 Recoveries

GLOBAL UPDATE

266,995 Deaths

3,859,483 Total cases

# Deaths leap after a lull

13 die, second highest in a single day; 706 new cases in 24 hours; experts say figures don't reflect reality as testing still inadequate

MOUDED AHMED SUJAN

The 13 deaths reported yesterday were an unexpected spike in the number of Covid-19 fatalities after over a week in single digits.

The fresh deaths, the second highest in a day, takes the total toll to 199. On April 17, the authorities reported the highest 15 deaths in a day.

The Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) also reported 706 new cases taking the total confirmed patients to 12,425.

Experts, however, said the number of reported deaths and new cases are far from the reality.

Inadequate testing and mismanagement on the part of the DGHS are to blame for this situation, they said.

"The number of deaths does not represent the reality. Many of the deaths that appear to be from Covid-19 are not being investigated and counted," said infectious diseases specialist Prof Ridwanur Rahman.

"If there were enough tests, the number of confirmed deaths would be higher," he told The Daily Star.

On May 4 and 5, the number of reported deaths across the country was five and one.

In the two days, 23 patients died from what appeared to be coronavirus at the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital, which is being used for treating Covid-19 patients, officials said.

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Bibi Amena, an elderly woman who suffered a stroke a couple of days ago, being stretchered on a busy Mirpur Road just outside the gate of Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College and Hospital around noon yesterday. Her husband, second from right, and two children were taking her to a nearby private clinic for an emergency X-ray since no operator at the hospital's radiology department was available at that moment, claimed the family, which arrived at the hospital on Monday from Feni.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



## Make sure policemen get good treatment

Says PM; cabinet okays 2 ordinances

RASHIDUL HASAN

Stating that Covid-19 pandemic was badly affecting the police department, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday instructed the authorities to give priority to the treatment of police members.

Speaking at a cabinet meeting at the Gono Bhaban, she also suggested expanding the treatment facilities for Covid-19 patients, said meeting sources.

This was the first cabinet meeting after about a month. Only three ministers – Finance Minister AHM Mustafa

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## 2 more sent to jail in case under DSA

2 Barguna journos held

A Dhaka court yesterday rejected the bail petition of two of the 11 accused in the case filed under the Digital Security Act for "spreading rumours and carrying out anti-government activities".

Metropolitan Magistrate Rajesh Chowdhury sent the two -- Didarul Islam, an activist of politico-civic organisation Rashtachinta, and Minhaj Mannan Emon, director of Dhaka Stock Exchange -- to jail after police produced them before him with a seven-day remand prayer.

The hearing on the remand prayer will be held once the court reopens, Sub-inspector Nizamuddin Fakir, general recording officer at the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court told our court correspondent.

Meanwhile, two journalists were arrested in Barguna yesterday under the Digital Security Act for allegedly recording video of a woman and her daughter for harassing them.

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## WHEAT PROCUREMENT Importers reach out to farmers

Govt fail to attract growers as private buyers offer better price and policies

QUAMRUL ISLAM RUBAIYAT with ANWAR ALI

Amid high demand for wheat in the local market, the government's procurement programme is failing to attract local growers, who witnessed a better yield this year.

Wheat importers, through local traders, have turned to the country's wheat farmers to buy the crop, often beating the government by offering competitive prices and easier procurement terms.

On April 15, the Directorate General (DG) of Food began to locally purchase 75,000 tonnes of wheat, which is only six percent of this year's production estimated at 12.45 lakh tonnes by the Department of Agricultural Extension.

Like last year, the government's procurement price has been fixed at Tk 28 per kg, whereas farmers are getting a price as high as Tk 30 per kg of wheat from private buyers.

In ten days till April 24, the government managed to buy only 84 tonnes, according to the Directorate General of Food.

Md Anisuzzaman, director, procurement division of the DG of Food, said private entrepreneurs usually rely on imports but now they are collecting wheat from the local market with competitive prices.

While farmers are struggling to find labour and transport to bring their wheat for sale to government depots because of the shutdown, the private buyers are collecting the grain right from farmers' doorsteps.

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## Eid shopping only at local markets

DMP directives say ID will be required

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

People in the capital will only be allowed to visit markets or shopping malls located within two kilometres of their residences and they have to carry proofs of their addresses in the form of identity cards or original copies of utility bills.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police yesterday issued the directive for the city dwellers when they will visit shopping malls and markets during the coronavirus pandemic.

According to the directive signed by DMP Commissioner Shafiqul Islam, shopping malls and shops can be kept open from 10:00am to 4:00pm as per the schedule announced by

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## Medicine supply, prices managed well amid crisis

DGDA chief Maj Gen Mahbubur Rahman tells The Daily Star

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

At a time when many sectors have come to a standstill due to the countrywide lockdown, production and supply of medicines across the country have been going off without a hitch, thanks to a timely plan of action undertaken by the Directorate General of Drug Administration (DGDA).

The planning also helped avoid a crisis of medicine as well as any hike in the drug prices during the Covid-19 outbreak, Major General Md Mahbubur Rahman, director general of DGDA, told The Daily Star yesterday in an interview.

"Ensuring a smooth production and supply of medicine was a Herculean task and so far we have been able to do it without any disruption," he said, adding that pharmaceutical is the only sector that has successfully tackled the situation.

Mahbubur said sensing the crisis, the DGDA started

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## 10-month-old dies under lockdown

Family alleges child could not be taken to hospital in time

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A 10-month-old with breathing problems died at a house that had been locked down since April 29 in Lalmonirhat Sadar town.

Family members alleged that the baby could not be taken to hospital on time due to the lockdown, resulting in the death on Tuesday morning.

Zillur Rahman, grandfather of the child, said his house in Banvasa intersection area of the town was locked down on April 29 by ward councillor Mukul Hossain, as some of his relatives from Dhaka had visited the house.

On the night of May 4, the physical condition of Zillur's grandson, who had been suffering

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## DIGITAL SECURITY ACT Editors' Council worried over cases against journos, writer

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Sampadak Parishad circulated a statement yesterday expressing deep concern and worry at the prosecutions of journalists, a cartoonist and a writer under the Digital Security Act (DSA).

They were prosecuted and several of them were arrested "on flimsy and unsubstantiated ground", read the statement signed by Mahfuz Anam, president of the organisation and the editor of The Daily Star, and Naem Nizam, secretary-general and the editor of the daily Bangladesh Pratidin.

"No concern is being shown as to the merit of complaints before making arrests. Reasons such as 'tarnishing the image', 'spreading rumour' or 'criticising the government' appear sufficient to put journalists behind bars," observed the statement adding that any complaint

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Without maintaining social distancing, people line up in front of a booth of a private bank to withdraw money, running the risk of contracting coronavirus. The photo was taken in the capital's Dhanmondi Road-4A around 1:00pm yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

## FINISHING COURSES AT PVT UNIVS UGC allows conditional online grading

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Private universities that have completed 70 percent of academic activities of current semester and have been conducting online classes successfully for theoretical courses will be able to evaluate their students via viva and presentations online.

The University Grants Commission yesterday issued a directive with an option saying that such universities can grade students taking into account their attendances, assignments, presentations, and mid-term exam results held before. They can also take results of previous semester into consideration while preparing results of the current session.

The universities can prepare the results only after confirming that at least 60 percent students are participating in the online classes. All students should be notified at least five or seven days before holding an exam.

"We have issued the directive on taking online classes, holding exams and admission tests against the backdrop of the Covid-19 situation," Fakhruul Islam, UGC private university division director, told The Daily Star.

All private universities have been closed since March 17, and the government has now extended the closure until May 16 to curb 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.

In its directive, the UGC said all private universities will

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## 2 more sent to jail

FROM PAGE 1  
On Wednesday, Rab-3 Assistant Director Abu Bakar Siddique filed the case with the Ramna Police Station against the eleven, including Cartoonist Ahmed Kabir Kishore, writer Mushtaq Ahmed, Swedish-Bangladeshi journalist Tasneem Khalil, and blogger Asif Mohiuddin.

Kishore and Mushtaq landed in jail on Wednesday after a Dhaka court rejected their bail prayer.

Talking to The Daily Star, Supreme Court lawyer Jyotirmoy Barua said, “If the accused had published something which is a subject matter of the law, then it is a public document and can be accessed from any computer system or even from a smartphone.”

“So what is the justification for taking a person on remand? What else can a police officer find other than the published statement?” he questioned.

“It was not right to accuse all the 11 people in the same case. If there is any specific allegation against someone, a case should be filed against the person separately. Now for one, the other 10 may suffer,” he added.

Meanwhile, 37 noted citizens in a statement yesterday demanded the withdrawal of the case filed under the Digital Security Act.

“We are decrying the action taken by the government and demand that the case be withdrawn. Freedom of expression is a constitutional right. It is extremely worrying that people are being forced into silence by threats of arrest, detention and lawsuit during this pandemic,” said the statement.

The signatories include former adviser to a caretaker government Hafizuddin Khan; noted human rights activists Sultana Kamal and Khushi Kabir; Transparency International, Bangladesh Executive Director Dr Ifteharuzzaman; jurist Shahdeen Malik; photojournalist Shahidul Alam; anthropologist Rahnuna Ahmed; Professor Ali Riaz of Illinois State University; Professor Mirza Taslima Sultana of Jahangirnagar University; and Supreme Court lawyers Sara Hossain, Syeda Rizwana Hasan and Jyotirmoy Barua.

They also criticised the imprisonment of photojournalist Shafiqul Islam Kajol.

In a separate statement, a number of former student leaders also demanded Kajol’s release.

They include Shafi Ahmed, Nur Ahmed Bakul, Nazmul Haque Proddhan, Sirajum Munir and Bazlur Rashid Firoze. **ARREST OF 2 JOURNALS**  
The arrested journalists are Mir Jamal, 28, Barguna correspondent of banglanews24.com, and Sumon Sikder, 28, Barguna correspondent of Channel News 24, Bangla Tribune and Daily Desh Rupantar.

Banglanews24.com and Bangla Tribune suspended the two and will investigate the allegations of violation of journalistic ethics against them.

## 10-month-old dies

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from respiratory disease since birth, deteriorated. However, they could not take him to a hospital due to the lockdown, Zillur said.

He also alleged that they repeatedly tried to communicate with the ward councillor through mobile phone, but he did not respond.

When they finally managed to get out on Tuesday morning, the child died on the way to the hospital. The baby’s life could have been saved if they could take him to a hospital on time, Zillur lamented.

Contacted, ward councillor Mukul Hossain said he did not get any phone call from the family on Monday night. He said he arranged for an ambulance on Tuesday morning after hearing of the issue but unfortunately the baby died on the way to the hospital.

Asked about the lockdown, Mukul said it was enforced for the greater interest of all residents living in the area. The local administration and health department were aware of it, he added.

Mahfuz Alam, officer-in-charge of Lalmonirhat Sadar Police Station, said he sent a police team when the house was locked down, following recommendation of the local coronavirus protection committee.

The district’s Civil Surgeon Dr Nirmalendu Roy said the baby’s sample had been collected for Covid-19 test.

## Make sure

FROM PAGE 1  
Kamal, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan and Law Minister Anisul Huq – attended the meeting, with the PM in the chair.

The previous cabinet meeting was held on April 6.

Talking to The Daily Star after yesterday’s meeting, the law minister said the PM expressed satisfaction at the handling of the coronavirus situation by different government organisations.

She said the Covid-19 pandemic was seriously affecting the police department as a growing number of cops were getting infected with coronavirus while carrying out their duties.

“So, there should be adequate arrangements to admit infected police personnel to hospitals,” Anisul said quoting Hasina as saying.

The PM also informed the meeting that the government was taking measures to boost isolation facilities for Covid-19 patients.

According to statistics of the Police Headquarters, 90 policemen were infected with Covid-19 across the country in 24 hours till 2:30pm yesterday.

The total number of infected policemen reached 1,285 at 2:30pm yesterday. Of them, six have died and 93 recovered so far.

Besides, 1,089 others were placed in isolation after they showed coronavirus-like symptoms and 2,689, who came in close contact with those infected, have been kept in quarantine, shows the PHQ data.

### ORDINANCES APPROVED

Yesterday, the cabinet approved an ordinance allowing courts to hold trials digitally using the information technology in view of the coronavirus pandemic.

It also gave the final approval to “The Value Added Tax and Supplementary Duty (amendment) Act, 2020” and “The

Income-tax Amendment Ordinance, 2020,” reports BSS.

“It is necessary to formulate a legal framework to continue the trial process in courts digitally or through videoconferencing using information technology as the backlog of cases is getting larger due to the nationwide shutdown over the coronavirus pandemic,” Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam told a news briefing at his Secretariat office after the cabinet meeting.

“So, the cabinet has finally approved the Information Technology Usage Ordinance by the Court, 2020,” he said.

Once the ordinance comes into force, trials can be held digitally without the physical presence of lawyers and their clients in courts.

The cabinet secretary said the ordinance was brought to the cabinet for its approval as the public and private organisations, with some exceptions, have been shut for the last one month due to Covid-19 situation.

Due to the shutdown, the litigants have long been deprived of getting justice and the backlog of cases is getting larger, he added.

Anwarul said the Income-tax (amendment) Ordinance, 2020 seeks to allow the taxpayers to pay their taxes without any penalty and interest for their failure to pay taxes in due time. They could not do so as all the official activities of the income tax department remained suspended since March 26 over the coronavirus pandemic.

The top bureaucrat said the cabinet also gave the go-ahead to the Value Added Tax and Supplementary Duty (amendment) Act, 2020 to allow the Board of Revenue to extend the time limit for submission of VAT return without penalty and interest in case of any natural disaster, pandemic and emergency situation.

## Medicine supply

FROM PAGE 1  
working since the end of January and several decisions, including how the raw materials would be imported, were taken in consultation with all the stakeholders.

He said raw materials of medicines are imported, mainly from China. But as it was one of the worst-hit countries by the pandemic, the DGDA held several meetings with the Bangladesh Association of Pharmaceutical Industries (BAPI) to find alternative sourcing countries.

Bangladesh is currently sourcing the raw materials from India and some European countries, Mahbubur said.

The decisions also included formulation of a guideline to keep the production and supply of medicine smooth, the DGDA director general said.

Although there is no specific treatment for Covid-19, the drug administration started working in advance to increase the production of some supportive medicines, the DGDA chief said.

“We have taken initiative to increase the production of paracetamol, vitamin-c, some antibiotics, and various vitamin supplementary so that there is no crisis if the situation worsens,” Mahbubur said.

He said initiatives were also taken to produce some antiviral drugs like remdesivir and favipiravir, which are being used to treat corona patients on a limited scale.

“We hope that remdesivir will hit the

market by May 20. Two companies have already started producing it,” he said.

“We have our all-out supports to the companies to go for maximum production and also the entrepreneurs to come forward,” he added.

Before the coronavirus hit Bangladesh, only two to three companies used to produce Hydroxychloroquine on a limited scale, but now at least 35 companies are producing it.

To end the crisis of PPE, the DGDA took the initiative to make its import duty free and now the import of raw materials for PPE has also been made duty free, said Mahbubur.

“Many companies are producing PPE locally and we are encouraging them by various means. We have authorised five labs to check the quality of the products both local and import,” he said.

He recommended that informative and positive reports regarding frontline fighters should be published in the mass media to encourage them.

The DGDA is working closely with the drug companies so that once a vaccine is developed, it can be made readily available in the country.

“We have the capacity to fill and finish 10 million doses of vaccine per month. We are trying to get the vaccine as soon as possible whenever an effective vaccine in the market,” he said.

The DGDA supervises and implements all the prevailing drug regulations in the country and regulates all activities related to import, procurement of raw and packaging materials.



With Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair, a cabinet meeting being held at the Gono Bhaban yesterday. This was the first cabinet meeting after about a month and a small number of cabinet members attended the meeting, maintaining social distancing.

PHOTO: PTO

## UGC allows conditional online grading

FROM PAGE 1

Private universities that have not started online classes should specifically inform the UGC about their plan to complete their current semesters by May 17, said Prof Dil Afroza.

The universities can hold admission tests in June, and the next semester will begin in July, said the UGC directive.

It added that the universities would not put pressure on guardians and students for tuition and other fees during the ongoing crisis. It also asked them to waive and reduce semester fees from students facing financial hardship or give them an option to pay the fees in instalments.

The private university authorities must pay salaries to their teachers and staffers regularly, the directive mentioned.

The commission issued the directive in line with the decisions made at a meeting among Education Minister Dipu Moni, UGC top officials, and leaders of Association of Private Universities of Bangladesh (APUB) on

the issue on April 30.  
The meeting was held as UGC and APUB were at odds over awarding grades to students without holding semester finals, enrolling new students without admission tests, and holding tests online.

On April 10, the UGC rejected an APUB request to postpone its decisions of not allowing grading students without holding semester finals, enrolling new students without admission tests, and holding tests online.

In a letter to the UGC chairman on that day, the APUB chairman said they were requesting the commission to postpone its decisions until holding a discussion with their association.

The commission on April 6 asked private universities to stop assigning their current students grades through online exams and evaluation, and to stop enrolling new students without admission tests amid the closure of educational institutions.

Students who will be not able to take online classes and exams, they should be allowed to take special classes to complete their courses. After that, they will sit for exams with the universities reopening, she added.

“We are putting emphasis on transparency and quality of test viva viva,” she said.

Students who will be not able to take online classes and exams, they should be allowed to take special classes to complete their courses. After that, they will sit for exams with the universities reopening, she added.

The universities will not be permitted to charge any extra from students who are out of online classes and exams.

Commission sources said only 63 universities out of 151 now have online classes. Of them, only four to five are public universities, and the rest are private.

“The import has reduced by 80 percent, so we have become interested in local wheat,” Hasan Ali, a flour mill owner of Thakurgaon, said.

Private buyers are providing cash to local traders in advance for collecting wheat from local markets, traders say.

“Import of wheat will remain less for some time over the coronavirus situation. We’re buying to avoid future crisis,” said Md Khademul Islam, a wheat trader of Boda bazar in Panchagarh.

Md Israil Hossain, director General of Bangladesh Wheat and Maize Research Institute (BWMRI), warned, “Any failure in the government procurement [of wheat] might not be a good thing this year.”

“If private buyers fear less import due to the corona situation, the government’s import is going to face the same impact. In that case, creating food storage based on the local market will be wise,” he said.

The country is dependent on wheat import as it produces only around 18 percent of its total annual demand of 70 lakh tonnes. This year’s production covers only 17.78 percent of the demand. Md Israil told The Daily Star.

**FARMERS’ ACCOUNT**  
Most farmers are not even aware of government procurement in Jhenaidah, where wheat is selling at Tk 30 per kg – Tk 2 more than the government price.

“I don’t know whether the government is buying, neither do I have any interest to know. Buyers are coming directly to my crop field. They are offering good prices,” said Arman Ali, a grower of Enayetpur village of Jhenaidah’s Kaliganj upazila.

Wheat grower Amzad Hossain of Thakurgaon district’s Farabari village finds the government procurement process cumbersome.

To procure wheat, the government

## Importers reach out to farmers

FROM PAGE 1

selects farmers through a lottery and then asks for 14 percent moisture in the crop, which sometimes becomes impossible to maintain, he said.

“We lose around three kilogram of wheat per maund [1 maund = 40kg] to maintain the moisture level,” Amzad said, explaining that the crop weighs less as it loses moisture.

Private buyers do not impose any moisture content requirement, he added.

Farmers also incur transportation cost to take their produce to the government depots, he said.

Unlike private buyers, who pay upfront, government officials provide a procurement certificate that farmers have to present at banks to collect payments, he added.

Md Samsuzzoha, a grower of Boda upazila in Panchagarh district, produced 28 maunds of wheat from 0.67 acres of his land this season and sold a portion of his crops at Tk 26 per kg.

“I got cash immediately as soon as I harvested. It is not possible at government depots,” he said.

Wheat grower Md Shamsuddin of Rajshahi’s Tanore upazila finds the government’s price for wheat satisfactory since this year his production cost for 37.5 maunds of the crop from one acre of his land was Tk 17 per kg.

He, however, said for sharecroppers the government price is low, explaining that had he leased the land his production cost would have been Tk 27 per kg.

In that case, the government price would not be satisfactory, he said.

However, this year the market price for wheat is higher than last year’s Tk 20 per kg, which was Tk 8 less than the 2019 government price, he said.

Despite a higher wheat price, Shamsuddin was yet to sell his crop, hoping that the price will further increase in the coming months.

**SHOULD GOVT INCREASE PRICE?**  
Food procurement boss Md

## Eid shopping

FROM PAGE 1

the government, but no hawkers or temporary roadside shops will be allowed.

The DMP also asked that automatic disinfection tunnels or chambers be installed at the entrance of every shopping mall, as well as thermal scanners to measure temperature of shoppers.

“Each store must have a separate temperature measurement system,” reads the directive.

Every shopping mall should follow directives of the health ministry, including the provision of keeping hand sanitisers, and no buyers would be able to enter without wearing masks, the directive said, adding that vendors and store employees should also wear masks and hand gloves.

If anyone goes to market without masks, they will have to buy it before entering, said the DMP, adding that in front of every shopping mall, a banner with the warning “disregarding the health directives will cause life risk” should be put up.

Buyers and sellers should maintain a distance of at least one metre (about 40 inches) during entry, exit, and shopping at each shopping mall, and the mall authorities will not allow more customers to enter the store than can be accommodated while maintaining this distance, read the directive.

The DMP further asked to discourage the elderly, children, and sick persons (those who have heart disease, diabetes, and others) from visiting the shopping malls.

The market authorities will remind those who have finished their shopping by loudspeaker to leave to avoid unnecessary gathering, and the shopping malls have to have separate and clearly marked entry and exit points, according to the directive.

The shopping malls should have a disinfection system in the parking lot, and drivers should stay in their respective vehicles, read the directive.

The directive added that rickshaws and CNG-run auto-rickshaws would be available on a limited scale for travel to shopping malls, but only two passengers could travel in the latter at a time and every passenger and driver would wear masks.

The government had earlier announced that shopping malls and shops can resume business from May 10, after a month and a half of a countrywide shutdown to curb the spread of coronavirus.

“We have time up to June for procurement. If the coronavirus situation improves by that time, private buyers will move toward import and farmers will be interested at the government rate,” he hoped.

**WHEAT PRODUCTION**  
Wheat is sown in November-December and harvested in March-April.

This year wheat yield – production per hectare of land – has been higher than the last six years’.

This year’s rate of 3.64 tonnes per hectare was achieved because of a prolonged winter and distribution of draught and blast disease tolerant seeds, said Md Abdul Mueyed, director general, the Department of Agricultural Extension.

Besides, wheat has been cultivated in more land than last year’s as many Boro farmers also moved to wheat cultivation after incurring loss in paddy farming, he said.

[Azibor Rahman from Jhenaidah, Ahmed Humayun Kabir Topu from Pabna and Rabiul Hasan from Chapainawabganj contributed to the report]

OUR CORRESPONDENTS, *Cox’s Bazar*

A suspected drug peddler was killed in a “gunfight” with Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) men in Ukhia upazila of Cox’s Bazar early yesterday.

The dead could not be identified immediately but BGB suspected that he belonged to the Rohingya community.

Lt Col Ali Haidar Azad, commanding officer of 34th BGB battalion, claimed to have recovered 37,000 pieces of yaba pills, a long-barrel gun and ammunition from the spot in Rahamater-Beel area at Palangkhali union.

A patrol team of BGB signaled a man to stop as he was trying to flee Rahamater-Beel area. Instead of halting, the man opened fire on the patrolling team, forcing them to retaliate, the BGB official said.

After the “gunfight” ended, BGB men found his body, the drugs and the arms, he added.

The body was sent to Cox’s Bazar General Hospital for autopsy, while filing of a case was underway, Lt Col Ali said.

## Deaths leap after a lull

FROM PAGE 1

The authorities handed over the bodies to family members without collecting samples for testing, officials said, adding that they didn’t have the capacity to test or store the bodies.

Since Saturday, 40 patients have died there.

“As the number of daily tests is inadequate, the daily case detection may not cross the 1000-mark,” Prof Ridwanur said.

“There must be many hidden cases across the country and they have not been isolated. But they are spreading the virus, nevertheless,” said the specialist.

Another expert from Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) said, “What’s happening is either mismanagement, or the DGHS is trying to hide the number of deaths, hoping to prove their competency to the high ups.”

**COVID-19 SITUATION**  
At the daily briefing yesterday, Prof Nasima Sultana, additional director general (administration) of DGHS, said 130 patients cured in 24 hours, taking the total recovered patients to 1,910.

Unlike other days, she did not mention the day’s death toll. The DGHS mentioned the number of deaths in a press release hours later.

Of the 13 new victims, eight were

## ‘Yaba peddler’

### killed in ‘gunfight’

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“Lawmakers traditionally always stood for free media and freedom of thought and critical thinking. Regrettably a few of them are now a part of the current DSA-led onslaught against the media. Clear preference of filing cases under DSA instead of existing defamation laws indicates a desire to intimidate and harass journalists rather than seek justice,” said the statement.

It pressed the point that the media’s duty is to expose corruption and irregularities and point out the failures of the administration. “This is all more necessary when thousands of crores of taka are being spent by the government to fight the pandemic and its disastrous consequences,” it added.

The Parishad had always opposed the Act, citing fears that it can be used as a weapon to suppress freedom of the media. “Our fear is now a nightmare-reality for the mass media,” said the statement.

“We consider the recent suing and arrest of journalists as clear threats to freedom of press and freedom of expression. We demand immediate release of all journalists and withdrawal of all cases against them. We condemn the frequent and indiscriminate use of DSA against the media and common citizens and demand that the Act be repealed,” concluded the statement.

# A welcome respite for them

Amid closure of national zoo, animals find a rare moment of peace and calm

ABIDA RAHMAN CHOWDHURY

Something strange is happening inside the Bangladesh National Zoo in Dhaka. For the first time in decades, this establishment is devoid of huge throngs of people for an extended period of time as the coronavirus pandemic has resulted in never-before-seen social distancing measures.

With no people in sight, the animals seem to be having the time of their lives (however much is possible within the confines of a cage). The curator of the National Zoo, Dr Md Nurul Islam, seems to think the same.

"They seem to be feeling happier and are moving around more. Previously, many animals would be seen crouching or sitting in one corner of the cage. They are even eating with more relish, it seems," said Dr Islam, donned in a mask, gloves and a surgical cap.

The Daily Star went into the Bangladesh National Zoo premises during the lockdown to take a look at how the animals were doing in a zoo with no visitors. The pathways were empty -- this time there was no heavy scent of human smell or perfume; no sound of vuvuzelas, no child's screams could be heard, neither the clacking of shoes on the gravel path. Even though they were still stuck inside cages, it looked as though the animals got a moment to breathe -- without having to entertain humans, without being pelted with nuts and other food scraps.

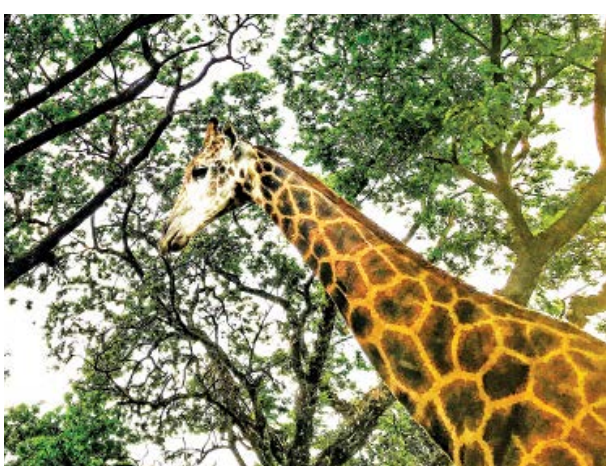
The deer moved in harmonious glory, within the little space they shared. They ate the watermelons given to them by one of the few caretakers who has been working at the premises during the shutdown.

Even the majestic tiger, which is often prodded and poked by visitors to move from its sedentary position, was seen walking on the little grass plot, napping and snoozing by the small waterbody, before retiring to its bed inside the cage.

Zoo authorities have made a roster to maintain the workforce needed to care for the animals. Every day, kilograms of meat, sugarcanes, apples, cucumbers and grains are prepped in the early hours for the zoo residents.

"There is a change in their eating habits as well. The

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2



A tiger lazes around beside a little pond, not a care in the world. As crowds are absent from the national zoo, animals are spending a happier time. Giraffes spend their time among the greeneries, while more and more birds are spotted in the zoo premises. The photos were taken recently.

PHOTO: ANANTA YUSUF, SARWAR RONY

# Resume transport construction work

Ministry directs RHD, DMTCL

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Road Transport and Bridges ministry has directed Roads and Highways Department (RHD) and metro rail authority to resume work of all projects amid shutdown to maintain continuity.

It also asked authorities concerned to ensure all health-safety measures and social distancing, following the guidelines of Health Service Division.

Road Transport and Highway Division on Tuesday sent a letter in this regard to chief engineer of RHD and managing director of Dhaka Mass Transit Company Ltd (DMTCL), which is implementing the country's first metro rail project.

The decision came at a time when the country is witnessing increasing numbers of Covid-19 deaths and infections. Most public and private offices were directed to remain closed from March 26 to May 16. Operation of public transport remains suspended to slow down spread of the outbreak.

However, the government allowed factories to resume operation from last week of April. Shopping malls, all types of shops and other businesses are going to reopen from Sunday on a limited scale ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr.

National technical advisory committee on Covid-19 has recommended reconsidering the government's decision of reopening, saying such a move could lead to further coronavirus transmission.

In the letter sent to RHD and DMTCL, the division said work of the projects should continue "for the sake of the country's development and considering reality on the ground".

RHD is implementing around 200 projects related to construction and maintenance of roads and bridges across the country. Of them, eight have been listed as mega projects.

On the other hand, DMTCL is responsible for building and maintaining the country's metro rail network in Dhaka and its adjacent areas. Physical work of MRTI-6, running from Uttara Third Phase to Motijheel, was ongoing.

Most physical work of all projects under RHD and DMTCL remained halted since March 26.

## CHALLENGES TO RESUME WORK

An RHD engineer, who is involved with two major projects, said although the ministry has given the order, it will be difficult to restart work before Eid.

"It would take four to five days to bring workers at project sites, and we don't have many days before Eid. So, the work will resume after Eid," he told The Daily Star on Wednesday, wishing anonymity.

Besides, there is a concern about the supply channel of

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



TO USE QR CODE ON YOUR SMARTPHONE, INSTALL FREE QR READER SOFTWARE FROM GOOGLE PLAYSTORE OR APPLE STORE. TURN ON THE SOFTWARE AND HOLD THE PHONE CAMERA OVER THE QR CODE TO GET THE VIDEO LINK.

## Fareast univ VC Nazmul Karim passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fareast International University (FIU) Vice Chancellor Prof Nazmul Karim



Chowdhury, who was tested Covid-19 positive, died yesterday at Dhaka Medical College Hospital's burn unit, dedicated for treating Covid-19 patients.

The 70-year-old was shifted there three days ago from a private hospital after being diagnosed.

He breathed his last around 1am at the ICU, said Brig Gen AKM Nasir Uddin, director of DMCH.

Nazmul, from Lakshimpur, was a professor of Tourism and Hospitality Management of Dhaka University. After retirement, he joined FIU as its VC. An internationally recognised educationist, Prof Nazmul was also a writer, researcher, lawyer and an adviser.

University Grants Commission, Dhaka University and Fareast International University expressed grief at his death.

## TACKLING COVID-19 FALLOUT

# ADB approves another \$500m for Bangladesh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) yesterday approved an additional \$500 million loan to strengthen Bangladesh government's efforts to manage the impact of coronavirus pandemic on the country's economy and public health.

"This package will build on ADB's ongoing collaboration with Bangladesh on structural reforms by supporting government efforts to speed up the country's social and economic recovery," said ADB President Masatsugu Asakawa.

"We will work closely with the government and development partners to mitigate the economic impact of the pandemic on the poor and most vulnerable, particularly those affected by job losses in small and medium enterprises and the informal sector," he said in a statement issued by ADB headquarters in Manila, Philippines.

The loan is expected to benefit over 15 million poor and vulnerable people in Bangladesh. Around 1.5 million workers, mostly women, in export-oriented industries will receive extended salary support while doctors, nurses, and medical workers fighting Covid-19 in government-run hospitals will receive special honorarium, the statement read.

The government's social protection programmes for senior citizens and women in distress will be expanded in the 100 poorest local government units in the country, it said.

At least 2 million poor families across the country will be given about \$23 each, while about 1 million poor and vulnerable families will receive food support every month during the pandemic emergency period. Affected industries and sectors, as well as micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises are also eligible for loans with subsidised interest, it added.

On April 30, ADB approved a \$100 million concessional loan to support the country's efforts to address the immediate public health requirements of combatting the Covid-19 pandemic.

Earlier, ADB also released a \$350,000 emergency grant for procurement of medical supplies and equipment and \$1.3 million from an existing project to provide one-time cash support to 22,619 trainees to enable them to continue their ongoing skills training programme, the statement added.

## Prepare list of RMG workers

Health ministry directs all deputy commissioners

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The health ministry yesterday directed all deputy commissioners to prepare and preserve a list of all RMG workers in their respective districts.

It also asked them to ensure home quarantine of garment workers, who would return from Dhaka, Gazipur and Narayanganj. A letter, sent from the health services division of the ministry, also asked all civil surgeons to assist deputy commissioners in this regard.

The directives came at a time when number of garment factories resuming operations is on the rise after the government allowed limited operation of the country's top export-oriented sector in the last week of April.

Health experts say reopening the factories increases the risk of a wider transmission of Covid-19 outbreak.

Around 80 percent of the country's total garment factories are in Dhaka, Narayanganj, Gazipur and Narsingdi. According to IEDCR, Dhaka, Narayanganj and Gazipur are the worst affected districts.

"We have given the directives following advice of the national technical advisory committee on Covid-19," Habibur Rahman Khan, additional secretary (administration wing) of health services division, told The Daily Star yesterday.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

## AHSANULLAH MASTER MURDER CASE

# 16 years on, justice yet to be served

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

Final justice is yet to be delivered to the family members of the then Awami League lawmaker Ahsanullah Master, who was brutally killed in 2004, as the appeals in connection with his murder case are still now pending with the apex court.

Yesterday was the 16th death anniversary of the lawmaker from Gazipur-2.

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court is yet to start hearing on appeals filed against the High Court verdict in the case, although they were filed a few years ago.

The apex court did not begin it as defence counsels took deferment of the hearing at different times due to personal reasons. Additional Attorney General Mottaz Uddin Fakir told The Daily Star yesterday. The appeals have been included in the cause list of the Appellate Division in January last year for hearing.

"We [state counsels] are ready for placing arguments. We will do it when the apex court starts the case proceedings," he said. All the relevant case documents have been submitted as well, he said, adding the SC may start hearing after it reopens.

Advocate Khandker Mahub Hossain, principal defence counsel of the case, couldn't be reached for comments despite repeated attempts over cellphone.

An Appellate Division bench headed by Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain was set

to start hearing of the appeals on January 7 last year, as the matters were enlisted in its cause list. But the apex court bench on that day deferred hearing till March 4 last year, as all relevant documents required for the hearing were not produced before it. The appeals were later included in the cause list.

Assailants killed Ahsanullah Master, a freedom fighter, and Omar Faruq Ratan, a student, and wounded 17 others in a staccato burst of fire on a rally of Swechhchasebak League at Naogaon near the MP's house in Tongi on May 7, 2004.

The next day, his brother filed the case against 19 people, including Nurul Islam Sarkar, a Jubo Dal leader.

On April 16, 2005, a Dhaka court handed death sentences to 22 people and life terms to six others. A decade later, on June 15, 2016, the HC confirmed death penalty of six persons, including Nurul.

It, however, commuted capital punishment of seven others to life imprisonment, upheld life term of two and acquitted 11 of charges.

Currently, five petitions challenging the HC verdict are pending with the apex court, including those by Ahsanullah's brother Motiur Rahman, the government and convicts, attorney general office sources said.

The appeals sought death penalty of all convicts, while convicts sought acquittal from all conviction and sentences.

## Coca-Cola pledges Tk 11.5cr in fight against Covid-19

CITY DESK

Coca-Cola in Bangladesh has pledged an initial support of Tk 11.5 crores towards helping the healthcare system and local communities through food package and distribution of beverages to combat the coronavirus crisis, said a press release.



The relief programme eventually aims at positively impacting over 50 lakh lives across the country. Coca-Cola Bangladesh is partnering with Care Bangladesh to implement this support initiative.

Sundeep Bajoria, VP of Coca-Cola South West Asia, said, "We are facing an unprecedented situation for humanity. Our approach to navigating the pandemic is grounded in our company's purpose, which ensures that we continuously strive to make a difference for people in the communities we serve around the world and Bangladesh as well."

Coca-Cola Bangladesh has adopted a purpose-driven approach to ensure immediate support to the country's healthcare infrastructure. The company will also support frontline workers including doctors, nurses, police and law enforcement personnel by catering to their hydration needs, said the press release.



With nothing else to do, two siblings entertain each other to pass the time while their mother watches on with a smile on her face. Sitting on a divider, they were waiting for food to be distributed at the capital's Elephant Road. Even during times of crisis, it seems there are little pockets of happiness here and there.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## GRAFT IN VGF RICE DISTRIBUTION

# Fifty-two public representatives suspended so far

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Union Parishad chairman and two members were suspended yesterday due to their alleged involvement in irregularities in VGF rice distribution, said a press release issued by the LGRD ministry.

With the three, the total number of public representatives suspended for misappropriating relief materials stands at 52, said Mahmudul Hasan, public relations officer of the ministry.

The suspended trio were representatives of Kuchaipotti UP of Gosairhat upazila under Shariatpur district.

They are: Chairman BM Nasir Uddin Swapan, member of Ward no-3 Mofazzal Bepari, and member of Ward no-9 Shamim Bepari.

Among the 52 suspended, there are 19 UP chairpersons, 31 UP members, one Zila Parishad member and a councillor of a municipality.

Along with the press release, the ministry has also issued a notification in this regard.

In the notice, the ministry asked the suspended public representatives to explain to deputy commissioners of their respective areas why they should not be permanently removed from their posts.

## Appeal for help

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Abdullah Al Hasan is a youth from Mymensingh and a graduate of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology's Forestry and Environmental Science (FES) department.

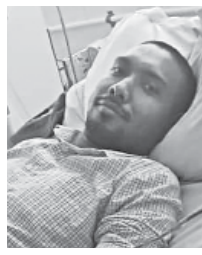
He was diagnosed with kidney disease and 90 percent functionality of both of his kidneys is lost.

His doctors advised kidney transplant which will cost around Tk 50 lakh, said Anup Datta, a lecturer of the FES department. Around Tk 13 lakh was collected for his treatment fund till yesterday, he added.

"Although we planned for the transplant operation at a hospital in Delhi, the process has become delayed during the coronavirus shutdown. Hasan is undergoing dialysis thrice a week at a Mymensingh hospital and costs are increasing," said Anup.

Hasan's family is seeking help to cover his medical expenses. Contributions can be sent to the fund formed by Sus't FES department's teachers and students. Account name - FES Treatment Fund, account number - 201 151 151581 of Dutch Bangla Bank Limited (Amborkhanna Branch), Sylhet.

Donations through bKash can be made to: 01791069892 (Dr Swapan Kumar Sarker, associate professor), 01917174537 (Dr Abu Sayed Arfin, associate professor), and 01834532951 (Anup Datta, lecturer). For PayPal donations: sontosh.kdeb@gmail.com.



Activists of National Garment Workers Federation yesterday formed a human chain in front of the capital's Jatiya Press Club, demanding arrest and property seizure of those factory owners who still have not paid their workers' salaries for March.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## A welcome

FROM PAGE 3

regular intervals and some of the herbivores graze on the trees and grass inside their enclosures," said Nurul Islam.

As the shutdown to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus continues -- for nearly two months now -- the zoo authorities are getting a glimpse of how the animals behave in the absence of constant human disturbance.

Authorities are also beginning

to notice something curious around the zoo premises -- adjacent to the National Botanical Garden. The sprawling zoo grounds have turned into a hotspot of sorts to go birdwatching in the earliest hours of dawn within the city.

Birds which would usually only be seen sparingly are now flocking over to the waterbody by the zoo. Streaks of white -- Egrets -- fly and land ever

so gracefully by the lake, little hoopoes dance and bob their heads on the empty gravel path.

For the zoo authorities, this can be a means of changing future management strategies when the institution does open up again. For now, the animals get a much-deserved break from their captors.

ANANTA YUSUF, SAIM BIN MUJIB AND TAMIM KHAN contributed to this story.

## Resume transport

FROM PAGE 3

construction materials, he said, adding that many sectors -- including banks, ports and transport -- are involved with the process.

AKM Manir Hossain Pathan, additional chief engineer (planning and maintenance wing) of RHD, said they have already asked project officials to resume work as much as possible, maintaining all health-safety measures.

"There are many districts which are not much affected yet. We have asked officials to escalate work in those districts," he told this correspondent on Wednesday.

Contacted, MAN Siddique, managing director of DMTCCL, said although they have been continuing their work on limited scale, they want to go full swing within seven to 10 days.

He said only 12 out of around 1,000 foreign nationals involved in the project left the country. Besides, one third of local workers are still at project sites, he added.

They will bring back other workers on special arrangement after doing necessary health check-ups, taking assistance from local administration, he added.

"We got hints that the government will give directive to resume work, so we have already started work on the stations... But we may not be able to continue work in full swing due to safety concerns," he further said.

MRT-6 is under-construction at a cost of Tk 22,000 crore and is expected to be completed in December 2021. However, the project witnessed 44.12 per cent overall progress as of April this year.

Once completed, it will carry 60,000 passengers per hour.

Physical work of MRT-1, the country's first underground metro rail running from Dhaka airport to Kamalapur Railway Station, is scheduled to start in December this year. It would have an elevated part to connect Purbachal with Natun Bazar.

## Prepare list

FROM PAGE 3

He said the committee during Monday's meeting with the health minister suggested that the authorities should take measures so that workers now working at different factories in Dhaka, Narayanganj and Gazipur do not change their locations.

They also recommended steps so that none can leave their current stations ahead of Eid in a bid to contain the spread of Covid-19.

"It will be easier to trace them through the list and send them to home quarantine if they return home from these three districts," he said.

NO. OF REOPENED FACTORIES RISING. Meanwhile, the number of factories resuming operations is increasing by the day.

At least 3,492 out of 7,602 export-oriented factories reopened as of yesterday, according to industrial police. The number of factories reopened was 1,427 on April 26, the first day after a one-month shutdown.

At least 1,269, out of 1,882 factories under BCGMEA, reopened till yesterday, industrial police said. A total of 369, out of 1,101 of BKMEA, 183 out of 389 of BTMA, 304 out of 364 under BEPZA and 1,367 out of 3,866 other factories so far reopened, they added.

## No clinical audit of the dead

FROM PAGE 12

possible to scrutinise the coronavirus fatalities.

"In the case of dengue patients, for example, a death review committee assesses the causes of death," she said.

Such a method is not being followed for coronavirus patients, she said.

"We are collecting data on comorbidity [the number of other conditions a patient has] for analysis but it is not being done in the same format as that of dengue patients for example."

However, experts said, while the IEDCR is mainly responsible for studying the disease and its effects, hospitals also have a role to play.

A clinical audit, or a death audit, is important because it gives an understanding to what happened

and why from the patient's history and their treatment experience at hospitals.

Prof Muzaherul Huq, former adviser (Southeast Asia Region) at the World Health Organisation, said a clinical audit should be performed for all Covid-19 deaths.

"This should be done to identify the cause of death and also weaknesses in hospital services," he said.

The clinical audit helps go beyond the numbers of deaths and ratio of deaths to the number of case, to determine the inciting factors and take measures on how these deaths could have been avoided.

The health specialist said if the exact cause of death is not identified, undertaking the proper intervention for patients will not be possible.

"We see that there have been no

deaths of coronavirus patients in Vietnam, Nepal, Bhutan and some other countries," he said.

"So, what the actual cause of death is should be identified so as to act properly."

Experts said a committee can be formed to ascertain the cause of death pertaining to coronavirus victims.

Eminent medicine specialist ABM Abdullah said a good number of coronavirus victims died with severe and aggressive pneumonia and other complications, including old age.

Although, globally, the elderly have been the worst victims of Covid-19, in Bangladesh fatalities were found in almost all age groups; this requires a detailed analysis of the cause of death in each case, he said.

## Silence of the looms

FROM PAGE 12

during Eid-ul-Fitr. This year, earning Tk 500 crore is becoming impossible in the peak season because the Covid-19 outbreak has put the country into months-long shutdown," said Aiyub Ali Khan, secretary of the association.

Looms across the country manufactures 14 types of attires, including saree and lungi. Over 10 crore lungis and four crore sarees worth Tk 5,000 crore are manufactured a year mostly in Pabna, Sirajganj, Tangail and Narshingdi, according to the association.

Bodiuzzaman, who is also the president of the Sirajganj chapter of the organisation, said only 40,000 to 50,000 out of over three lakh looms in Sirajganj and Pabna are operating this year.

Festival production decreased by at least 80 percent in the last two months because of Covid-19 fallout, he said.

In big factories, 20 to 30 percent looms are running while most marginal weavers have stopped production due to the lack of money, he added.

**HARD TIMES FOR WEAVERS**  
Md Abul Kalam, owner of a powerloom factory in Pabna Sadar upazila's Kulunia village, is operating only four out of his 10 looms.

"I closed my factory on March 25 due to the countrywide shutdown and resumed production on a small scale from the first of Ramadan targeting the Eid market. Of the 10 looms, I am just running four, producing 30 to 35 lungis everyday although I had produced 120 to 150 lungis a day last year around Eid," he said.

Before shutting his factory, Kalam had manufactured over 10 thousand

pieces of lungi, most of which remained unsold to date.

Md Jamal Bishwas, a marginal weaver of Kulunia, could not sell any of the over 100 sarees he had weaved before the shutdown.

Jamal had borrowed money and raw materials from local lenders to make those sarees using his two powerlooms.

"Before I could sell my products, all the wholesale markets closed down," he said. He is now stuck with piles of sarees at home and no cash in hand.

"Failing to repay loans, I am unable to resume production," Jamal lamented.

Md Alamin Hossain, trader at Sirajganj's Shahzadpur wholesale clothing market, said the market has been closed since the countrywide shutdown started.

"We do not open our shops. Traders from different areas of the country also cannot come to the wholesale market," he told the Daily Star.

The traders of Baburhaat wholesale clothing market in Narshingdi, however, resumed operation at a small scale from the beginning of Ramadan.

"When the buyers come to the market, they call us and we give them clothes. We are allowed to do business for a few hours every day. Small traders do not pay cash due to their poor business, but we are giving them clothes on credit," Md Mobarak Hossain Ripon, a trader of Baburhaat market, said.

"Last year, I sold 3,500 to 4,000 pieces of lungi earning Tk six lakh to Tk seven lakh a day," he said, adding that this year he is struggling to make Tk five lakh to Tk six lakh in a week.

PRICE HIKE OF RAW MATERIALS. Though the sales declined, prices of threads and dyes have rapidly increased, loom owners said.

Price of one bundle of thread has increased from Tk 16,000 to about Tk 23,000 and the price of one kilogram of dyes has soared from Tk 2,000 to Tk 4,000, they said.

"Thread and dyes are mostly imported from India and China. There has been almost no import in the last two months, so the price of raw materials has increased. Lockdown of Narayanganj, the main market for raw materials of clothing, also pushed up the price," Md Bodiuzzaman said.

**INDUSTRY IN NEED OF SUPPORT**  
"Most of the big loom factories have large bank loans. They are suffering because bank interest is accumulating but they could not sell their products in the last few months to pay interest," he said.

"If they do not get soft loans for resuming their business, nobody will be able to revive their business."

Marginal weavers, running two to three looms, need financial support without any condition, he added.

Although the government announced a Tk 20,000 crore stimulus package for the cottage, micro, small and medium enterprises to deal with the economic fallout caused by the coronavirus pandemic, the weavers and loom owners are still in the dark about it.

Noting that approximately 20 lakh people across the country are involved in the weaving industry, Ayub said they have not received any direction about accessing the benefits under this package.

## Resist armed miscreants

FROM PAGE 12

activities across the country, he adds. He calls for resisting these criminal elements in cooperation with law enforcement agencies.

The prime minister appeals to the people to work hard and give their best effort to increase agricultural production. He describes in detail various government incentives in this regard.

Bangabandhu further says that he has started the task of reconstruction on debris and will not be able to deliver any substantial goods to the people for three years. He however assures that not a single person will be deprived of the government's relief and rehabilitation support.

**A BRIDGE OVER JAMUNA**

Bangabandhu today declares at Bogura that a bridge will be built over Jamuna River. He shares that Japanese Prime Minister Eisaku Sato is taking keen interest in the Jamuna Bridge project. A Japanese survey team will soon visit Bangladesh to prepare a feasibility report for a bridge on Jamuna and apprise the Japanese government of the financial requirements for it, adds the prime minister.

**CASE AGAINST 1,500 PAKISTANI OFFICERS AND SOLDIERS**

Bangladesh government has filed cases against 1,500 Pakistani officers and soldiers for the commission of mass killing and other war crimes against humanity in Bangladesh during the

Liberation War. The government is planning to set up a special tribunal under Geneva Convention to hold the trial. The Indian government will soon be requested to hand over those PoWs against whom war crime charges are brought by the Bangladesh war crimes investigation committee.

**SOVIET UNION HANDS OVER SEA-GOING VESSEL**

The Soviet Union has handed over a 1,300-tonne sea-going vessel as a gift to the people of Bangladesh. Industry Minister Syed Nazrul Islam received the ship from the Soviet Ambassador to Bangladesh Valentin Popov at a ceremony at Naryanganj dockyard. SOURCE: May 9, 1972 issue of Dianiik Bangla.

## Outbreak worse 'attack'

FROM PAGE 12

"Could have been stopped at the source. Could have been stopped in China," he said.

Hua responded: "They might say the pandemic is comparable to Pearl Harbor or 9/11, but the enemy facing the US is the novel coronavirus."

She said Washington should "fight side-by-side" with Beijing instead of as "enemies".

Hua added that "lots of foreign countries, experts and scientists have all made positive comments on China's effective virus prevention and control."

"But the US alone has made some very disharmonious, untruthful and

insincere remarks," said Hua.

The coronavirus, which first emerged in central China late last year, has now killed more than 73,000 people in the US.

**'EXTREMELY CAREFULLY'**

The World Health Organization (WHO) warned on Wednesday that countries emerging from restrictions to halt the new coronavirus must proceed "extremely carefully" or risk a rapid rise in new cases.

Director-General Tedros Adhanom Gebreyesus said countries needed to ensure they had adequate measures to control the spread of the Covid-19 respiratory disease like tracking systems and quarantine provision.

## Rabindranath's

FROM PAGE 12

of 13 surviving children of Debendranath Tagore and Sarada Devi.

He became Asia's first Nobel laureate after winning the Nobel Prize in literature for Gitanjali in 1913.

Two of his songs are now the national anthems of Bangladesh and India.

Tagore wrote novels, short stories, songs, dance-dramas, and essays on political and personal topics. Gitanjali, Gora, Ghare Baire, and Chokher Bali are among his best-known works.

Meanwhile, President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday issued separate messages on the occasion.

## Brick kiln worker punished

FROM PAGE 12

2013 (Amended).

Meanwhile, the actual owner Abdul Aziz alias Kutti Mollah, of Nazirpur village under Baufal, said he has no idea why Barishal DoE identified Tareq as the owner and jailed him.

"Everyone knows that I am the owner of the kiln. But I don't know why my worker was punished as the owner," he told this correspondent on May 2.

Tareq has been working since November last year. He is a very good man at heart," the owner added.

However, director Abdul Halim said there is no room to question any

sentence given by a mobile court.

"A higher court can look into the matter," he added.

Tareq's father Abdul Matin said, "My innocent son has been unjustly punished."

To appeal against the sentence at the local magistrate court, on March 22, Abdul Matin applied for certified copies of the documents issued by Barishal DoE's mobile court.

He alleged that the director of Barishal divisional DoE has been reluctant to provide the certified copies.

When contacted, Abdul Halim told this correspondent on May 5 that

the certified copies of the documents were sent to the Patuakhali district magistrate court on May 3.

Like most institutions, all courts are closed till May 16 because of the pandemic.

Advocate Syed Mohammad Mohsin, secretary of Patuakhali bar (lawyer's) association, said the court will decide on the hearing after getting the documents.

After the hearing, the court can either grant bail to Tareq or fix a date for the final hearing. The court may also consider whether there was any discrepancy in the mobile court sentence, he added.

## 'Half tested positive after factories reopened'

FROM PAGE 12

in Mymensingh and Chattogram, one each in Manikganj and Jashore and the rest 14 in other areas, it added.

Findings of the report "Data list of coronavirus-infected garment workers" were disclosed yesterday via a virtual press conference.

While disclosing the findings, Taslima Akhter, president of BGSS, said coronavirus outbreak at the community level and rapidly increasing number of infected garment workers suggested that the factories were resumed without due preparations.

"As a result, the workers are now exposed to a bigger risk," she said.

Taslima hoped that the report would help the government and factory owners reconsider steps regarding operations of the factories and providing safety to the workers and saving the garment sector as a whole.

The report was prepared based on news reports published in 25 media

outlets including national and local dailies and online news portals.

The report read that gender identity of 76 infected workers have been reported in the media.

Of them, 53 percent was male workers and 47 percent female workers. Of the workers, 90 percent are aged between 18 and 35, and the rest above 35.

The report said 10 garment workers and one factory official have died either due to coronavirus infection or showing symptoms since April 3.

Three of the dead were coronavirus positive, it added.

According to the report, treatment condition of 46 of the workers could be known. Of them, 16 were under institutional quarantine and majority of others were in home quarantine.

So far garment workers in 24 districts found coronavirus positive. Only two infected workers have recovered, the report added.

BGSS said the findings hinted there was further chance of infection among

garment workers due to factory reopening without adequate preparation.

Usually, garment workers live low-paid and small rented accommodations amid squalid condition along with other family members, it said.

This at one end raise concern over the effectiveness of their home quarantine, while there is also risk that their family members and neighbours could get infected by them, it warned.

In its proposal, BGSS called upon the government and owners to reconsider decisions regarding factory reopening amid health concern of workers and the countrymen.

It demanded quick disclosure of information regarding infected and deceased workers and disinfection of factories including those in Savar and Ashulia where workers were found infected.

It urged the authorities to ensure treatment to the infected garment workers and supply of treatment costs.

## Request for Proposal (RFP)

(RFP-BD-2020-011)



United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Bangladesh is inviting Request for Proposal from interested firms/organizations for supporting Formulation of National Adaptation Plan (RFP-BD-2020-011).

This procurement process will be conducted through online e-tendering system of UNDP. Interested firms/organizations who wish to submit the RFP document must register in the system to access the bidding document (RFP). To register please visit the link: <https://etendering.partneragencies.org> and use the user name and password provided below to start the registration:

Username: event.guest  
Password: why2change

Once registered, bidders have to insert under the field "Event ID" the following: "BGD10" in the first box, and "RFP-20-011" in the second box and click the Search button.

The complete user guide and bidding document (RFP) can be found at UNDP Bangladesh website in the link below: [https://procurement-notice.undp.org/view\\_notice.cfm?notice\\_id=65645](https://procurement-notice.undp.org/view_notice.cfm?notice_id=65645)

Pre-proposal conference will be conducted online on Wednesday, May 13, 2020, 2:00 pm (LOCAL BD TIME). Link to online conference is provided in the bidding document.

The deadline for submission of proposal is Wednesday, May 20, 2020, 2:00 pm (LOCAL BD TIME).

## Israel lawmakers back Netanyahu-Gantz govt

Israeli lawmakers approved the formation of a unity government between Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his erstwhile rival Benny Gantz yesterday, paving the way to an end to more than a year of deadlock. Parliament voted by 71 votes to 37 to back the coalition deal that will see rightwinger Netanyahu and Benny Gantz, a centrist former military leader, share power. The two men have said they will swear in their new administration on May 13, with Netanyahu remaining leader for 18 months, before handing over to Gantz. Netanyahu has been written off by pundits and rivals many times since taking power in 2009, but the man sometimes dubbed "the magician" has invariably found a route to remain in power.

## US military killed 132 civilians globally in 2019

One hundred thirty-two civilians were killed last year in US global military operations, the army said Wednesday, a number far lower than those published by NGOs. The Department of Defense "assesses that there were approximately 132 civilians killed and approximately 91 civilians injured during 2019 as a result of US military operations in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, and Somalia," the Pentagon said in an annual report mandated by the US Congress. The NGO Airwars, which tracks civilian victims of aerial bombardments around the world, estimated there were between 465 and 1,113 civilians killed in Syria alone by the US-backed coalition last year.

## Trump vetoes Iran war powers resolution



US President Donald Trump on Wednesday vetoed what he called a "very insulting" congressional resolution seeking to limit his war powers in Iran. In a statement, Trump said he had used his veto because the resolution -- a rare bipartisan rebuke to the president approved in March -- was based on "misunderstandings of facts and law." The measure stemmed from fears among both Trump's Republicans and Democrats that the White House was stumbling into war with the Islamic republic. The resolution said the US president cannot commit his military to hostilities against Iran or any part of its government or military without explicit authorization from Congress. To override a veto, two-thirds of the members of both houses of Congress must vote to do so -- unlikely, given the Republican majority in the Senate.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS



Rescuers evacuate people following a gas leak incident at an LG Polymers plant in Visakhapatnam, India, yesterday. Inset, the chemical plant in Visakhapatnam.

PHOTO: AFP

## Spectre of multiple famines looms: UN

Appeals for \$4.7b dollars more; WHO urges countries to invest now to fight next pandemic

AFP, UNITED NATIONS

The United Nations yesterday issued a new appeal for \$4.7 billion in funding to "protect millions of lives and stem the spread of coronavirus in fragile countries."

The money is on top of the \$2 billion the UN already called for when it launched its global humanitarian response plan on March 25. It has received about half of that money so far.

"The most devastating and destabilizing effects" of the novel coronavirus pandemic "will be felt in the world's poorest countries," UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Mark Lowcock said in the statement.

"Unless we take action now, we should be prepared for a significant rise in conflict, hunger and poverty. The spectre of multiple

famines looms," he warned.

The full \$6.7 billion is expected to cover costs of the humanitarian response plan until December.

COVID-19 infections are expected to peak in the world's poorest countries in the next three to six months, UN estimates.

Meanwhile, the World Health Organization on Wednesday urged countries to invest in getting their healthcare systems fit to fight the next pandemic rather than scrambling around in panic when it hits.

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said investing now would save lives later. "The COVID-19 pandemic will eventually recede, but there can be no going back to business as usual," he said. "As we work on responding to this pandemic, we must also work harder to prepare for the next one."

## GAS LEAK AT CHEMICAL PLANT

## 11 killed in India

300 hospitalised; 1,500 evacuated

AGENCIES, NDTV

At least 11 people were killed in southern India by a gas leak at a South Korean-owned factory making polystyrene products, with emergency services rushing over 300 people to hospitals and evacuating 1,500 from a nearby village, a police official said.

The accident occurred some 14 kilometres (9 miles) inland from the east coast city of Visakhapatnam, in Andhra Pradesh state, at a plant operated by LG Polymers, a unit of South Korea's biggest petrochemical maker, LG Chem Ltd.

Srijana Gummalla, Commissioner, Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation said styrene leaked from the plant during the early hours of the morning, when families in the surrounding villages were asleep.

A spokesman for LG Chem in Seoul said the leak was discovered by a night shift maintenance worker and has been brought under control.

According to both the company spokesman and Gummalla, the plant was being reopened after India relaxed a nationwide lockdown that had been imposed on March 25 to contain the spread of the new coronavirus.

Of the people hospitalised, up to 25 are critical, NDTV quote the National Disaster Response Force, who declared the incident a chemical disaster.

## CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

### LATEST UPDATES

#### MORE THAN 260,000 DEAD

At least 264,111 people have died of the novel coronavirus since the epidemic surfaced in China late last year, according to an Johns Hopkins University tally at 1900 GMT yesterday. There have been more than 3,769,150 officially recorded cases spanning 195 countries and territories. The United States is the worst-hit country, with 73,431 deaths. Britain follows with 30,150, then Italy with 29,684 deaths, Spain with 25,857 and France with 25,812.

#### TOURISM TO PLUNGE UP TO 80%

The number of international tourist arrivals will plunge by 60 to 80 percent in 2020 because of the coronavirus pandemic, the World Tourism Organization said yesterday, revising a previous forecast of a 20-30 percent drop. Tourist arrivals fell by 22 percent in the first quarter of the year, with Asia and Europe suffering the biggest declines.

#### WORLD FOOD PRICES FALL SHARPLY

World food prices fell for a third consecutive month in April, hit by the economic and logistical impact of the coronavirus pandemic, the United Nations food agency said yesterday. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) food price index, which measures monthly changes for a basket of cereals, oilseeds, dairy products, meat and sugar, averaged 165.5 points last month, down 3.4% on March.

#### DONATE MAY PAY: SRI LANKA

Sri Lanka yesterday appealed to its 1.5 million government employees to donate their May salary to the government to boost the economy reeling from the coronavirus pandemic and a weeks-long lockdown. Top civil servant PB Jayasundara called on all public sector workers -- including members of the armed forces and the police -- to forego their salary in the name of "social responsibility."

#### INDIA'S CASES JUMP PAST 50,000

Coronavirus cases in India rose past 50,000, the health ministry said yesterday, with the pace of new infections showing no signs of abating despite a strict weeks-long lockdown in the world's second-most populous country. India added 3,561 cases, taking its total 52,952 while the death toll rose by 89 to 1,783.

#### NEPAL EXTENDS LOCKDOWN

The government has decided to extend the nationwide lockdown until May 18. Nepal has been on lockdown since March 24 to contain the spread of the virus. 82 cases have been detected in Nepal so far with no death.

#### UK MINORITIES RISK

Black men and women are more than four times more likely to die with coronavirus than white people in England and Wales, the Office for National Statistics says.

#### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SPIKE

Emergency services across Europe have seen a sharp rise in domestic abuse calls during lockdowns, the World Health Organization's regional office says, with countries reporting up to a 60 percent increase in calls in April compared to last year.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

## Positive tests for recovered patients are not reinfections

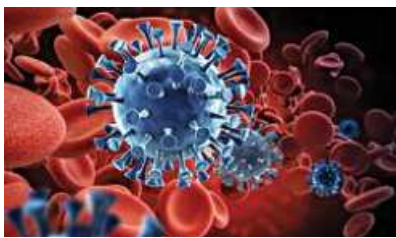
Says WHO; S Korean findings suggest such cases are false positives

AGENCIES

Coronavirus patients declared recovered who later test positive for the disease are still expelling dead lung cells rather than getting a new infection, the World Health Organization (WHO) told AFP on Wednesday.

South Korean health officials reported more than 100 such cases in April, raising concerns that patients who had recovered could become reinfected. But after weeks of research, they now say that such test results appear to be "false positives" caused by lingering - but likely not infectious - bits of the virus. South Korea had reported more than 350 such cases as of Wednesday, according to the Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (KCDC).

"We are aware that some patients test positive after they clinically recover," a



WHO spokesperson told AFP, without making specific reference to the South Korean cases.

"From what we currently know -- and this is based on very recent data -- it seems they these patients are expelling left over materials from their lungs, as part of the recovery phase."

People infected with the new coronavirus build up antibodies starting a week or so after infection or the onset of symptoms, research has shown.

But it is still not clear, experts say, whether the body systematically builds

up enough immunity to ward off a new attack by the virus or, if it does, how long such immunity lasts.

In a recent interview with BBC, infectious disease epidemiologist Maria Van Kerkhove, part of the WHO's Health Emergencies Program, explained the "dead cell" scenario.

"As the lungs heal, there are parts of the lung that are dead cells that are coming up. These are fragments of the lungs that are actually testing positive," she said. "It is not infectious virus, it's not reactivation. It is actually part of the healing process."

"Does that mean they have immunity? Does that mean they have a strong protection against reinfection? We don't know the answer to that yet."

For some viruses, such as the measles, those who contract it are immune for life. For other coronaviruses such as SARS, immunity lasted from a few months to a couple of years.



Children respect social distancing rules as they enter the Petri primary school in Dortmund, western Germany, yesterday, as the school reopens for some pupils following a lockdown due to coronavirus pandemic.

PHOTO: AFP

## Ex-spy chief elected Iraq PM amid crises

AFP, BAGHDAD

Iraq's former spy chief Mustafa Kadhemi took office as prime minister yesterday facing a staggering economic crisis, a pandemic and the spectre of renewed protests after breaking months of political deadlock.

Parliament approved the new government overnight after last-minute changes to the cabinet line-up, nearly a month after the ex-head of the National Intelligence Service (NIS) was nominated by President Barham Saleh.

It was the third attempt to replace outgoing premier Adel Abdel Mahdi.

The nomination of 53-year-old Kadhemi followed weeks of lobbying of deeply divided political parties, including those close to neighbouring Iran who had been wary of his ties to the United States.

One hardline faction had accused Kadhemi of conspiring with Washington over the January drone strike that killed Iranian general Qasem Soleimani and Iraqi commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis outside Baghdad airport.

But yesterday morning, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif tweeted a congratulatory message to the new premier, saying: "Iran always stands with the Iraqi people and their choice of administration."

Kadhemi had already received a call from US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who announced a 120-day waiver extension on US sanctions to let Iraq buy gas from neighbouring Iran.

The waiver is "a display of our desire to help provide the right conditions for success," the State Department said.

## Captured US 'mercenaries' to be tried in Venezuela

Pompeo says US to use 'every tool' to free Americans

AFP, CARACAS

Venezuela will try two Americans allegedly captured during a failed bid by mercenaries to invade the country, President Nicolas Maduro said Wednesday, as the US vowed to "use every tool available" to bring them home.

Venezuela announced Monday that it had arrested the two former US special forces soldiers on suspicion of trying to topple Maduro in an operation supported by the US-backed opposition.

"They are convicts, confessed, caught red-handed and are being judged by the republic's attorney general, by Venezuela's civil courts, and the process will be full of guarantees and fair," said Maduro.

The leader of the crisis-wracked South American country insisted the Americans, identified as Luke Denman and Airan Berry, were being "well treated, with respect."

Maduro showed the passports of Denman, 34, and Berry, 41, on state television. The US army has confirmed they

were former members of the Green Berets who were deployed to Iraq.

In Washington, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said the government would "use every tool that we have available to try to get them back."

US President Donald Trump had denied any involvement by his administration with the mission. Russia, a close ally of Maduro's, hit out at Trump on Wednesday and described his denials as "unconvincing."

Venezuela's Attorney General Tarek William Saab said Monday that opposition leader Juan Guaido, who is backed by the US, had signed a \$212 million contract with "hired mercenaries" using funds seized by the US from the state oil company PDVSA.

Denman and Berry are among 17 people arrested for allegedly being part of an invasion force that was intercepted early Sunday just off the coast, about 40 minutes from the capital Caracas. Another eight alleged attackers were killed.



<b>Dairy Development Research Project</b> Bangladesh Livestock Research Institute Savar, Dhaka-1341 Memo No. 33.05.2672.106.00.407.20.929 Date: 07/05/2020			
<b>e-Tender Notice</b>			
e-Tender will be invited in the National e-GP System Portal ( <a href="http://www.eprocurement.gov.bd">http://www.eprocurement.gov.bd</a> ) for procurement of following works. Details are given below:			
Tender ID No.	Ref. No. & package description	Tender publishing date & time	Tender closing date & time
458547	Ref. No. 33.05.2672.106.00.407.20.928 Construction of Guard Barak at BLRI Regional Station, Baghabari, Sirajganj.	10/05/2020 at 11:00pm	28/05/2020 at 4:00pm
To get access to the e-Tender document, the required fees is to be deposited through any registered branch of enlisted banks on or before of abovementioned date & time. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and e-GP help desk ( <a href="mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd">helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd</a> ).			
<b>Dr. Md. Azharul Islam Talukder</b> Project Director Phone: 02-7792209			
GD-806			

STOCKS		COMMODITIES		ASIAN MARKETS				CURRENCIES			
DSEX	CSCX	Gold	Oil	MUMBAI	TOKYO	SINGAPORE	SHANGHAI	USD	EUR	GBP	CNY
Closed	Closed	\$1,694.30 (per ounce)	\$31.36 (per barrel)	▼ 0.76%	▼ 0.28%	Closed	▼ 0.23%	BUY TK 83.95	89.64	102.94	11.66
				31,443.38	19,674.77		2,871.52	SELL TK 84.95	93.44	106.74	12.26



# Star BUSINESS

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## TAMING CORONAVIRUS RAMPAGE

# ADB paints the bleakest picture for Bangladesh

### Approves \$500m in short notice to stave off financial ruins

REJAU KARIM BYRON and MD FAZLUZ RAHMAN

The coronavirus pandemic will drive an additional 13 million people into poverty, cut 3.7 million jobs, take budget deficit to as high as 7.5 per cent and inflict a minimum revenue loss of 2 per cent of GDP in Bangladesh as the killer bug is wreaking havoc throughout the economy, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) has warned.

The grim picture was painted as the Manila-based development lender yesterday approved an additional \$500 million loan for Bangladesh to bolster its efforts to manage the impact of the pestilence on the economy and the public health.

This is the first budget support from any development lender to Bangladesh after the outbreak of the coronavirus, as it seeks more than \$3 billion initially from development partners to ward off the impact of the virus and embark on implementing its \$11.3 billion-strong stimulus packages.

The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is planning to provide \$250 million in co-financing with the ADB to support the government's programme.

This package will build on ADB's ongoing collaboration with Bangladesh on structural reforms by supporting the government efforts to speed up the country's social and economic recovery, said ADB President Masatsugu Asakawa in a press release.

"We will work closely with the government and development partners to mitigate the economic impact of the pandemic on the poor and most vulnerable, particularly those affected by job losses in small and medium enterprises and the informal sector."

Since March 26, Bangladesh has virtually shut its entire economy to flatten the curve on coronavirus. Still, the country is moving to the fourth stage of infection (community transmission), with 59 of the country's 64 districts affected.

As of yesterday, the total number of infections and fatalities stood at 12,425 and 199 respectively. "Given the density of the country's population, sizable slum population and underdeveloped medical system, Bangladesh faces significant challenges in containing the disease," the ADB said.

On April 30, the ADB approved a \$100 million concessional loan to support Bangladesh to address the immediate public health requirements of combatting the pandemic.

The lender also released a \$350,000 emergency grant for the procurement of medical supplies and equipment and \$1.3 million from an existing project to provide one-time cash support to 22,619 trainees to enable them to continue their ongoing skills training programme.

#### COVID-19 IMPACT

In 2019, over 34 million people, or 20.5 per cent of Bangladesh's population, were poor and 17 million, or 10.5 per cent, were extremely poor. The shutdown and the consequent economic disruptions have led to a spike in poverty.

The International Food Policy Research Institute estimates that an additional 42 million people in

South Asia could fall into extreme poverty in 2020 due to the pandemic.

For Bangladesh, the ADB estimates that the pandemic is expected to drive an additional 7.7 per cent of the population or close to 13 million people into poverty.

The gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate is projected to decline to 3.8 per cent this fiscal year 2020 from 8.2 per cent in fiscal 2018-19, the ADB said, quoting data from the International Monetary Fund.

This would be the slowest growth rate since

The reduction in remittance inflow will impact consumption and put the livelihood of many migrant workers' families at risk.

In April, inflows hit a 34-month low of \$1.08 billion, down 25 per cent from a year earlier.

Domestic consumption accounts for 75 per cent of the economy. Google's mobility report provides indications of the cliff-like drop of domestic consumption which will severely impact retail, accommodation, restaurants, and transportation sectors of the economy.

Consumption in the retail and recreation sector

COVID-19 response plan, the ADB said.

A social protection and economic stimulus package amounting to Tk 95,619 crore, or \$11.3 billion, equivalent to 3.5 per cent of the GDP has been announced.

With rising expenditure and declining revenues, additional government financing requirements in fiscal 2019-20 are estimated at \$8.8 billion, or 14.2 per cent of the this fiscal year's budget.

About \$2.9 billion of the deficits will be financed through external sources and \$5.9 billion from the domestic market.



### Impact of coronavirus on the Bangladesh economy

- 7.7pc people will be poor additionally
- Budget deficit to soar to 7.5pc of GDP in FY20.
- Industry to decline 2pc, services 3.5pc
- Exports to decline 19.8pc in FY20.
- Revenue to fall by \$6.7b

### ADB's fund will be used

- Support for 1.5cr poor and vulnerable
- Salary support for 15 lakh workers in export industries
- Healthcare personnel fighting COVID-19 in government-run hospitals to receive honorarium
- 20 lakh poor families to get \$23 each
- 10 lakh poor, vulnerable families to receive food support of 20kg a month
- Eligible industries, sectors to get loans at subsidised interest

### The government will need \$8.8b in additional financial requirement in FY20 and hopes to manage \$2.9bn from external sources



2002, which is lower than the 5 per cent growth at the height of the global financial crisis in 2009.

The nationwide stay-at-home order has resulted in simultaneous supply and demand shocks, with production, consumption, trade and investment all at a standstill.

Many informal workers, which account for 85.1 per cent of the workforce, lost their livelihoods instantly.

The lack of social safety net coverage will lead to dire consequences for the more than 20 per cent of the population who live below the poverty line and the many newly jobless who will join them.

By sector, the industry is expected to decline by 2 per cent (from 12.7 per cent in fiscal 2018-19) and services by 3.5 per cent (from 6.8 per cent in fiscal 2018-19).

The traditional growth drivers of the economy -- export-oriented industries, remittances, domestic consumptions, and SMEs -- have all ground to a halt.

Exports have been one of the main drivers of economic and social development in Bangladesh. The growth rate was 10.9 per cent in 2019 but a decline of 19.8 per cent is expected in fiscal 2019-20.

Total remittances are expected to stagnate in fiscal 2019-20 and drop sharply in fiscal 2020-21.

crashed 76 per cent between February 29 and April 11, in grocery and pharmacy 55 per cent and the transportation sector 72 per cent, according to the Community Mobility Report.

The pandemic is having a significant impact on the fiscal position.

Before the pandemic, the economy was on track to grow by 7.8 per cent this fiscal year. The budget deficit was expected to return to the 5 per cent range after a temporary jump to 5.5 per cent in fiscal 2018-19 due to elections.

As per the Manila-based multilateral lender's estimate, the fiscal deficit is likely to rise to 7.5 per cent of GDP in fiscal 2019-20.

The pandemic and consequent stoppage of economic activities are expected to significantly reduce tax receipts. Non-tax revenue will also be severely affected by the reduction of imports and other fee sources.

A minimum revenue loss of 2 per cent of GDP (\$6.7 billion) is projected by the government. The Bangladesh economy stands to lose a staggering \$13.3 billion for the coronavirus outbreak, the ADB said earlier this month, which is 4.9 per cent of its GDP.

#### BANGLADESH'S FUND REQUIREMENT

Bangladesh has taken prompt actions to control the spread of the disease and manage its impact on health, welfare, and the economy under its

Of the foreign portion, Bangladesh hopes to receive \$600 million from the ADB, \$250 million from the AIIB, \$100 million from the World Bank, \$700 million from the IMF and \$1.239 billion from other sources.

**FURTHER CHALLENGES FACING BANGLADESH**  
Delayed implementation of the economic stimulus or inadequate size may reduce the effectiveness of the programme and significant escalation of the pandemic may lead to severe disruptions in government work that may hamper programme implementation too, the ADB said.

Insufficient internal control may lead to reduced efficiency, fairness, and transparency of the government support programme.

The lender cautioned that the government's plan to fund a significant portion of expenditures from domestic sources may not succeed if the pandemic situation deteriorates.

The government has been prudent in raising external debts, with low external debt-gross domestic product ratio of 15 per cent.

Tapping different funding channels should be considered and ADB will continue to engage the government to evaluate various strategic options, it said.

Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal thanked Asakawa for approving the loan in such a short period.

Shopping centres must follow health and safety measures when open

Says commerce minister

#### STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government has left the decision to reopen shopping centres to their owners as it gradually lifts the restrictions of the shutdown to allow businesses to resume operations ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr, said Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi yesterday.

"Reopening shopping centres is not mandatory," he said.

If the shopping centre owners do not want to reopen their properties, they can do so too. But if any shopping centre does open its gates to customers again, the management will have to follow the health and safety measures.

Shopping centres, shops and shopping complexes can reopen on a limited scale from May 10, the government said on Monday. The opening hours are from 10 am to 4 pm.

The government has also decided to import goods by trains from India during the pandemic as transportation through road has become difficult.

Both Bangladesh and India have agreed in this regard. The higher-ups of both countries will finalise the standard operating procedure (SOP) on carrying goods on Sunday.

"We can start carrying goods by trains from India very soon once the SOP is ready," Munshi told The Daily Star after a press conference at his secretariat office in Dhaka.

Meanwhile, state-owned Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) has started selling commodities such as sugar, lentil and edible oil since April 1 and it will continue up to May 20.

The TCB is selling the items in 425 spots across the country, including 80-85 locations in metropolitan areas, 10-12 in divisional cities and four to eight spots in the district level.

Some 3,000 TCB-appointed dealers have also been taking part in the sales of the goods to supply the essentials to the people at reasonable prices during the fasting month of Ramadan.

The state agency will start selling onion at Tk 25 per kg from Saturday, the minister said.

The government took the decision following a rise in the price of the key cooking ingredient at the beginning of Ramadan.

# Cabinet comes to panic-struck taxpayers' rescue

### New clause to be added to law to allow deadline extension for extraordinary circumstances

SOHEL PARVEZ and REJAU KARIM BYRON

The cabinet yesterday decided to bring in changes in direct and indirect tax laws with the view to thwarting taxpayers from getting slapped with a penalty for their failure to comply with deadlines owing to the shutdown.

It was decided that a provision would be added to the VAT and Supplementary Act 2012 such that the revenue authority can extend the deadline for submission of value-added tax returns during extenuating circumstances like natural calamity, pandemic and other emergencies.

A similar provision would be added to the Income Tax Ordinance 1984 so that the National Board of Revenue (NBR) can waive

the penalty and interests for the failure of taxpayers to comply with time-bound rules and extend time -- a move that is likely to give respite to a large number of taxpayers from the risk of fine.

The decision comes nearly one-and-a-half months after the government declared a general holiday and enforced a stay-at-home order to slow the spread of highly contagious coronavirus that has wreaked havoc all over the world.

Most of the businesses save for essential commodity processors and marketers, drug makers, superstores, groceries and perishable foods and banks have remained shut since March 26.

While the NBR kept its field offices of VAT open from April 12 to April 15 to receive

VAT returns from businesses, the majority of the businesses could not file returns timely because of the adverse environment.

Subsequently, various trade bodies including the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry appealed for extending the deadline for submission of VAT returns without fine.

Last month, the NBR got 31,000 returns, which is half of what it received the previous month, officials said.

As per rule, businesses have to submit details of transactions of the previous month and deposit VAT paid by the end consumers to the state coffer within the 15th of the following month.

Firms have to pay Tk 10,000 as a penalty for failure to submit VAT returns within the

deadline.

They can also seek time for delayed furnishing of return but they have to pay 2 per cent simple interest monthly for delayed submission, according to rules.

In the face of rising concerns and difficulties faced by businesses, Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal last month said that the deadline for submission of VAT returns would be extended.

Apart from VAT, there are various time-bound provisions in the income tax law.

Many taxpayers who got permission to file tax returns after petition could not file their income and expenditure statement as the lockdown began ahead of their submission deadline, said a senior official of the income tax department.

Besides, employers have to submit statements of return filings by their employers within April 30 every year to avoid a penalty, which many could not do.

Companies are also required to deposit the tax deducted at source of goods and services of the current month within the first half of the following month.

There is also a time-related obligation regarding disposal of tax-related appeals in the present rules, said officials and firms.

But many could not do them for the shutdown.

Now, a senior official of the NBR said time equivalent to the number of days lost for the shutdown will be extended so that taxpayers can comply without facing a penalty.

**TAMING CORONAVIRUS RAMPAGE**

# State banks seek liquidity support amid fund withdrawal by SoEs

AKM ZAMIR UDDIN

State-run lenders yesterday approached both the central bank and the finance ministry to seek liquidity support as government agencies are withdrawing funds rapidly, a development that will handicap them ahead of implementing the government's massive stimulus packages.

They came up with the plea at a virtual meeting with the finance ministry. Managing directors of all state-run banks and non-bank financial institutions were present.

Md Ashadul Islam, senior secretary of the financial institutions division, chaired the virtual meeting. Bangladesh Bank Deputy Governor Ahmed Jamal was present.

The state-run lenders have been asked to play a leading role in materialising the packages by using their large branch network.

As of November, the country's 59 banks have 10,467 branches. Of the sum, four state-owned banks -- Sonali, Janata, Agrani and Rupali -- together account for 34 per cent of the branches and 56 per cent of the branches are located in the rural areas.

Both the government and the central bank have so far declared 18 stimulus packages worth Tk 95,619 crore to tackle the economic fallout.

The packages, which are equivalent to 3.5 per cent of the country's GDP, will be implemented under the supervision of the BB and the finance

ministry.

The finance ministry asked the lenders to implement the stimulus packages in a quick manner with a view to pulling the economy out of the meltdown.

There are 68 state-run enterprises (SoEs) that have Tk 212,100 crore deposited in banks, and the state-run banks have been sitting on enough liquidity for long on the back of the bulk deposits.

But the liquidity base has started to contract as the government has been forced to meet its expenditure due to the ongoing economic fallout resulting from the coronavirus pandemic.

For instance, the Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation will withdraw Tk 2,000 crore from Sonali and Janata respectively within the next week.

The central bank, however, assured the lenders of required fund injection in the form of repurchase agreement to mitigate the impending liquidity crunch.

The meeting did not take any final decision, but the finance ministry gave a hint that the state banks would have to play a major role in implementing the stimulus packages, said Md Abdus Salam Azad, managing director of Janata Bank.

The ministry has asked the lenders to give an idea about the potential losses their business will face due to the ongoing fallout, he said.

Bangladesh Krishi Bank (BKB) will have to execute the stimulus package

largely for the farm sector, said its managing director Md Ali Hossain Prodhania.

The central bank has formed a refinance scheme of Tk 5,000 crore for the small and medium enterprises of the farm sector, of which Tk 1,199 crore will have to be disbursed by BKB.

Besides, the bank will have to give out a major portion of loans to farmers at 4 per cent interest rate, he said.

"We are well prepared to do so. This will help protect the agriculture sector from the recession," Prodhania said.

The state lenders could lead the implementation of the stimulus packages by using the huge network, said Mohammad Shams-Ul Islam, managing director of Agrani Bank.

In a separate move, the central bank has divided proportionately for banks the stimulus package of Tk 30,000 crore earmarked for the industrial and services sectors.

A majority of banks now face a liquidity crunch in the wake of deposit withdrawal by clients, so they will try to disburse loans under the package.

The central bank has taken into account the outstanding amount of the respective bank's working capital until December in the industrial and service sectors while fixing the sum for them.

Banks will get an interest rate subsidy of 4.5 per cent for the disbursed loans under the package.

# Mobile operators demand tax reforms



STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Mobile phone operators in their budget proposals for the upcoming fiscal year have called upon the government to streamline the telecom tax regime, saying the existing policies encumber them and stand in their way to contributing more to the economy.

The operators' contribution to the country's economy is 7 per cent now, but if proper tax reforms can be brought on board, the rate will rise further, the Association of Mobile Telecom Operators of Bangladesh (AMTOB) said in the proposals emailed to the National Board of Revenue.

"Since the sector is already going through multiple issues regarding taxation, it's time to find solutions to them," said AMTOB President Mahtab Uddin Ahmed.

As the whole country is facing unprecedented challenges due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the telecom sector has become the backbone of all sorts of communication, business and entertainment, he added.

In the proposals, the operators requested the government to abolish SIM tax, bring down the corporate tax, lift turnover tax and eliminate double taxation.

Mobile operators are currently paying Tk 200 tax per SIM, which

they say is a major barrier to taking telecom services to low-income people, according to an AMTOB statement issued yesterday.

"If the SIM tax is waived, mobile phone coverage will widen in the rural areas and it will bring greater benefit to the national economy," it said.

The AMTOB called for bringing down their corporate tax from 45 per cent to 30 per cent, a rate currently applicable to other companies in Bangladesh.

The corporate tax rate for mobile phone operators is 22 per cent in India, 30 per cent in Pakistan and Nepal, 28 per cent in Sri Lanka and 20 per cent in Afghanistan.

The minimum threshold of the turnover tax creates a huge pressure on small carriers, which pay 2 per cent of their revenue regardless of whether they incur a loss or make

a profit, the AMTOB said, adding that three loss-making operators are paying this tax from the equity injected by shareholders.

"Bringing down the turnover and corporate taxes is a prerequisite for the sustainability of the industry."

The operators share 5.5 per cent of their gross revenue with the government, while contributing another 1 per cent to a "social obligation fund" of the regulator, the AMTOB said, stressing the need for eliminating double taxation.

It also urged the NBR to clarify the Value Added Tax and Supplementary Duty Act, 2012, which they say does not provide specific guidelines with regards to VAT exemption for regulatory agencies.

"The government agencies and regulators are not following the VAT regulations as they are demanding or collecting VAT without registration and are not issuing any VAT challan, which goes against the principle of the VAT law," the AMTOB said.

It is difficult to ascertain the consequences of COVID-19, but mobile phone services will face huge challenges soon if the regulatory, tax and VAT-related issues are not addressed immediately, said AMTOB Secretary General SM Farhad.

"The coronavirus situation is negatively impacting the operators and wreaking havoc on their revenues. We request the government to consider our proposals so that the industry can help the country with its full potential," he said.



# Textile millers missed sales of Tk 20,000cr

REFAJET ULLAH MIRDHA

Shahid Alam, a yarn manufacturer for the local garment industry, used to sell cotton yarn worth Tk35 crore a month, and more so on the occasions of Pohela Baishakh and Eid-ul-Fitr.

But this year has been starkly, depressingly different. His factory in Narayanganj has been bolted shut for the past one-and-a-half month for the countrywide shutdown

enforced on March 26 to flatten the curve on coronavirus.

Unfortunately, both the mega sales events took place during this time, leaving him and his sector ruing missed sales to the tunes of Tk 20,000 crore.

The local millers produce fabrics for salwar kameez, curtains, home textile, sari, lungi, hand towels and so on. With the increase in purchasing power capacity for Bangladesh's tremendous growth momentum, sales of

the goods had been increasing on the two occasions.

The weavers, dyers, printers and spinners say they were deprived of Tk 5,000 crore in lost revenue during Pohela Baishakh and another Tk 15,000 crore in Eid, which is three weeks away.

Every year, almost all the Eid sales would be cleared from factories in the first week of Ramadan. But this time, the factories remain firmly shut in the first week of the fasting

month, which began on April 25.

The slump in production at the mills has negatively impacted the sales of garment, dress materials, sari and lungi in the country's major wholesale hubs such as Baburhaat, Islampur, Sirajganj and Madhabdi.

Subsequently, the Bangladesh Textile Mills Association (BTMA) has called for government support.

"There are so many micro, small and medium units serving the local markets,

but they are not enjoying the government benefits," said BTMA President Mohammad Ali Khokon.

There are about 11,000 micro, small, medium and large spinning, printing, dyeing and weaving mills, according to the association.

So far, three members of the BTMA sent letters to the association because the banks are not cooperating with them in availing the fund from bailout package, said Monsoor Ahmed, secretary of the trade body.

# Things looking up for Banglalink

MUHAMMAD ZAHIDUL ISLAM

Banglalink, once the most spirited operator in the market, seems to have gotten a spring back in its step in 2020 after two consecutive quarters of underwhelming performance.

In the first quarter of this year, the country's third largest operator reported a 3.75 per cent year-on-year growth in revenue thanks to 4G, according to its parent company VEON's quarterly report.

Its revenue of Tk 1,163 crore was the highest after it purchased additional spectrum in February 2018 and invested in 4G services.

However, the operator did not disclose its profit status in the report published yesterday.

"Our simplified product offers accompanied by the continued expansion of 4G coverage has supported our data customer growth and improvement in data revenue," said Erik Aas, chief executive officer of Banglalink.

During the quarter, Banglalink's data customers increased 7.8 per cent year-on-year and its data revenue a whopping 18.5 per cent to Tk 265.78 crore.

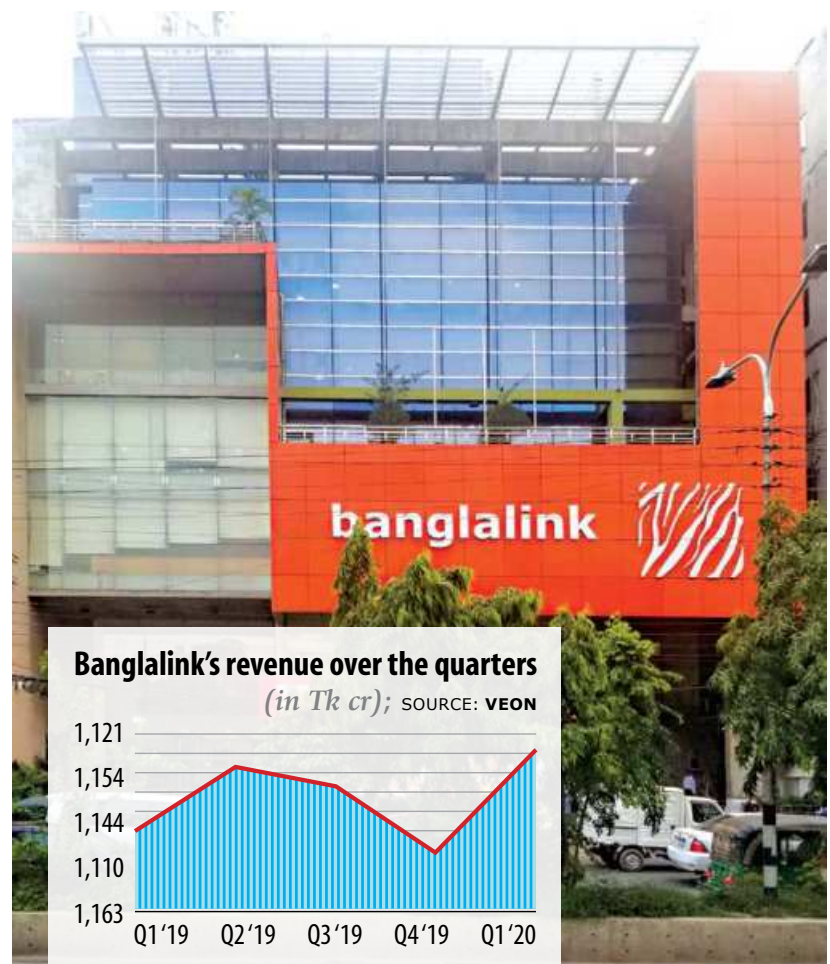
Its data usage growth between January and March was up 42.8 per cent year-on-year to 1,713 MB per user per month.

And the average earning per user every month increased to Tk 113 from Tk 109 in the previous quarter, which was its lowest yet.

At the end of March, Banglalink's 4G network covered 52 per cent of the population, which also help its customers to use more data. Its 3G coverage was 73 per cent of the population, reads the report.

The carrier ended the quarter with 3.36 crore active users, up 1.9 per cent year-on-year.

To support its customers during the general shutdown, Banglalink is providing some of its services free of



charge and has improved access to digital reload channels.

On top of ensuring uninterrupted telecommunication services to their customers, Banglalink has also been active with various social initiatives that are beneficial to the people of Bangladesh during this difficult time, Aas said.

The social initiatives include relief distribution among the population in need, free e-learning facility for primary school students and toll-free

hotlines to coronavirus testing centres.

The pandemic has exposed both the customers and Banglalink to unprecedented challenges.

"Bangladesh is already a challenging market for us to operate in due to the high tax rates and the less favourable regulatory environment, and the current crisis is posing another challenge to our business' sustainability. Nevertheless, we do hope to overcome this situation soon and come out stronger," Aas added.

**NEXT STEP**

## Making a DIFFERENCE

Bangladesh is rapidly moving towards middle income status by 2021. Our businesses definitely offer immense opportunities for the growing economy and this diversity needs a stage for the stories untold. See Bangladesh make its mark on the global map as Making a Difference brings you our proudest success stories from across the country.

### How to stay connected with your team while working remotely

Social distancing has become an integral part of our daily life during this pandemic. While working from home, remote workers face many challenges. The main challenge is to stay connected with the whole team. Here are some insights on how to be a successful remote worker while staying connected with your colleagues.

**SCHEDULE DAILY MEETINGS**  
To encourage team spirit, daily meetings are much needed even if it's just for 10-15 minutes. It'll involve all the colleagues in the discussion of company updates and help them stay on top of information. A meeting in the morning to set the daily goals and to rank urgent projects can keep you and your team on the right track.

**MAKE VIDEO CALLS MANDATORY**  
Many nonverbal cues incentivize you to work proficiently. But when you default to phone calls, you're not able to build a level of rapport. Face-to-face meetings or video calls let us feel like we are huddled together in a small conference room and enable us to coordinate our work.

**ENGAGE YOURSELF IN A REASONABLE AMOUNT OF CHIT CHAT**  
Remote work gets lonely in between meetings and calls. This gap can be tackled if you stay connected with your team in a group chat. You can make small announcements and ask quick questions here. It is also the best way to understand your co-workers and develop a better team spirit.

**STICK TO A SET SCHEDULE FOR WORK**  
When you are working from home,

there is no fixed time to complete the assignment. Procrastination and slackness can make your whole team less productive. The balance between personal life and professional life will be in trouble because of this slackness. Set primary working hours and stick to them no matter what. In this way, you can achieve your daily goals and stay connected with your colleagues actively. You may also spend time with your family.

JINAT JAHAN KHAN

## Right to freedom of expression is in mortal danger

Cases filed under Digital Security Act continue to pile up

A cartoonist, a writer and an activist were among the four latest victims of arrest under the draconian Digital Security Act, which it seems is being used to indiscriminately shut down anyone who criticises the powers that be or disagrees in the slightest with their narrative. The four were arrested allegedly for making anti-government posts on Facebook. But we must ask, since when has it become normal for multiple vehicles full of Rab personnel to show up in the middle of the night and pick someone up from their home for posting something critical of the government on social media? Isn't it all a bit too much? What is the purpose of this? Is it to intimidate people into silence? That is what legal experts and rights activists are pointing to as being the real concern here.

According to the human rights body Article 19, between January 1 and May 6, a total of 60 cases have been filed against more than 100 people, including 22 journalists, under the act. There were 34 cases that were filed under the act in 2018 and the following year, that number rose to a total of 63. This shows an increasing trend in the number of cases being filed under the act—with this year's number nearly reaching last year's sum total already.

This stifling of free expression that we have been witnessing completely violates the basic principles of democracy, and the targeting of journalists simply creates confusion by depriving people of accurate and complete information. In this moment of crisis, if the government is truly concerned about true information reaching the public, it should be assisting that process, not hampering the free flow of information and creating a general sense of fear by arresting anyone it sees as having committed the smallest transgression.

We once again call on the authorities to reconsider scrapping the widely unpopular and extremely questionable Digital Security Act and be more tolerant towards free expression and those exercising their constitutional right to it.

## Reopening the businesses amid highest risks

Maintaining safety guidelines will be the biggest challenge

AS the government has decided to reopen shopping malls, all types of shops and businesses on a limited scale from May 10 ahead of the Eid, not all people related to the businesses are sure that they should do so now when the number of new coronavirus infections is rising every day, even under lockdown. Two of the biggest shopping malls of the city have decided not to reopen considering the risk it will pose to the shoppers. But others have decided to go ahead as the economic losses have become too much for them to bear.

The difference between us and other countries that are reopening their economic activities is that they have decided to do so under strict guidelines and have only taken the decision when new infections and deaths in their respective territories have shown a downward trend. Unfortunately, our government has decided to reopen when the numbers are rising. Of course, the economic hardship that our people have been going through is not comparable to those of the European countries, as already over a crore people have lost their jobs due to the shutdown here and the government's stimulus packages are just not being enough to feed the hungry people across the country for a few more months.

Since the decision has already been taken to reopen, we think the government, business owners, law enforcement agencies and other authorities have a huge responsibility to maintain social distancing and other safety guidelines. The directives given by the home ministry—that there should be sanitisers at the entrances of the malls, no one will be allowed inside the buildings without gloves and masks, and there will be a banner in front of malls saying that disregarding the health directives will cause life risk—should be strictly maintained. The shop owners will also have to ensure sanitisers and masks for their employees, appoint volunteers to help maintain the safety measures, mark places where shoppers will stand, as well as have disinfection rooms inside the buildings. The police have also come up with some directives, such as restricting people's movement into their respective areas' shopping malls and making all carry their NIDs with them, etc.

We urge the market authorities to take proper precautions in the remaining days before reopening. We also hope the public will comply with the directives of social distancing and other safety guidelines. Considering the rush of people during this time before Eid, ensuring all the guidelines will no doubt be a big challenge for the authorities. The government should enlighten us about how it is planning to monitor that everything goes as per its plan. Because if the safety measures are not followed by all, the result of reopening could be disastrous for the nation.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

### Potential drug a ray of hope

It is indeed heartening to learn that six local drug makers are now ready to produce the experimental antiviral drug remdesivir, developed by an American biopharmaceutical company. According to reports, its potential to help Covid-19 patients is based on the ability to disable the mechanism by which certain viruses, including the new coronavirus, replicate themselves and potentially overwhelm their host's immune system.

Even though the drug is yet to prove fully efficient in eradicating Covid-19, it is promising nonetheless. And to know that of the six companies, two are already in the advanced stage of their preparation, is surely a ray of hope in these dark times. I would like to urge the authorities to assist the companies in every possible manner so that the drug can be made available as early as possible for the wellbeing of the nation.

Nahian Zaman, Dhaka

# Shifting universities to non-physical platforms

Collaborative efforts will be the way forward



ADNAN M S FAKIR

AFTER much confusion, the University Grants Commission (UGC) on April 30 provided the directive to hold online classes in all public and private universities.

Given that the PM has directed universities to remain closed till September, if the situation does not improve, we face at least 4-5 months of such distance learning. Setting aside the ethical and moral dilemmas and the students' mental health issues (topics on their own merits), the central query is, then, how do we make such a nationwide transition suddenly? Given that a considerable percentage of students do not have access to the necessary facilities/technology, to what extent is this feasible?

I think the first step in that direction should be conducting university-specific surveys to identify: (1) non-tech savvy faculty members who are unable to conduct classes in the online platform, and (2) students who do not have access to the internet and the necessary tech equipment, including a (reliable) smartphone. Emphasis of the prior sentence falls on accepting and utilising smartphones as a (short-term) learning tool. While apt (ironically online) training can be provided to non-tech savvy faculty members (peer to peer, if not centralised—admittedly a difficult task at which a number of universities are failing), the student survey will provide important information on the prevailing status of the student body. The surveys can be done centrally by the admin or by course-specific faculty members/RAs, online and over phone calls, for those not reachable online.

The reasons why incorporating smartphone-centric learning is important are simple. First, in Bangladesh, mobile phone penetration is higher than broadband internet connectivity, and a larger percentage of students have access to smartphones rather than computers. Second, almost all online classroom platforms (Zoom, Google Classroom) are easily accessible from smartphones. Faculty members should record their sessions and upload them on a common platform (such as personal faculty channels in YouTube, if Blackboard features are unavailable) for students to access later (not as alternatives to interactive online classes). The real catch is in accommodating two sets of students. The first set are students without smartphones and/or internet access, who will be unable to attend online classes. This concern, plaguing other South Asian countries as well, is further aggravated by the fact that many students returned to their village homes, in some cases in remote areas without constant electricity or proper internet infrastructure. Here are a few of the ideas floating around regarding bridging the gap:

**The internet issue (for those with access to at least smartphones)**  
In India, the southern state of Kerala announced that it would provide extra bandwidth across the state to cater to such needs. In Bangladesh, students who are now in remote areas (and many in

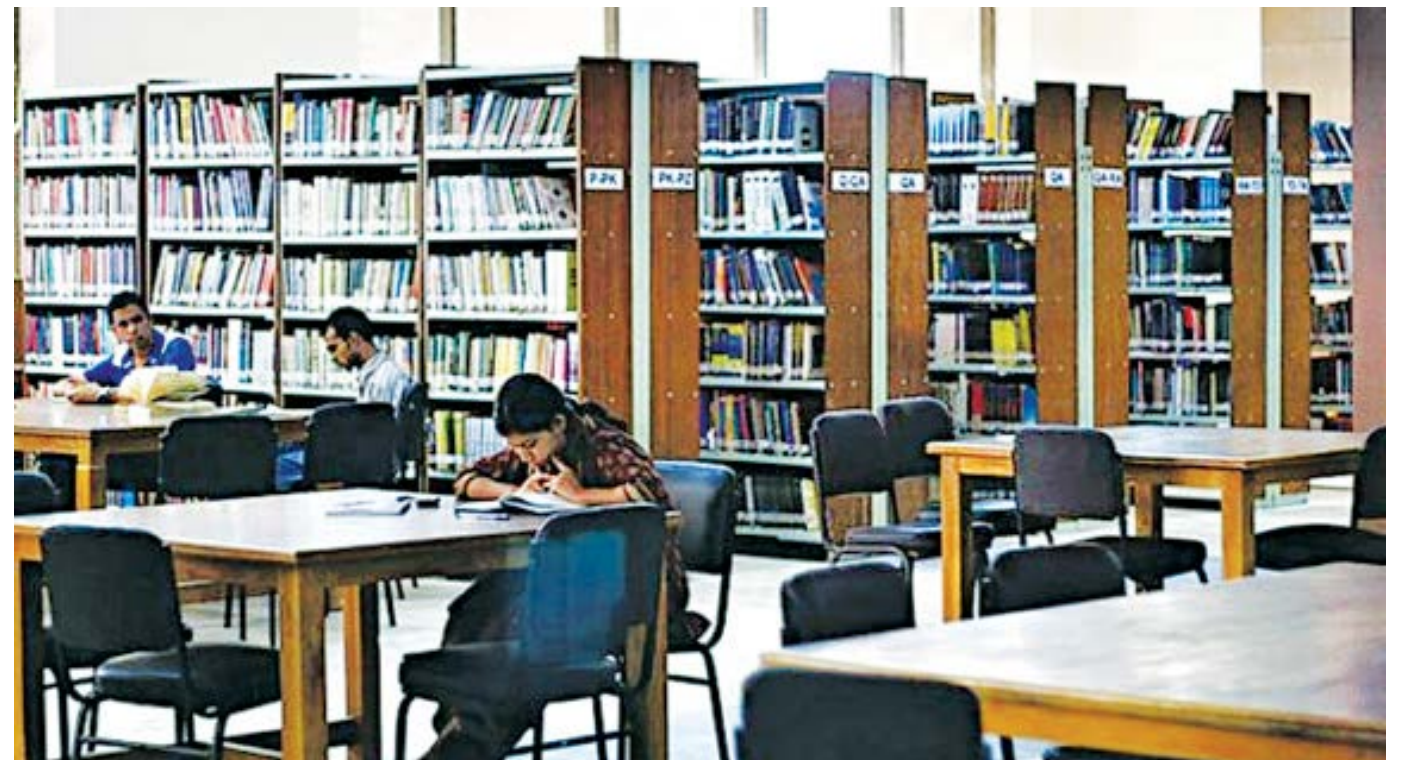
urban areas) are unlikely to have access to broadband internet. However, those with smartphones should have access to telco-specific internet. This is where the telecom industry in Bangladesh can step in. Many students will not be able to buy the amount of data required to attend such classes online (the survey can identify them). Telco-university collaborative measures can be taken to offer "internet education packages" for these students. Ideally, these packages can be managed and provided by universities to the students, renewed biweekly (easier planning for students in terms of usage) and, if deemed necessary, can also be targeted for using learning-specific applications. The American University of Afghanistan (AUAF) is taking a similar approach. While students without a 4G connection or with low network availability may still be unable to partake

who are doing practical lab-based work. These courses require physical presence which I believe has no pragmatic alternative. These will, sadly, have to be delayed. The idea of replacing lab-based work with "theory labs" is akin to condemning the student with a low-skilled setup.

Oddly, now seems an ideal time to remind ourselves that exams are not the best way to assess students. Term papers (plagiarism checked), application-based essays, and case studies with critical reasoning better fit an andragogy framework, corresponding to the different stages of Bloom's taxonomy of thinking. Those without access to a PC/broadband internet can hand-write on paper, take photos using a smartphone and email the photos to the faculty using the smartphone and mobile internet (we have been entertaining this approach for

in online classes (if relocated for such purposes). I shall leave that question for another discussion.

Surely, the aforementioned approaches do not ensure integration of every single student. The idea is to transit to a system that can integrate most students across the country. In the end, I do not believe we will have a fully equitable solution within such a short time span, but we can try our earnest to ensure apt learning transfers take place. The biggest contention of not being able to integrate everyone is that it will exacerbate inequality in a scenario where many universities are already unable to equip students with the necessary skillset for the job market. The haves remain shielded even in attaining knowledge. But a successful transition can help many students to not lose time, especially when alternative solutions are a possibility.



Smartphone-centric learning can be an important part of the shift to online classes.

STAR PHOTO

in it, many others will be able to.

### The smartphone issue

In an ideal world, we would be able to provide temporary access to smartphones/laptops to students who need them, as being done in several western universities. But suggesting such an attempt in Bangladesh feels like too much to ask for. If no other mechanism can be accommodated to bridge the gap, the controversial and non-equity decision would be to give such students the option to defer the remaining (and future lockdown period) semester (exempt of any enrolment fees).

### Peer-to-peer learning partners

The simple idea is to partner a student with proper resources (laptop, good internet) with another student with weaker resources (smartphone, weaker internet). It is the responsibility of the better-equipped student to aid and keep his/her learning partner regularly updated on class proceedings. Such collaboration is essential for learning and would immensely help in present times.

The second set of students are those

students in Australia without a laptop). If, however, exams must be taken, there are online platforms (such as Examplify) where students can sit for exams online using smartphones. The UGC can step in and provide subscriptions to the more premium platforms (as they have done for Zoom). If cheating is a concern, these platforms enable you to randomise your questions and the order of appearance. Collusion is, unfortunately, something we cannot avoid entirely but the lockdown itself should minimise that. Now is not the time to aim for perfection in assessment, rather a time to focus on empathy and integration. It is also important to remember to provide extended adequate time to students for these online exams, and opportunities for re-sits or alternatives.

Finally, there is the dreaded issue of tuition. Should students enrolled in online sessions have to pay the same tuition fees as physical classes under the current circumstances? Reduced tuition fees may enable students to attain improved connectivity to perform better

Overall, the entire situation has to be dealt with ample empathy for the students' circumstances and on a university-to-university, course-to-course basis. The mental health of the students also needs to be kept under constant consideration. Coordination by the management and faculty members—ideally with a monitoring system in place—will be the key. Understandably, such a transition will be difficult and will require time to acclimatise; till then, a lot of the classes will be of sub-par quality. Some students may not even be able to adapt to such a drastically different learning experience; their needs will have to be catered to as well. This will be a learning curve for both the faculty members and the students, where all stakeholders will have to put in ample effort. These are extraordinary times, which requires us to excel in extraordinary (and hopefully temporary) measures, and I believe collaboration will pave a cleaner path.

Adnan M S Fakir is a PhD candidate in economics at the University of Western Australia and a Senior Lecturer (on study leave) at BRAC University. Email: adnanfakir@gmail.com

# Three priorities in the fight against Covid-19



POONAM KHETRAPAL SINGH

THE WHO South-East Asia Region is entering a new phase in its pandemic response. In recent weeks, the spread of Covid-19 in the region has slowed, due in large part to the unprecedented

physical distancing measures that countries implemented early and aggressively. Several member states are now preparing to safely transition towards a "new normal" in which social and economic life can function amid low disease transmission. To do that successfully, countries must continue to be bold, decisive and mobilise the full power of their whole-of-government, whole-of-society approaches.

Our challenge is immense. Across the globe, the spread of Covid-19 continues to cause disease, death and disruption. It has pushed even the most advanced health systems to the brink. The crude mortality ratio for Covid-19 is estimated to be upwards of 3 percent, but can change from country to country, and even within countries. Key variables include access to care and the availability of testing.

The Region's member states must continue to take evidence-informed action and conduct careful risk assessments prior to making decisions on winding back public health and social measures. Among other factors, due consideration should

be given to the local epidemiology of Covid-19, including identified hotspots and clusters, and the capacity of systems and responders to find, isolate and care for cases, and quarantine contacts.

Whatever a country's current transmission scenario, there can be no illusions: We are in this for the long haul. In what will be an ongoing struggle against Covid-19, member state strategies must be clear, comprehensive and cover immediate and long-term needs. Three priorities must chart the path ahead: control and suppress spread, strengthen and maintain health services, and support each other to stay safe, healthy and well.

To control and suppress spread, we must take the fight to the virus. Active case detection, isolation, testing and contact tracing can control the virus. Should community transmission occur, these are vital to suppressing it. Strengthening surveillance and contact tracing in particular will help national and local authorities to rapidly adapt to evolving outbreaks, whether moving from one case to a cluster of cases, or from a cluster of cases to no cases.

Agility and innovation will be crucial, especially at the sub-national level, across borders and with mobile populations. For areas with limited transmission, responders must focus on finding and isolating all cases, providing them with appropriate care, and tracing, quarantining and supporting all contacts. Where sustained transmission occurs, they must aggressively slow and reduce it to manageable clusters, for which they may

consider reintroducing physical distancing measures in a way that minimises negative impacts.

To strengthen health services, all countries must first protect health workers. WHO continues to work with governments, industry and the Pandemic Supply Chain Network to overcome global shortages of personal protective equipment. It is imperative that health workers have the gowns, gloves, medical masks and eye protection required to save lives and avoid infection.

Countries must continue to expand isolation and ICU capacity, while also rationalising it. By networking Covid-19 treatment facilities, health leaders and administrators can better share the burden among facilities. By implementing clear triage protocols, they will ensure all patients with severe manifestations are provided safe, rapid admission to intensive care units. Rigorous infection prevention and control is needed to prevent health facilities from facilitating transmission.

Ensuring essential health services are maintained is vital. We must not only reduce mortality from Covid-19 itself, but also from vaccine-preventable diseases and other treatable conditions that can increase when health systems are overwhelmed. WHO will continue to support countries in the Region to implement key WHO guidelines on maintaining essential health services as they directly respond to Covid-19.

To achieve these outcomes, member states must mobilise a whole-of-government, whole-of-society approach

that highlights each person's role in supporting one another to stay safe, healthy and well. Regular hand-washing, coughing or sneezing into one's elbow, and avoiding contact with people with flu-like symptoms are crucial to staying healthy. So too is following local and national guidance on physical distancing. Avoid using tobacco, alcohol and other substances that impair the immune system and damage health. Support health workers and say no to stigma.

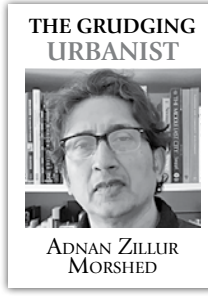
We must also stay well. Look after your mental health and be supportive of others. It is natural to feel sad, stressed, confused, scared or angry during a crisis. Helpful coping strategies include getting sufficient rest, exercise, eating well, avoiding harmful substances and staying in close contact with family and friends. WHO will continue to provide accessible and actionable information on coping with Covid-19-related stress and anxiety, and will support all member states to strengthen mental health services as part of the Covid-19 response.

We must continue to stand together to tackle what is the greatest public health challenge of a generation. The Region's strategy to control and suppress spread, strengthen and maintain health services, and support each other to stay safe, healthy and well, will help all countries to save lives and minimise impact. Our mission is clear. Our challenge is great. Together, forward in the fight against Covid-19.

Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh is the WHO Regional Director for South-East Asia.



# Density is not the problem – lack of public health and social justice is



ADNAN ZILLUR MORSHED

**THE GRUDGING URBANIST**  
IN America, one of the politically charged reactions to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic has been the denigration of urban population density. Many pundits are arguing that New York City's high density is the root cause of the city's extremely high Covid-19-related deaths (13,538 as of May 2, with another 5,387 as probable). The contention has been that high population density creates unhygienic, dark, and airless spaces, breeding disease and enabling easy human-to-human viral transmission. The numbers seem to support the idea. While New York City's average density is 28,000 people per sq. mi., which is the highest in the USA, Manhattan's is over 70,000 people per sq. mi.

Whether this argument has merit or not, it is giving rise to a new generation of isolationist policies and practices, parochial politics along the old American urban-rural fault line and, in general, anti-urban sentiments. There are chances that "social distancing" may be turned into a covert "social hygiene" policy of further separating different economic classes, minority groups, and the urban poor. As high-density cities become the ground zero of the pandemic blame game, advocacies for suburbanisation are likely to animate post-pandemic debates on remedial urbanism in America.

But to think that urban population density is the cause of high death rate in New York City is both premature and misleading. Let's look at some comparable cities. Hong Kong's population density is 18,492 per sq. mi., even though some pockets there, such as the Mong Kok district, have some of the most densely populated places on Earth with 330,000 people crammed inside each square mile. Yet, Hong Kong has recorded just 1,014 confirmed coronavirus cases and only 4 deaths. Let's not forget, Hong Kong is only 571 miles south of Wuhan, where the coronavirus is believed to have originated. Why did the virus not have a devastating effect on Hong Kong despite its high urban population density?

Consider also Seoul's astounding case: 637 confirmed patients with coronavirus infection and only 2 deaths against its population density of 45,000 per sq. mi. Tokyo has recorded 141 coronavirus-related deaths against its average population density

of 12,296 per sq. mi., even though, like Manhattan and Hong Kong, some areas of Tokyo have extremely high density.

Hong Kong's high urban density is actually not the problem. The 2003 severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) outbreak here killed 299 people. This experience led to the creation of robust public health infrastructure for pandemic preparedness and a concerted social campaign to promote a collective sense of personal hygiene as a bulwark against any future pandemic. The result couldn't be more obvious in 2020.

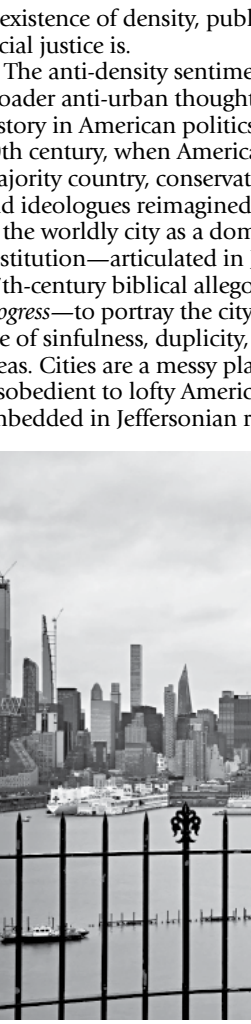
To blame population density for New York City's coronavirus apocalypse without understanding what goes on in the city's impoverished neighbourhoods is to overlook how urban poverty, alienation, isolation, ghettoisation, and lack of access to quality healthcare make disenfranchised communities more vulnerable to pandemics. An example is the Bronx, New York City's poorest borough where residents have died at a rate double that of the city. Mohammed Jafor, the Bangladeshi yellow cab driver, whose son is now a double major in economics and history at Harvard, used to live in an apartment in the Bronx. Most possibly contracting coronavirus while carrying passengers, Jafor died on April 1, a heartbreaking story covered by CNN. Tragedy also struck the family before. His wife died in 2016 from cancer. Jafor's two sons and a daughter are now orphans in the Bronx.

It is very easy to blame the congested and poor world of the Bronx for Covid-19 to have a field day to kill people, as long as one isn't considering its higher poverty rate (28.4) than the other four boroughs (average 18.4) of New York City. Immigrants make up 37 percent of the total population of the Bronx, where median household income was a paltry USD 38,000 in 2018, much lower than any other boroughs of the city. Racial and ethnic disparities in healthcare in the Bronx are well-documented. The poor of the Bronx, in their encounters with the borough's health-care system, stated: "Ghetto care means long waiting times—feeling like an abandoned dog."

Poverty-stricken neighbourhoods, physically-demanding menial jobs that often don't permit social distancing, and preexisting public-health dysfunctionality in the Bronx made it a Covid-19 killing field. From the soaring tower of privilege, it is not only hard to see how the huddled masses struggle against titanic odds, but also easy to blame them for their misery. Urban density is not the problem; a failure to understand the beneficial

coexistence of density, public health, and social justice is.

The anti-density sentiment is a trope for broader anti-urban thoughts that have a long history in American politics. Since the early 20th century, when America became an urban-majority country, conservative politicians and ideologues reimagined the Puritan view of the worldly city as a domain of moral destitution—articulated in John Bunyan's 17th-century biblical allegory *The Pilgrim's Progress*—to portray the city as a dangerous site of sinfulness, duplicity, and radical ideas. Cities are a messy place, teacherously disobedient to lofty American ideals, embedded in Jeffersonian rural goodness.



To think that urban population density is the cause of high Covid-19 death rate in New York City is both premature and misleading.

PHOTO: MIKE SEGAR/REUTERS

Congested cities are where the urban poor burdens the American coffers. Cities are unhygienic melting pots where the immigrants bring their alien cultures, polluting and ailing the American body. "Real America," as Sarah Palin would say, is found in small-town Main Street. Current conservative criticisms of dense cities as the killing field of Covid-19 are deeply rooted in anti-urban fears. The conservative distaste for dense cities needs to be contextualised in how America's urban-rural divide works politically. According to a 2018 Pew Research Center study, urban areas have a higher concentration of Democrats (62 percent), whereas rural areas Republicans (54 percent). In response to a

question as to whether immigrants threaten American customs and values, 78 percent of rural Republicans said yes. The answer is engrained in a complex cocktail of anti-urban paranoia, xenophobic biases, anti-intellectualism, and nativist fascinations with racial purity. To dispel the "urban-density-is-the-bad-guy" myth, it has become imperative to re-experience a "how-the-other-half-lives" moment in 2020. The photojournalist, New York City police reporter, and social reformer Jacob Riis' controversial namesake study exposed the squalid living conditions of New York City's uber-congested tenement housing. Riis's book, published in 1890,

city's public-health infrastructures, focusing instead on portraying the city as a virus-trap, from which it is best to escape. Under the current White House leadership, "social distancing" may become an urban policy to cleanse what Jane Jacobs, the author of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961), called "weird wisdom"—a type of community-oriented urban norms, behaviours, and quirks that people develop while living in close proximity to one another. The constellation of weird wisdom attracts to the city what economist Richard Florida called the "creative class" that propels the economy of a country.

More than anybody else, Jacobs celebrated human density as the bedrock of urban liveability. If Urban Renewal was a dominant post-World War II planning "theory" of cleansing the inner city poverty, decay, and congestion, New Urbanism, to a great extent inspired by Jacobs' planning-from-below ethos, began to champion from the 1970s population density as a catalyst for building vibrant communities.

By the turn of the 21st century, urban density became conventional wisdom to stop carbon-footprint-magnifying urban sprawl and inspire walkability that many consider the key tenets of urban sustainability. Density makes public transportation economically, socially, and geographically viable.

The devastation that Covid-19 wrought in New York City is giving rise to a quick-fix anti-density argument against all these sustainable ideas that were generated, debated, and practiced in this very city. Social distancing can become a powerful political ideology to diffuse density in the city as a covert way to rob it of its dynamic density dividends. More dangerously, ideologues and demagogues will try to exploit the pandemic crisis to promote pre-pandemic politics of isolationism, anti-immigration, and wall-building in the name of stopping the spread of the virus. But, in reality, they want to fortify the citadel of the privileged and their economic safety and political power. Isolationism facilitates predatory capitalism by making the less privileged more invisible and more voiceless.

Urban population density, fused with social justice, a robust culture of hygiene, and pandemic preparedness, should continue to be the foundation of sustainable cities. Adnan Zillur Morshed is an architect, architectural historian, and urbanist. He teaches in Washington, DC. His book *Impossible Heights: Skyscrapers, Flight, and the Master Builder* (2015) has studied American urbanisation in the early 20th century. Email: morshed@cua.edu

# How faith actors can help fight Covid-19 crisis

AISHA BINTE ABDUR ROB

THE catastrophic public health impact of the Covid-19 crisis has sent the world reeling, but its full ramifications have only begun to unfold. The pandemic is shaking the foundations of economic, social and cultural institutions across societies. Amidst this turmoil, the historical instances of faith actors playing a vital stabilising role during global crises offer a beacon of hope. Thus, while faith actors have not always had a positive impact, history entrusts them with a critical part in healing the world from the ravages of this pandemic. The expansive social roles of religious organisations in Bangladesh must, therefore, be recognised, integrating their wide-ranging contributions—from the material to the spiritual—into the social response to this pandemic, underscoring the profound curative power of faith in the gravest times of suffering.

The Covid-19 pandemic is having an extreme impact on lives and livelihoods in Bangladesh, threatening some of the remarkable gains made in the decades of progress towards development and social cohesion. Religion can play a crucial mitigative role at all levels of this impact, from the micro-level role of religious actors, in offering individuals spiritual and material relief, to the macro-level contributions of religious organisations, in meeting broader crisis-induced humanitarian and socioeconomic challenges. This potential has been realised in Bangladesh since the early years of the Liberation War in 1971, when the country

was struck by devastating cyclones, floods, and famines. In tandem, various religious organisations have assumed longstanding roles in evacuation efforts, humanitarian aid and service delivery during crises, in addition to wider efforts towards social development, from advancing gender equality to ensuring minority rights' protection. It is thus essential to draw on the experiences and insights of the faith world in shaping the social response during and beyond the lifecycle of the Covid-19 crisis.

The lessons from the past and contemplations on the future of the pandemic can only be actionable where these are adapted to the specific nature of this crisis. It is thus important to understand that the Covid-19 crisis reintroduces old challenges in serious magnitude and also poses unique problems, which will require faith actors to reaffirm their social commitment and reorient themselves to thwart the novel threats to Bangladeshi society.

With a backdrop of a massive humanitarian crisis, the onslaught of Covid-19 brings unprecedented economic and social challenges in its wake. The crisis has already struck at the Bangladesh economy's core pillars of ready-made garments and remittances. With the spate of order cancellations from its major European and American buyers, the Bangladesh RMG sector already faces an estimated loss of USD 1.5 billion. Similarly, the loss of migrant workers' wages due to global economic slowdown will mean plummeting remittances, with dire consequences for families in rural Bangladesh which depend heavily on the remittance

inflow. The overall economic impact of this crisis will not only decelerate the growth of the economy but also exacerbate poverty and social inequality, as reported by the World Economic Forum.

The marked gender dimension of the pandemic particularly exposes women and girls to risks of harm and deprivation. Entrenched gender stereotypes are likely to confine them to housework and caregiving roles and may lead to further gendered harms such as sexual exploitation, early and forced marriage and early pregnancy, both in the present and post-pandemic scenes, as Plan International and UNESCO have warned. Moreover, both Ain o Salish Kendra and Manusher Jonno Foundation have reported rising levels of domestic violence against women since the onset of the lockdown.

Tensions are also simmering within various social pockets as the crisis threatens to deepen existing fissures in our society, accentuating class and group interests and pitting sects against one another. From the propagation of incendiary views on the causes of the Covid-19 crisis to the fomenting of unrest through hate-mongering, the bonds of cohesion in society are being assailed on multiple fronts.

Faith actors in Bangladesh can mitigate the devastating impact of the Covid-19 crisis on all its fronts, using both time-tested and innovative approaches. Vital religious resources are contained in the holy texts and jurisprudences of different faiths, which can both inspire and instruct adherents in times of hardship. This can ensure continued moral development and active citizenship

among followers and also alert them against misguided approaches to religion which are inimical to social wellbeing.

Similarly, religious practices aimed at alleviating the sufferings of the vulnerable can be adapted to address the dire needs arising from this crisis. On the other hand, the practice of religion can be maintained despite necessary public health measures, thereby continuing to deliver spiritual and moral guidance to the adherents. This can be done through creative adaptations in practice, the aid of technology as well as the endorsement of hitherto less-practiced forms of worship that conform to health-based prescriptions.

Methods of community mobilisation and thought leadership relied on by religious leaders during past crises can be repurposed for the present times. Religious actors can work, both individually and institutionally, to tap into their extensive networks that grant them greater access to the remotest parts of the country than is often available to state and other non-state actors. Similarly, as faith leaders are highly revered within their communities, their efforts towards maintaining public health standards and fostering social cohesion are likely to be efficacious.

Established partnerships can be reenergised, and new ones forged, to deliver stronger and broader responses against the crisis. An interfaith dimension to collaborations between religious organisations can greatly enhance social cohesion, and partnering with non-religious entities will also be highly beneficial. Religious actors' association with state organs offers important advantages in

terms of resources and security, while state organs can benefit from expanded access and increased legitimacy vis-à-vis religious constituencies. Religious organisations' engagement with their non-religious counterparts can also create larger resource pools for building more robust responses and establish a mutual support system in terms of distinct expertise and unique pathways of access. It is thus essential to draw on the experiences, insights, and vast capacity of the faith world in facing this pandemic and looking to the future.

The key social role of religious organisations is affirmed by the work undertaken through research collaboration between the Centre for Peace and Justice, Brac University, and the World Faiths Development Dialogue, Georgetown University, USA—which explores the faith dimensions of development and social cohesion in Bangladesh. The research identifies productive interactions between the faith world and the development sector and lays important stepping stones to recognising the expansive roles of religious organisations in Bangladeshi society. Such work now takes on renewed urgency and greater significance, as the existing and emerging dimensions of this pandemic reveal the importance of including faith actors in charting the course through this turbulent time and reaching safe harbour in the post-Covid-19 world.

Aisha Binte Abdur Rob is a Research Associate at the Centre for Peace and Justice, Brac University. The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the positions of Brac University or the World Faiths Development Dialogue (Georgetown University).

**ON THIS DAY IN HISTORY**

**WORLD WAR II IN EUROPE ENDED**  
May 8, 1945

Following Germany's unconditional surrender, World War II in Europe officially ended at midnight on this day in 1945, although the war in the Pacific continued until the Japanese surrender in September.

**CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH**

**ACROSS**  
1 Title holder  
6 Skate park sights  
11 Critic, at times  
12 Honolulu hello  
13 Make amends  
14 Angry with  
15 Wall defacer  
17 Try out  
18 Pendulum path  
19 Like old streets  
22 Draw  
23 More pious  
24 "John Brown's Body" poet  
25 Illinois city  
27 Ryan of movies  
30 "You busy?"  
31 Swearing vow

**DOWN**  
32 Tough wood  
33 Zhivago's portrayer  
35 Map area  
38 Brighten  
39 Comic strip unit  
40 "Message received"  
41 Glossy  
42 Canary chow  
1 Copying  
8 Electronic component  
9 Star Fleet weapon  
10 Quite full  
16 Canadian dollar coins  
20 Fan setting  
21 Drill part  
24 Frilly wrap  
25 Mail-related  
26 Flammable gas  
27 Sahara sight  
28 Ready for print  
29 Errand runners  
30 Shocked sounds  
34 Balm ingredient  
36 Casual shirt  
37 Canadian grazer

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**BEETLE BAILEY** BY MORT WALKER

**YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS**

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

**BABY BLUES** BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

# Farm fish in Bagerhat dying as water level falls

### Farmers hesitating to sell mature fish as prices low during Covid-19 shutdown

PARTHA CHAKRABORTY, Bagerhat

Cultivated fishes including carp and shrimp in a number of enclosures in Bagerhat are dying due to scarcity of water amid the hot weather prevailing for the last couple of weeks.

There is no way to prevent the situation if there is not sufficient rain soon as conventional medicines are not working, fisheries officials say. Thousands of people in the coastal district depend on fish farming for their livelihood.

Officials have suggested selling out the already matured fishes, especially the large ones, to minimize the loss but many fish farmers are hesitating as the price is low amid the shutdown during the Covid-19 situation.

"As the white carp of my fish enclosure started

dying several days ago, I applied some medicines including oxygen tablets but to no effect," said Rustam Ali of Narendrapur village of Kachua upazila.

Thousands of fish farmers of Bagerhat Sadar, Kuchua, Rampal, Mongla, Chitalmari and Mollahat upazilas are facing the same problem as they kept matured fish in enclosures for weeks to sell for good profit during the month of Ramadan.

"I failed to prevent death of fish by using the various medicines. As I went to the fisheries officer, he suggested selling out the fish soon, or arrange a shade over the enclosure and bring water into it from the canal or river with a machine," said Hakim Sheikh of Nawapara village of Sadar upazila.

But there is hardly any scope for bringing water with machine as canals and rivers have dried too, said several farmers of Sangdia and Afra areas in Kachua upazila.

Bagerhat District Fisheries Officer Dr Khaled Kanak said the water levels in the fish enclosures see drastic fall due to a less rainfall during the ongoing summer.

"As a result, fish are dying and most of the surviving fish in the enclosures became weak. As oxygen tablets or conventional medicines available in the market are not working, the only way to save the fish is to supply water by machine or any other method," he said.

He advised the farmers to sell out the big fish from the enclosures.



Fish floats dead at an enclosure of Narendrapur village in Kachua upazila of Bagerhat.

PHOTO: STAR



Shykh Seraj discusses with some rural Rwandan farmers at the eastern part of the country.

PHOTO: HRIDOYE MATI O MANUSH

# Desert locust won't invade Bangladesh

### Says expert from Italy

SHYKH SERAJ

On April 18, a swarm of insects were seen in Cox's Bazar's Teknaf upazila which raised concerns over locust attack amid the outbreak of coronavirus. The news really shocked me as food security is already a concern during the ongoing crisis across Bangladesh and the entire world. The government is taking different initiatives to manage the ongoing crisis. Meanwhile, the arrival of locusts in our country was certainly a panicky news. The government immediately sent a team of experts, comprising of plant protection experts, entomologists and agricultural scientists, to Teknaf to identify the species of the insects. After investigation, experts said the insects were 'spotted grasshoppers'.

On May 1, I contacted Senior Locust Forecasting Officer Keith Cressman, who works at United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and currently stationed at the headquarters in Rome, Italy. During the lockdown in Italy, he was at home. We had discussed the issue over a Skype call and he confirmed that it was not the deadly desert locust (*Schistocerca gregaria*). But, before that I sent him some photos of the insect which were seen in Teknaf.

Keith said, there is no chance of its arrival in Bangladesh and seeing the images he said those were not desert locusts. He said these locusts may travel along the border areas of Pakistan and India in June this year but not beyond that. Keith is not only an expert on forecasting but also on migration of the locusts. Because these insects travel very fast from one country to another.

It's a huge relief that the insects which were seen in Teknaf are not destructive at all and farmers have nothing to fear. It only eat leaves of wild plants and do not attack any other common vegetative species. These insects were actually identified as *Aularches miliaris*, belonging to the family of Pyrgomorphidae, a kind of grasshopper.

Since I was overwhelmingly panicked, I asked Keith again, why he feels that this deadly insect won't come to Bangladesh and he gave me three main reasons -- Bangladesh is too far from where the locust swarms are now; they don't travel against the wind and most importantly the habitat and topography. Bangladesh is too wet and green and this environment is not favourable for the desert locusts at all to start living. However, the current situation

and forecast are alarming as locust infestations are expected to extend to other areas in the horn of Africa and southwest Asia. Another generation of breeding will increase the numbers of locust as well. In southwest Asia, hopper groups and bands are present in southern Iran and in Pakistan substantive control operations are continuing. Control operations also continue in Africa. The global forecast says it all- locusts will increase further and extend to different areas.

Dear readers, I would also like to share you about another insect, popularly known as 'Fall Armyworm.'



Shykh Seraj is Bangladesh's pioneer development journalist. He received country's two highest civilian honours, Swadhinata Puroshkar and Ekushey Padak, respectively. He is a BIDS, Ashoka and Bangla Academy Fellow. He also received highest award for agricultural journalism from the United Nations, FAO A.H. Boerma Award, Gusi Peace Prize (Philippines) and many other prestigious accolades at home and abroad. At Channel i, he's the Founder Director and Head of News. He's also Director and Host of Channel i's popular agro-documentary, Hridoye Mati O Manush.

Bangladesh has been suffering because of another insect, mainly at the maize field, known as fall armyworm (FAW). This insect also caused panic and trouble for the farmers. Recently FAO has supplied thousands of pheromone traps to farmers in Bangladesh to support the country in the battle against FAW. FAO representative in Dhaka Robert D Simpson told me that this will help farmers a lot. Gradually FAO plans to assist farmers in the battle against FAW. This invasive pest can cause serious damage to food production. Pheromones are natural compounds that are emitted by female FAW moths to attract male moths for mating. Synthetic compounds that mimic natural FAW pheromones, often referred to as 'lures', are placed in the traps to attract and trap male moths. Moths that are caught are

then counted. From these numbers, farmers can know if FAW is present in their fields and if there is need for any increased scouting. Robert D Simpson told me that FAW has spread very fast in Bangladesh since it was first detected less than two years ago. Although there is no way to eradicate fall armyworm, it can be managed. These pheromone traps are an important way to monitor and control its spread, he says. Keith Cressman gives a different idea on handling FAW. He says after the maize plants are sowed and they grow to the stage of two leaves, farmers can monitor the field and use their hands to destroy numerous eggs, FAW lay on leaves. Although this would be really tough job for a farmer, but its destruction at an early stage would definitely help farmers in the future. Using the pesticide won't kill them as they go deep into the maize and it's difficult for pesticides to reach that deep spot. The hand-method also saves a lot of money that is truly labour-intensive.

The problem of the desert locust mainly lies in the horn of Africa, especially in Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia. Keith Cressman says FAO already sought a fund of 153 million dollars and they have already received 120 million dollars for the control operation to reduce the desert locusts and for relief and rehabilitation as well. They have also found the aerial operation is most effective and sprayed pesticides from helicopters in the affected zones of the affected countries. Besides, FAO has been closely working with the agricultural and other authorities concerned of the affected countries.

Dear readers, we are already challenged by world's most fearsome pandemic Covid-19. Bangladesh government has taken many measures to tackle it and also took plans on how to keep on going for the food production. Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is closely observing the impacts of this deadly virus. On the other hand, the desert locust remains a major threat for food security, in particular for many rural populations who mostly live their life on farming. There is a high cost involved in controlling the invasion and FAO has been working wonderfully well in the affected countries. Although there is no apparent worry that locusts will enter Bangladesh, but we must stay alert and keep communication with FAO as they play a vital role in monitoring and controlling the deadly insect with supreme expertise.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার				
বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ				
খুলনা মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশ হেডকোয়ার্টার্স				
খুলনা				
উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি				
চলতি ২০১৯-২০২০ অর্থ সালে খুলনা মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশ, খুলনার দ্বি-বর্ষিক ১৮টি মেরামত প্রকল্প বাস্তবায়নের জন্য সীলমোহরকৃত খামে প্রকৃত যোগ্যতা সম্পন্ন প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিকট হইতে প্রতিযোগিতামূলক দরপত্র আহবান করা যাইতেছে।				
১।	মন্ত্রণালয়/বিভাগ	বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ।		
২।	সংস্থা	খুলনা মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশ, খুলনা।		
৩।	দরপত্র সম্পাদনকারী প্রধান	কমিশনার, খুলনা মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশ, খুলনা।		
৪।	দরপত্র সম্পাদনকারীর জেলা/সংস্থা	খুলনা মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশ, খুলনা।		
৫।	দরপত্রের সূত্র ও তারিখ	(কেএমপি-ইমারত)/৪(৪৪)২০১৯-২০২০/১৬২৫/ই, তাং ০৪/০৫/২০২০ইং।		
৬।	দরপত্রের পদ্ধতি	উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র।		
৭।	বাজেট এন্ড সোর্স অব ফান্ড	টিএসি এর সুপারিশ অনুমোদনকালে পুলিশ বাজেটের সংশ্লিষ্ট খাত হতে ব্যয় নির্বাহ করা হবে।		
৮।	দরপত্র প্রকাশের তারিখ	১১-০৫-২০২০ইং।		
৯।	দরপত্র সিদ্ধিপ্রাপ্তির সর্বশেষ তারিখ	২৭-০৫-২০২০ইং।		
১০।	দরপত্র জমা প্রদানের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	২৮-০৫-২০২০ইং, বেলা ১২-৩০ ঘটিকা।		
১১।	দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ ও সময়	২৮-০৫-২০২০ইং, বেলা ১৫-০০ ঘটিকায় দরপত্রদাতা বা মনোনীত প্রতিদ্বন্দ্বিতাদের উপস্থিতিতে (যদি থাকে)।		
১২।	দরপত্র মূল্যায়নের তারিখ ও সময়	০২-০৬-২০২০ইং বেলা ১২-০০ ঘটিকা।		
১৩।	দরপত্র সম্পাদনকারী অফিস ও ঠিকানা	খুলনা মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশ, সদর দপ্তর, খুলনা।		
১৪।	দরপত্র প্রাপ্তির স্থান	সকল ডেপুটি পুলিশ কমিশনার এর অফিস, কেএমপি, খুলনা এবং খুলনা মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশ সদর দপ্তরের ইমারত শাখা।		
১৫।	দরপত্র খোলার স্থান	সদর দপ্তর, কেএমপি, খুলনা।		
১৬।	দরপত্রদাতার যোগ্যতা দরপত্রের সহিত যে সকল কাগজপত্র জমা দিতে হইবে	হালনাগাদ ট্রেড লাইসেন্স, আয়কর সার্টিফিকেট, ভাট রেজিস্ট্রেশন সার্টিফিকেট, ব্যাংক সলভেন্সী সার্টিফিকেট ও সংশ্লিষ্ট কাজের অভিজ্ঞতা সার্টিফিকেট, নাগরিকত্ব সার্টিফিকেট/এনআইডি কার্ড ইত্যাদির সত্যায়িত ফটোকপি।		
১৭।	দরপত্র আহ্বান কর্তৃপক্ষের নাম	কমিশনার, কেএমপি, খুলনা।		
১৮।	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্মকর্তার নাম ও পদবী	কমিশনার এর পক্ষে শেখ মনিরুজ্জামান মির্হা, ডেপুটি পুলিশ কমিশনার (সদর) (অঃ দাঃ), কেএমপি, খুলনা।		
১৯।	কাজের বিবরণী/কাজের নামঃ			
ক্রঃ নং	প্রকল্পের নাম	সিদ্ধিপ্রাপ্তির মূল্য	দরপত্র জামানতের পরিমাণ	কাজ সমাপ্তির সময়
১।	কেএমপি, খুলনার খানজাহান আলী থানার ভবন মেরামত।	৭৫০/= টাকা	৩০,০০০/= টাকা	৩০ দিন
২।	কেএমপি, খুলনার জোড়াসোটে ট্রাফিক অফিসের ২য় তলার দক্ষিণ পার্শ্ব প্রশাসনিক অফিসের ২(দুই)টি কম মেরামত ও সংস্কার।	৪০০/= টাকা	৮,১০০/= টাকা	৩০ দিন
৩।	কেএমপি সদর দপ্তরের নিচতলার উত্তর পার্শ্বের অবশিষ্ট ফ্লোর টাইলস স্থাপনসহ গার্ডরুম ও বাথরুম মেরামত।	৪০০/= টাকা	১২,৫০০/= টাকা	৩০ দিন
৪।	কেএমপি, খুলনার জোড়াসোটে ট্রাফিক অফিস ভবনের নিচতলার মাঝখানে অবস্থিত টিআই (গ্রন্থাগার) এর অফিসের ২(দুই)টি কম মেরামতসহ বৈদ্যুতিক কাজ।	৪০০/= টাকা	৭,৫০০/= টাকা	৩০ দিন
৫।	কেএমপি, খুলনার জোড়াসোটে ট্রাফিক অফিস ভবনের নিচতলার দক্ষিণ পার্শ্বের অতিরিক্ত উপ-পুলিশ কমিশনার এর ব্যবহারের জন্য ১ (এক)টি কম মেরামত ও বাথরুম নির্মাণসহ বৈদ্যুতিক কাজ।	৪০০/= টাকা	৮,৮০০/= টাকা	৩০ দিন
৬।	কেএমপি'র খুলনা থানার গুসি কোয়ার্টার ভবন মেরামত (০২টি ভবন) (সংশোধিত)	৪০০/= টাকা	৭,৫০০/= টাকা	৩০ দিন
৭।	কেএমপি, খুলনার খানজাহান আলী থানার গুসি কোয়ার্টার মেরামত।	৪০০/= টাকা	৮,৮০০/= টাকা	৩০ দিন
৮।	কেএমপি, খুলনার ট্রেডবুল পুলিশ ফাঁড়ি মেরামত/সংস্কার কাজ।	৪০০/= টাকা	১৫,০০০/= টাকা	৩০ দিন
৯।	কেএমপি, খুলনার বানিয়াখামার পুলিশ ফাঁড়ির চত্বর উচ্চরক্ষণসহ অস্ত্রাগারের কলপাসিবল গেইট নির্মাণ কাজ।	৪০০/= টাকা	৭,৫০০/= টাকা	৩০ দিন
১০।	কেএমপি, খুলনার মাহেশ্বরপাশা পুলিশ ফাঁড়ির পিছনে লিচু জায়গার মাটি ভরাট।	৪০০/= টাকা	৭,৫০০/= টাকা	৩০ দিন
১১।	কেএমপি, খুলনার নিরাদা পুলিশ ফাঁড়ির সীমানা প্রাচীর মেরামত, রাস্তাসহ চত্বর উচ্চরক্ষণ কাজ।	৪০০/= টাকা	১৯,০০০/= টাকা	৩০ দিন
১২।	কেএমপি, খুলনার সোনাডাঙ্গা থানার অস্ত্রাগার ২য় তলা ক্রিকটিং সাপোর্ট সেন্টার মেরামত।	৪০০/= টাকা	৮,৫০০/= টাকা	৩০ দিন
১৩।	কেএমপি, খুলনার জোড়াসোটে পুলিশ কোয়ার্টারের জন্য ১(এক)টি সিউনওয়েলসহ সাবমার্সিবল পাম্প স্থাপন।	৪০০/= টাকা	৫,০০০/= টাকা	৩০ দিন
১৪।	কেএমপি, খুলনার খালিশপুর পুলিশ ফাঁড়ির সীমানা প্রাচীর মেরামত ও গেইট সংস্কার।	৪০০/= টাকা	৩,৭০০/= টাকা	৩০ দিন
১৫।	কেএমপি, খুলনার খালিশপুর পুলিশ ফাঁড়ির গার্ডরুম (রানার রুম) মেরামতসহ সংস্কার।	৪০০/= টাকা	৮,৫০০/= টাকা	৩০ দিন
১৬।	কেএমপি, খুলনার বৈকালী পুলিশ বাস মেরামত।	৪০০/= টাকা	২,৪০০/= টাকা	৩০ দিন
১৭।	কেএমপি পুলিশ লাইনের সেমি পাকা অফিস ভবন মেরামত।	৭৫০/= টাকা	৪৬,০০০/= টাকা	৩০ দিন
১৮।	(২) কেএমপি, খুলনার বয়রা পুলিশ লাইনের ১নং ফোর্স ব্যারাকের টয়লেট ও বাথরুম মেরামত (টাইলস অপরিবর্তিত রেখে শুধু স্যানিটেরী ফিটিংসে সংশোধিত)।	৭৫০/= টাকা	৩৭,৫০০/= টাকা	৩০ দিন
২০।	বিশেষ জ্ঞাতব্যঃ			
ক)	ব্যক্তি বা প্রতিষ্ঠানের স্বত্বাধিকারীর স্বাক্ষরযুক্ত প্যাডে আবেদনপূর্বক ডেপুটি পুলিশ কমিশনার (উত্তর/দক্ষিণ/ভিবি/ট্রাফিক/প্রসিকিউশন/আরসিডি) এর অফিস এবং খুলনা মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশ সদর দপ্তরের ইমারত শাখা হইতে অফিস চলাকালীন সময়ে দরপত্র সংগ্রহ করা যাইবে।			
খ)	দরপত্র সংক্রান্ত অন্যান্য তথ্যাবলী সংগ্রহকালে নিম্নস্বাক্ষরকারীর কার্যালয় হইতে জানা যাইবে।			
গ)	অনুমোদিত বরাদ্দের আলোকে কার্যাদেশ প্রদান করা হইবে। এতদসংক্রান্ত কোন আপত্তি গ্রহণযোগ্য হইবে না।			
ঘ)	দরপত্র উন্মুক্ত সময়ে মধ্যে কার্য সম্পাদন করিতে হইবে।			
ঙ)	পৃথীত দরনাতাকে কার্যাদেশ প্রদানের পূর্বে অনুমোদনকৃত দরের ১০% (শতকরা দশ ভাগ) নিরাপত্তা জামানত কমিশনার, কেএমপি, খুলনার অনুকূলে ব্যাংক ড্রাফট/পে-অর্ডারের মাধ্যমে জমা দিতে হইবে এবং ৩০০/= (তিনশত) টাকার নন-জুডিশিয়াল সত্যাপন চুক্তিপত্র সম্পাদন করিতে হইবে।			
চ)	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্তৃপক্ষ কোন কারণ ব্যতিরেকে দরপত্র বাতিলের ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।			
<b>শেখ মনিরুজ্জামান মির্হা</b> ডেপুটি পুলিশ কমিশনার (সদর) (অঃ দাঃ) কমিশনার এর পক্ষে খুলনা মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশ খুলনা				
জিডি-৮০২				



## Debate over contracts amid resumption uncertainty

ANISUR RAHMAN

Nearly two months after the postponement of the Bangladesh Premier League in light of the coronavirus outbreak, the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has been stuck in a state of indecision about whether to resume the league even as a majority of clubs have been clamouring for the season to be cancelled.

If the league is cancelled, most clubs want local players' contracts for this season to be carried over to the next as teams have each played only six of their league 24 matches.

After failing to take a concrete decision, the professional football league committee referred the matter to the BFF executive committee, with the recommendation that the league be resumed at a suitable time after taking the clubs' opinions into account.

But the wait for a decisive move is set to continue as the BFF secretariat has yet to decide when its executive committee will sit.



captain Jamal Bhuiyan has left it up to the BFF to decide whether to resume or cancel the league this season, but he is against the clubs' intention of carrying forward current contracts.

"I think it is for the BFF to decide if they should cancel the league," Jamal told The Daily Star over phone from Denmark.

"All players have different contracts for different lengths. If a contract expires in August and the league is ongoing at that time, well then I think either the club should offer a new contract or the player should be able to sign for a new club and that is actually FIFA law," Jamal said.

It may be mentioned here

that Jamal usually signs contracts with clubs for a certain period on the basis of monthly salary like foreign players, but local footballers are signed by clubs on a season by season basis and they are bound to play for their clubs until the season is over.

According to FIFA regulations, if the season is declared to be over, there is no scope for clubs to retain players on the same contracts for the new season.

However, according to FIFA's special regulations in the wake of Covid-19, players must complete the current season for their respective clubs if the season is delayed due to the pandemic.

National team and Abahani

striker Nabib Newaj Jibon is also against the clubs' desire to retain players on old contracts but is ready to sacrifice a portion of his salary this season.

"I don't know why everyone is in such a hurry. Only four months of this year have gone. Eight months are left. Clubs can easily wait another two or three months, then take a final decision," said Jibon. "We have already played half the season and the league was supposed to be completed before Eid-ul-Adha. The players need new contracts in the new season but there may have to be a mutual understanding with individual players regarding old contracts."

Jamal also wants the return of the domestic league for the sake of the national team, which is supposed to play four fixtures of the Qatar World Cup qualifiers.

"It will have a big impact on the national team's performance if there is no domestic competition ahead of the World Cup Qualifying fixtures," Jamal said. "I think domestic competition is a key factor and is very important not only for people in Bangladesh but also so that we can show the rest of the world that Bangladesh have a great league with a lot of competition. When there is a lot of competition, the national team's level also is lifted."

The 30-year-old left for Denmark on March 26 after being confined for nearly two weeks at the club tent following the lockdown in Bangladesh. He is now roaming freely in Denmark and practising regularly as the situation there is comparatively better.

"Denmark had been shut down for the last 2 months and is not taking any risks. I'm keeping myself active with daily fitness activities," said Jamal.

## Bundesliga to restart behind closed doors from May 16

REUTERS, Berlin



The Bundesliga season will restart on May 16 after a suspension of more than two months, the German Football League (DFL) said on Thursday, becoming the first European league to resume amid the coronavirus epidemic.

The DFL said the season would restart under the terms of a strict health protocol that bans fans from the stadium, with six games on Saturday, including the high-profile Ruhr valley derby between Borussia Dortmund and Schalke 04.

The derby and four other matches will start at 1330GMT while Eintracht Frankfurt will host Borussia Moenchengladbach at 1630GMT. League leaders Bayern Munich face Union Berlin in one of two games on Sunday while one more will be played on Monday.

"The interest (globally) is big. I see reports from across the world that we are the first major league to return," DFL CEO Christian Seifert told a news conference.

"This is only possible because we have the privilege to live in a country with one of the most modern health systems in the world."

He was speaking by video conference after a meeting with first and second division clubs following the government's decision on Wednesday to give the green light for the Bundesliga to restart in the second half of May and throw a financial lifeline to the cash-strapped clubs.

Seifert said there would be no Friday match in the first week as the government's order was for play to resume in the second part of the month.

"Friday the 15th is not in the second half of the month," Seifert said.

All teams will have to have go into a seven-day training camp in complete isolation prior to May 16 and with all players being tested before their inclusion in the camps, to reduce the risk of any infection.

About 300 people, including players, staff and officials, will be in and around the stadiums during matchdays.

"The matches will feel different. After

the first matchday we will all know why we prefer games with fans," Seifert said. "But that is the framework we have to operate in and I expect the best possible sport within this framework."

The DFL is desperate to finish the season by June 30 to be contractually in compliance with sponsors and broadcasters and because more than 100 players' contracts are running out on that date, Seifert said.

The DFL has warned any further delay could be "existence-threatening" for some clubs.



Borussia Dortmund striker Erling Braut Haaland juggles the ball in training yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

"The season finale will take place at the end of June," Seifert said, with June 27-28 as a likely date.

He said ideally he hoped the new season to start some time in August but a date had not been finalised.

The teams have been training since mid-April, divided into small groups and under strict conditions, including extensive COVID-19 testing of all players and coaching staff.

## Organisers say Australian Open could be cancelled

AFP, Sydney



Tennis Australia conceded Thursday that January's Australian Open faces cancellation under a worst-case scenario, but said it was looking

at a range of options in hope the COVID-19 crisis eases.

This year's tennis calendar has been suspended until at least July 13 and, with global borders closed, there is uncertainty about when the international circuit can resume.

The season-opening Grand Slam is scheduled to take place in Melbourne from January 18, more than 8 months away, and Tennis Australia said it would abide by whatever restrictions were in place then.

"We've certainly made no secret about the number of scenarios that we're looking

at," a spokeswoman told AFP. "We're hoping for the best but planning for everything."

Possibilities range from cancellation to imposing quarantine on overseas players and allowing only Australian fans into the event.

"We have to look at all the angles because a lot of the decisions will be beyond our control and related to government guidelines and restrictions," she said. "We do need to have all the protocols in place to ensure everyone's safety."

This year's Wimbledon has been canceled for the first time since World War II and the French Open postponed until the end of September.

The United States Tennis Association will decide in mid-June whether or not the US Open will be able to begin on schedule in New York in August.



Chinese Super League club Shanghai SIPG players returned to their first public training session following the coronavirus outbreak, and the players were extremely relaxed and looked like they enjoyed catching the eyes of fans after a lengthy gap.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## 'Don't want to be typecast in one format'

PTI

Star West Indies all-rounder Jason Holder says he might be leading the Test side but doesn't want to be "pigeonholed" in just one format and is determined to make a name for himself in all the three forms.

"I don't want to just segregate myself and pigeon-hole myself to one particular format," Holder, who has been the captain of the Test side for the last five years besides leading the side in 86 ODIs, was quoted as saying.

"Yes I'm the captain for the Test team but as I've crossed formats for a number of years, I think my sole focus has been on West



## 'MY FACE SAYS IT ALL'

Juventus have announced that forward Paulo Dybala has recovered from the coronavirus. The Serie A leaders issued a brief statement Wednesday saying that Dybala's two latest tests came back negative. Dybala later took to social media to confirm the news. "Many people talked in the past weeks ... but I can finally confirm that I am healed. Thank you for your support and my thoughts to all who are still suffering. Take care!" Dybala tweeted. "My face says it all, I'm finally cured!" Dybala posted. The picture, posted on Instagram, shows the Argentine looking absolutely ecstatic.

PHOTO: INSTAGRAM

## CA to begin pre-season with new protocols

AGENCIES



Cricket Australia is set to begin the team's pre-season later this month under a set of new training protocols devised for the safety of players amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to a report in 'The Sydney Morning Herald', CA is churning out strategies for resumption of training under the watchful eyes of its chief medical officer Dr John Orchard and head of sports science and sports medicine Alex Kountouris.

The duo is working closely with counterparts of other cricket playing nations and are part of committees of the Australian government and the ICC which are trying to find ways for the resumption of sports.

The report said CA's immediate priority is to draw up protocols for players' pre-season, which include barring the use of saliva or sweat to shine the ball during training.

CA's head of sports science and sports medicine Kountouris said the coronavirus-forced new normal shouldn't have much impact of teams' training in a sport like

cricket.

"There's physical distancing in the nets - there's two or three bowlers in each net. One bowls at a time, the batter is 22 yards away so it's not a big problem," Kountouris said.

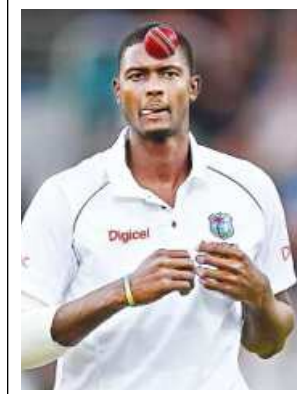
"We don't see it as too big a problem to manage, but these are the things we're spelling out. This is what you should do: keep your distance, how you should handle the ball, these are things easy to manage."

Kountouris said with social distancing becoming mandatory in the post-COVID world, teams will have to find out new ways of on-field celebrations.

"You might not see high-fiving after a wicket or people ruffling someone else's hair. It will be a spaced huddle. It will be the new norm. That's one of those things, the physical distancing for the time being, that will definitely be out until a vaccine or some sort of solution like that (comes up)."

"I think we'll have to find a different way to celebrate, they'll have to be innovative," he said.

"There are things you won't be able to chop out overnight but people will gradually get used to doing things differently."



Indies cricket, ideally in all three formats not only in Test cricket.

"I think West Indies cricket is so diverse in many different ways and for us as players, we've got to understand each and everyone of us has a part to play in this whole puzzle," he added.

The 28-year-old is ranked number one in the international Test all-rounders' list for over a year now.

He is placed at number three in the bowling charts and is the highest-ranked batsman for his country at the 35th spot.

# No clinical audit of the dead

Experts say crucial info for helping Covid-19 patients being lost

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

A total of 199 people have died of Covid-19 so far but the details of these deaths have not yet been examined, said health officials.

Though it is declared that the patients died of coronavirus, whether that itself was the main cause of death or if pre-existing, underlying conditions were, is not ascertained. This information, however, is crucial to treating coronavirus patients, said experts.

As these cases were not examined in details, what experts call a "clinical audit", the real cause of death remains unidentified, they said.

The Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) is assigned to examine the cause of death in each of the cases, said the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

"The organisation is busy with testing and that's why it could not concentrate more on research activities," said Abul Kalam Azad, director general of the DGHS.

"We have already instructed they concentrate more on this, aside from testing."

Since the beginning of the Covid-19 outbreak in the country, IEDCR was solely in charge of testing and identifying coronavirus patients.

Testing facilities were later decentralised but IEDCR continues to conduct testing with an immense workload at the moment.

Meerjady Sabrina Flora, IEDCR's director, said that it has not been

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



Anowar, a private job holder, carries his daughter Anima as his wife Sonia stares on, while waiting for their turn to be tested for Covid-19 at the capital's Mugda General Hospital yesterday. Anowar said they went to their village in Shariatpur after the government had announced the ongoing shutdown in late March. But after they returned a couple of days ago, the owner of their rented flat in Muradnagar asked them to provide him with their Covid-19 test reports. The owner threatened to drive them out if they failed to do so.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

# INFECTED RMG WORKERS 'Half tested positive after factories reopened'

Claims workers' body report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some 96 garment workers and a staffer of a factory were found Covid-19 positive between April 9 and yesterday in the country, read a report of Bangladesh Garment Shramik Sanghati (BGSS).

Of the workers, 52 percent have been infected since the resumption of factories on April 26, and the rest 48 percent between April 9 and April 26, read the report.

Besides, 79 percent of the infected are workers of factories in Dhaka, Gazipur and Narayanganj districts, it said.

Most 26 cases have been reported in Narayanganj followed by 24 in Savar and 14 in Gazipur. Also, seven workers were infected in Ashulia, six in Dhaka, two each

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

# Brick kiln worker punished instead of owner

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Md Tareq Khan, a labourer of Siam Bricks, has been in Patuakhali jail for more than one and a half months, apparently for no fault of his own.

On March 19, while Tareq was working at the illegal brick field in Dhandi village under Baufal upazila, a mobile court of the Department of Environment's (DoE's) Barishal divisional office raided the place.

The mobile court, headed by Abdul Halim, director of DoE's Barishal divisional office, named Tareq as the owner of the brick kiln, fined him Tk 20 lakh and served him one year of imprisonment.

Abdul Halim told The Daily Star, "Since the brick kiln is illegal, no government records exist on it. Thus, whoever we found at the site baking bricks was punished."

"There has been no misapplication of the law," he added.

According to DoE Barishal, Tareq was punished as the owner under the Brick Making and Kiln Installation Control Act-

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## FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

### Resist armed miscreants



May 8, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

#### BANGABANDHU'S NORTH BENGAL TOUR BEGINS

On the first day of the four-day tour of North Bengal, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman today visits Bogura. Addressing a large gathering, Bangabandhu says that imperialist forces and their local agents are active in their machinations against the independence of the country. These armed miscreants are involved in various antisocial

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



# Rabindranath's birth anniversary today

UNB, Dhaka

The 159th birth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore is being observed in the country today.

A poet, visual artist, playwright, novelist, as well as a composer, Tagore's works reshaped Bangla literature and music in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Born on 25th of Baishakh in the Bengali year of 1268 (May 7, 1861) at Jorasanko mansion in Kolkata, he was the youngest



SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

# Silence of the looms

Tough times for weavers as clothing business hit hard by Covid-19 fallout

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPLI, Pabna

The fallout from Covid-19 has muffled the sound of looms and the buzz of the clothing markets this year during the peak business season for apparels, Eid-ul-Fitr.

Of the eight to 10 lakh looms in the country, only about two lakh are now in operation, said Md Boduuzzaman, the joint secretary of the central committee of Bangladesh Handloom and Powerloom Owners Association.

According to the association, the clothing business centres around the two Muslim festivals -- Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-ul-Azha -- which generate 80 percent of the yearly production of clothes and 60 percent of the annual earnings of loom owners.

"Last year, we earned around Tk 2,000 crore from the clothing business

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

# Outbreak worse 'attack' than 9/11

Says Trump, again blames China for global woes; Beijing hits back; WHO warns against rushed end to lockdowns

AGENCIES

China yesterday accused the United States of trying to shift blame over the coronavirus, after President Donald Trump said the pandemic was a worse "attack" than Pearl Harbor or 9/11.

Tension between the world's two biggest economies has reached fever pitch in recent days as they have exchanged barbed comments on each other's handling of the virus.

"We urge the US side to stop shifting the blame to China and turn to facts," said foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying at a press briefing.

On Wednesday Trump drew analogies

with the virus, which emerged in the Chinese city of Wuhan last year, and infamous military and terrorist attacks on the United States.

"This is really the worst attack we've ever had," Trump told reporters. "This is worse than Pearl Harbor. This is worse than the World Trade Center."

The Japanese assault on the Pearl Harbor naval base in Hawaii drew the United States into World War II.

The September 11, 2001 jihadist attacks on that killed about 3,000 people and triggered two decades of war.

Trump said the coronavirus pandemic "should never have happened".

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

**PRAYER TIMING MAY 8**  
Fazr Juma Asr Maghrib Esha  
AZAN 3-51 12-15 5-00 6-34 8-00  
JAMAAT 4-01 1-15 5-15 6-44 8-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

**SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING**  
**RAMADAN MAY SEHRI IFTAR**

14	8	6:34
15	9	3:50 6:35
16	10	3:50 6:35

## গণবিজ্ঞপ্তি

করোনা থেকে বাঁচি স্বাস্থ্য বিধি মেনে চলি

- বাংলাদেশে কোভিড-১৯ প্রতিরোধ ও নিয়ন্ত্রণ এবং অর্থনৈতিক কর্মকাণ্ড ক্রমাগত চালু করার সুবিধার্থে বিভিন্ন প্রতিষ্ঠান, স্থাপনা ও পেশার জন্য এক গুচ্ছ কারিগরি নির্দেশনা প্রস্তুত করা হয়েছে।
- স্বাস্থ্য ও পরিবার কল্যাণ মন্ত্রণালয় কর্তৃক দায়িত্ব প্রাপ্ত একদল জনস্বাস্থ্য বিশেষজ্ঞ চীন ও অন্যান্য দেশের সংশ্লিষ্ট কারিগরি নির্দেশনা অনুসারে নির্দেশনাগুলি প্রস্তুত করেছেন। স্বাস্থ্য অধিদপ্তরের ওয়েব সাইট ([www.dghs.gov.bd](http://www.dghs.gov.bd)) থেকে এগুলো ডাউনলোড করা যাবে।
- কারিগরি নির্দেশনাগুলি সর্বস্তরে একান্তভাবে প্রতিপালন করার জন্য সংশ্লিষ্ট সবাইকে পরামর্শ দেয়া হলো।

মনে রাখবেন আপনার সুরক্ষা আপনারই হাতে

**স্বাস্থ্য অধিদপ্তর**  
স্বাস্থ্য ও পরিবার কল্যাণ মন্ত্রণালয়

**A male orange-headed thrush rests on a branch of a mango tree in Chapainawabganj town. The small bird, with uniform grey upper parts and an orange head, can be seen all across the country.**

PHOTO: RABIUL HASAN