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Your Right to Know

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BANGLADESH
UPDATE706
New cases in 24hrs12,425
Total cases199
Deaths1,910
RecoveriesGLOBAL
UPDATE266,995
Deaths3,859,483
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 Amina, 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
STAR REPORT

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 Rashtreechinta, 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," Fakhrul 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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