### Vaccine orders plummet amid coronavirus outbreak: CDC

Orders for vaccines against diseases such as measles have declined since a national emergency was declared in the United States because of the coronavirus pandemic, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said Friday.

The number of vaccine doses ordered around the country has fallen sharply since mid-March, the CDC

said, citing data from the Vaccine Tracking System.

The study compared data from March 13 to April 19 of this year to the same period last year.

"There is a drop of 2.5 million doses of all routine non-influenza vaccines and 250,000 doses of measles-containing vaccines that appears to be the result of staying at home during the Covid-19 outbreak,'

### Peak in 3rd or last week

The team includes public health experts MA Foyez, Liaquat Ali, and Iqbal Anwar.

"Our team forecasts... that at the peak, Covid-19 cases may cross the 50,000 mark," said Prof Monir, senior consultant of the World Health Organisation.

By the end of June, when the situation becomes tolerable, there will still be new cases, he added.

It will be quite some time before there will be zero transmission, according to the committee.

"But the crucial thing is we follow restrictions and implement the intervention levels 1, 2, 3 and 4. Then the peak period will be shortened.

"Our prediction will be proved right if we can continue the interventions," Prof Monir said, adding, "If we start lifting restrictions, the predictions will be wrong.

Meanwhile independent experts called for increasing the number of tests to at least 20,000 a day in order to assess the actual situation. Besides, they called for no further lifting of the coronavirus

A member of the government committee also admitted that the predictions would have been more reliable if there were more testing.

Hundreds of garment factories started reopening across the country late last month although the number of new cases have been on the rise.

Besides, the government has already lifted restrictions on people gathering at mosques and shopping malls and many other businesses are going to reopen on a limited scale from today. MORE TESTING

Prof Muzaherul Huq, former adviser

(Southeast Asia Region) of the WHO, said, "We won't be able to tell the actual rate and spread of infection until we can

increase the number of daily tests. "We got confined between 5,000 and 6,000 tests. We have to test at least 20,000 people a day. The tests should be done across the country," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

"Then we should observe the rise in the rate of infections. Before that, it's not possible to give a prediction," he said. He also said the government should

not relax the restrictions any further. "The government should not allow reopening anything like shopping malls

and should ensure strict enforcement of the restrictions," he said. People should be encouraged and

involved in the fight against Covid-19, Infectious diseases specialist Prof

Ridwanur Rahman said, "Even though the number of tests is inadequate, we are observing a rising trend in daily detection of cases. The actual number of patients must be much higher."

Covid-19 outbreak usually reaches its peak three or four weeks after the daily new cases rise, he said.

"But, we are enforcing the lockdown halfheartedly. People are partially abiding by it. So, we have no example before us [to make proper predictions], he said.

"Such a lockdown has not been enforced anywhere in the world. Besides, the lockdown is not enough, we have to find the patients and isolate

Asked Prof Shah Monir said, "Such predictions are there to give an idea of how bad the situation might get and to

### Eskayef submits Eskayef for supplying the drug to the

market if the result of the samples sent to the laboratory for testing was satisfactory. PRESS NOTE FROM BEXIMCO Beximco Pharmaceuticals Limited

regarding the production of remdesivir. In the note, it claimed it is the first company to have produced the generic drug in the country.

also issued a press note to the media

On Saturday, several newspapers company Gilead Sciences, Inc.

reported that the drug was first produced in the country by Eskayef.

In the note, Beximco said the news was "confusing" and "factually

On May 7, Beximco submitted samples of the drug to the DGDA for

The anti-viral drug remdesivir has been proved to fight against coronavirus infection. It was invented US-based biopharmaceutical

# Epidemiological surveillance

conducting been epidemiological surveillance in and outside Dhaka. We are hopeful that we will be able to complete it within two to three weeks," said ASM Alamgir, principal scientific officer at IEDCR.

Asked when did they start the work and what was the sample size, he declined to provide any details.

Bangladesh entered into its 61st day yesterday ever since the first case of the coronavirus was detected in Dhaka on March 8. The surge in infections continued with 636 new cases reported yesterday, taking the total to 13,770.

Yesterday, the authorities also reported eight Covid-19 deaths, bringing the death toll to 214.

Amid the worsening coronavirus situation, the government has reopened factories and decided to reopen businesses and shopping malls on May 10 on a limited scale, apparently in a desperate attempt to bring the economy back on track, but without an epidemiological surveillance report from the IEDCR, the reference body of WHO in Bangladesh.

"Policy makers are not public health experts. So, the health officials should suggest them based on evidence. We are yet to hear about such epidemiological surveillance," said Prof Be-Nazir Ahmed, former director (disease control) of the

Without epidemiological evidence, which is needed to check the infection rate and help generate immunity in

a particular community, relaxing the shutdown may be dangerous and may expedite the spread of the virus, Be-Nazir warned.

Expert also said an epidemiological surveillance can decipher how many of a representative group of people of a community have generated antibodies to fight the virus despite been infected.

Scientists then may extrapolate from there the magnitude of the pathogen's spread in the broader population, experts said. Such surveillance could also shed

light on how the virus transmitted among people, including what role seemingly less-affected groups, like children, have played in its dispersion, they said, adding that the IEDCR should focus more on surveillance.

"IEDCR needs to concentrate more on the ongoing epidemiological surveillance of Covid-19 for analysis, which is very important for epidemic control. It will give us a clear idea about the Covid-19 situation of the country,' IEDCR consultant and epidemiologist Mushtuq Husain told The Daily Star.

Abul Kalam Azad, director general of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), also acknowledged it.

'It is important and we have asked the IEDCR to concentrate more on research," he said.

He also said currently their rojections are based on the trends of the identified cases.

"But to give an accurate picture, we need epidemiological surveillance."

## 2,329 inmates

the law ministry, recently ordered the prisons authorities to release 2,884 inmates who were jailed for one year or less for minor offences, but served months in jails.

Earlier, 555 prisoners were freed last week in two phases. Of them, 170 served six months behind bars, and the rest between three months and six months, jail sources said.

As per the home ministry's order, the prisons headquarters recommended releasing around 5,000 prisoners under three categories.

Under the first category, there were more than 3,000 prisoners who were sentenced to two-year imprisonment.

The second category included 1,413 life-sentenced prisoners who served more than 20 years in jail. Besides, there were 36 inamtes with physical disabilities under the third category.

However, the list of 1,413 prisoners is being shortened.

Col Abrar said, "We are excluding inmates convicted of heinous crimes like murder, rape, abduction, throwing acid and in arms cases from the list. After exclusion, the number is now around 460. Preparation of the list is still under process.'

There are around 90,000 prisoners in 68 jails across the country against the capacity of 41,244. Such a large number of prisoners is posing a high risk of coronavirus transmission inside the prisons.

Twenty-two prison guards, two inmates and a doctor of prisons have tested positive for Covid-19 so far since the first Covid-19 case was reported in the country on March 8.



delivery service providers for the job. The photo taken on English Road in the capital shows packages scattered across the street as they are being loaded on to a truck of a courier service provider.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

# Fear grips mothers-to-be

treatment at three hospitals although she had to run around for around nine hours at a stretch to get to those places.

Although Tania's delivery date was May 3, her water broke (amniotic membrane rupture) on that very day and she was in immediate need for ospitalisation for a safe delivery.

She was first refused Government Mohammadpur Maternity Hospital, which has shut down its delivery facilities. The other two hospitals, Ad-Deen Hospital and Azimpur Maternity Hospital, refused to treat her as those suspected her to be Covid-19 positive.

By this time, Tania began feeling like she might not survive as her lower abdomen had hardened and she was feeling unwell, the report read.

The ongoing pandemic has also forced many pregnant women to skip their antenatal appointments, even if they were unwell or facing severe health complications.

While some are avoiding checkups in fear of coming in contact with coronavirus patients, a large number of them are not being able to due to the unavailability of their ob-gyns. Nujahat Jebin, who is in her 35th

week of pregnancy and has been suffering from thalassemia, is currently facing a dire situation because her gynaecologist is currently unavailable. "Since I have thalassemia, the

doctor earlier said the baby isn't getting enough oxygen. To ensure that the baby gets oxygen, I needed to go to the clinic regularly, but now the clinic is so overcrowded.

"Besides, the movement of the baby

has also decreased and I have also felt a pain in my lower abdomen," said Jebin. "I don't know what's going on but I'm

Fourteen weeks pregnant, Jannatul Ferdous needed to go to her checkups scheduled this month, but she too couldn't make it due to the unavailability of her doctor.

also needed a change of medication, but I cannot contact my doctor. I needed the hepatitis B vaccine, but I feel so unsafe outside in the middle of this crisis," she said.

According to the interviewees, given the current global pandemic the world is facing, many obstetricians are increasing the interval between face-toface visits and encouraging them with telemedicine. However, this is not a viable option for many, especially those who require close examination or tests.

Taslima Afrin, who is expecting to deliver her baby on the June 2, told this correspondent that she was supposed to do an ultrasonogram, check her haemoglobin level as she is anaemic, and take a random blood sugar test. "However, this is not possible over phone and I am now told to stay home," she said.

Priyanka Saha, another mother-tobe in Gaibandha, said she has had a severe cough for the past week and her antibiotics are not working properly.

"The doctor suggested seeing a chest specialist for this, which is not possible from here," said Priyanka, who has a history of a miscarriage.

Dr Nawsheen Sharmin Purobi, a renowned gynaecologist, however said that they have not been discouraging anyone to come to visit the hospitals and have been attending emergency manage commodities.

cases. However, we prefer dealing with it over phone or online platforms if the problem is not severe.

"Our patients also prefer not to visit due to the current situation. What is more surprising is that we are getting a lot of queries from patients all over the country on our online platform --'Dr Purobi's Help Desk" (a Facebook Page)," she added.

She also suggested that pregnant women do not get stressed as it can have adverse impacts on the pregnancy, such as high blood pressure, high sugar level or premature contractions.

AKM Mohiul Islam, director general of family planning (DGFP), also believes that maternal health, such as, care during pregnancy, post-pregnancy and childbirth, are issues that demand special attention and treatment, and any interruption may increase risks.

A large number of pregnant women also said that they were discharged early from hospitals to limit the risk of inadvertent exposure and infection, while the hospitals' staffers and the obstetrics teams have been trying to minimise the number of people who enter the hospital.

Nazlee Shamima Ferdousi is also with child. She said she has planned to get admitted to hospital 13 days before her due date. "I'm lonely here due to the current situation. Both my mother and mother-in-law are outside the city and they cannot help me right now.'

A number of mothers-to-be also noted that they were unable to do the necessary shopping for essentials, such as diapers, baby wipes, and formula milk, and are now facing difficulties to

# Most city malls opt not to open

FROM PAGE 1

centres in Dhanmondi area, including Gausia, Chadni Chak, Chistia, New Chistia, Noor Mansion, Dhanmondi Hawkers Market, Privangon, Islami Mansion and Eastern Mallika, said they would not reopen as well.

Owners of wholesale markets in Gulistan, Phulbaria and Banga Bazar areas stated the same.

Aarong, a popular destination for many to buy Eid dresses, however, yesterday decided to reopen some selected outlets. It said special health safety measures would be ensured and that the decision was taken to save the livelihood of rural artisans and small entrepreneurs.

"To reduce health risk and ensure social distancing, Aarong has also, for the first time in Bangladesh, introduced an online booking system for customers who want to visit any shopping outlet. They can book their time slot at aarong.com and visit the outlet at their scheduled time for safe and comfortable shopping," Aarong said in a release.

Of its 21 outlets, two situated in Narayanganj city and Bashabo area of the capital, however, will remain closed as these two areas are considered as Covid-19 hotspots.

Dewan Aminul Islam Shahin said, "Following the government announcement, we had decided to reopen the Dhaka New Market today hawkers or temporary roadside shops contributed to this report)

Sunday to save our livelihood. But we see coronavirus cases are increasing every day. Amid such a situation, most shop owners have decided not to reopen their shops before Eid." He also said the Dhaka Metropolitan

Police and the health ministry gave

them various instructions on ensuring

social distancing and hygiene at the market, but those would be hard to follow at the market. "All shoppers might not agree to follow these guidelines and an untoward situation may arise if shop employees ask them to do so," he said. Replying to a query, he said some

506 shops at the market employ some

3,000 people. The DMP on Thursday came up with a set of directives following the government announcement. It said shoppers would be able to go to markets only if they were within two kilometres of their homes. The shoppers will have to carry ID cards or

original copies of utility bills. It also asked the shopping mall authorities to install disinfection tunnels and thermal scanners at the entrance to each mall.

Besides, the authorities of each shopping mall will have to ensure that no one enters the establishment without wearing masks.

"Each store must have a separate temperature measurement system,' reads the directive. Talking to this correspondent,

will be allowed.

Kamrul Hasan Babu, president of Dokan Malik Samity, Gausia Market, said apart from the fear of getting infected with coronavirus, shop owners of different markets in Dhanmondi area said it would not be possible for them to ensure all the guidelines were followed.

Mohammad Bablu, president, Ismail Mansion Market, said they would not be able to do business if they had to remain occupied in ensuring those guidelines.

"That's why most of the shop owners and leaders of different markets in a meeting today decided not to reopen the shops before Eid, although it will deal a blow to our livelihood and earnings," he said. SHOPPING MALLS IN CTG

Meanwhile, owners of 12 large shopping malls in Chattogram on Friday decided that the malls would remain closed till May 31 to prevent the spread of novel coronavirus.

The decision was taken at a joint meeting of the shop owners' association and the traders' association.

(Mohammad Suman, our staff

According to the directives, no correspondent from Chattogram,

# Hundreds of repatriated Pakistanis test positive for virus

And in the northwestern province

of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, a senior

government official told AFP that

more than 200 of the 1,600 passengers

repatriated to the city of Peshawar had

about 4.5 million Pakistanis work in

According to the foreign office,

minister, told a press conference.

tested positive.

the Middle East.

Hundreds of Pakistanis who were repatriated from the Middle East where many lost jobs amid coronavirus shutdowns and were living in cramped conditions -- have tested positive for Covid-19, officials said Friday

Pakistan has so far brought about 20,000 nationals home, among them a large number of unskilled workers who had been labouring in Gulf nations only to see their jobs disappear as lockdowns slowed economic activity. Of the 2,069 Pakistanis returning

from the Middle East to the southern

province of Sindh, more than 500

tested positive for the coronavirus,

Murad Ali Shah, Sindh's chief

In addition to the 20,000 who have already come back, around 110,000 more overseas Pakistanis have registered a desire to return home. Pakistan has been chartering flights to bring back stranded nationals, as

have been halted. Labourers in many Gulf nations live in crowded dormitories or work camps where social distancing is million people.

commercial flights into the country

During a briefing Thursday, Moeed Yusuf, the prime minister's special assistant on national security, said that on some flights as many as half the passengers were infected.

Our ministry of foreign affairs has raised this issue with those countries and we are finding ways so it should not happen again," he said. pressures,

Citing economic pressures, Prime Minister Imran Khan on Thursday announced the easing of a nationwide lockdown, sparking fears coronavirus cases may increase dramatically.

More than 26,000 cases of Covid-19 have been confirmed so far, with the death toll at a relatively low 600 or so in the nation of about 215

#### 2 Rohingyas killed in 'gunfight'

Our Correspondent, Cox's Bazar

Two Rohingyas, who were allegedly involved in yaba trade, were killed in a gunfight with police in Teknaf upazila gunfight with ponce ... --of Cox's Bazar early yesterday. Mohammad, 35,

Noor Mohammad, 35, and Mohammad Rafique, 25, were from Kutupalang Rohingya Camp in Ukhia upazila, said Prodip Kumar Das, officerin-charge of Teknaf Police Station.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of the police conducted a raid in Ulubania village around 6:00pm on Friday and detained Noor and Rafique, said the OC. During primary interrogation, they

confessed that they regularly smuggled yaba from Myanmar to Bangladesh, the

police official said. They also told police that they had recently brought a consignment of the illicit drug and concealed it somewhere in Ulubania village, Prodip said.

Police, taking along the two suspects, conducted a raid in the village around 1:30am yesterday to recover the yaba pills, he added.

As the law enforcers reached the spot, cohorts of the detainees opened fire on them, forcing them to retaliate that triggered a "gunfight", the OC said.

The two caught in the line of bullets during the incident and were taken to Teknaf Upazila Health Complex and later to Cox's Bazar General Hospital, where they succumbed to their injuries around 5:00am, OC Prodip said, adding that two policemen were also injured during the incident.

Two firearms, five bullets and 158,000 yaba pills were recovered from the spot, the police official said.

Three cases were filed in this connection with Teknaf Police Station.

#### Nine out of 10

In the last seven days until yesterday, the highest 6,260 individuals' samples were tested on Monday. Of them, 688 tested positive.

On Wednesday, the highest 790 cases were detected after testing 6,241 individuals' samples.

In the other days, it stayed stagnant near 5,500 on an average.

RECOVERY RATE AROUND 92 In yesterday's press bulletin, Prof

Nasima Sultana shared the recovery and death rate of the Covid-19 patients in the country. Around 17.5 percent of all the detected Covid-19 patients in the

country have recovered from their illness while 1.5 percent died, she "With 313 in past 24 hours [until 2:30pm yesterday], a total of 2,414 patients have recovered from the

disease. In terms of all concluded cases,

recovery rate is 91.8 percent while the

mortality rate is 8.2 percent," she said. DHAKA CITY TOPS THE LIST OF **COVID-19 CASES** According to the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) website, Dhaka city continued to be the worst affected region in the country with a total

6,423 positive cases detected here so It is more than 58 percent of all

cases detected. Collectively, more than 81 percent cases were detected in Dhaka division and 12 other districts.

With 1,177 positive cases until vesterday, industrial city Narayanganj continued to be the second worst affected district in the country, followed by Gazipur with 332 positive cases and Munshigonj with 212 cases.

Among other districts outside Dhaka division, the highest 212 positive cases were detected in Mymensingh followed by 207 in Chattogram.

Among the north Bengal districts,

Rangpur district has 157 cases

detected so far while all other districts

in Rangpur and Rajshahi divisions

#### have more or less 50 cases each.

RMG workers

the protesters as the protesters refused to pay any heed to their request, Shusanto Kumar, additional superintendent of Gazipur Industrial Police, adding that the situation was brought under control around 2:00pm.

In Ashulia, around 4,000 agitating workers demanded that the decision to reduce 40 percent of their house rents be implemented.

shut down fearing a spillover of the

Several factories in nearby areas were

The decision was taken at a meeting among industrial police, house owners and local union parishad authorities on

"If the decision comes into effect, we will accept the government decision regarding our salary," said the workers. Earlier, to avert job cuts and

temporary closures during Covid-19 outbreak, the government, on April 29, directed RMG factory owners to pay their workers 60 percent salary for April. Asked about the workers' demand,

a secretary at the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Association (BGMEA) said the decision of paying 60 percent salary was taken at a meeting on Thursday where representatives of two workers' unions, the BGMEA, and the government came to an understanding on this score.

The workers who have worked will receive 100 percent of their salaries, he

The BGMEA has requested all members not to lay off any worker in