



# The Daily Star

www.thedailystar.net

REGD. No. DA 781

Vol. XXX No. 116

BAISHAKH 28, 1427 BS

Your Right to Know

RAMADAN 17, 1441 HJRI

12 PAGES PRICE: Tk 12.00

BANGLADESH  
UPDATE887  
New cases in 24hrs14,657  
Total cases228  
Deaths2,650  
RecoveriesGLOBAL  
UPDATE281,477  
Deaths4,140,899  
Total cases

## Little care for the living and the dead

*Deluged with suspected Covid-19 patients, hospitals struggle to ensure emergency treatment; dead too are often left in neglect*

ZYMA ISLAM

Time is of the utmost essence in emergency care. But in this pandemic, as hospitals take on the challenge of a rising number of patients, emergency care is denied to many, resulting in fatal consequences.

Abrar Hossain's mother needed emergency assistance when she was brought to Dhaka Medical College Hospital's newly inaugurated coronavirus unit at 10:35am yesterday.

Abrar, who is a subeditor at this newspaper, narrated the incident to this correspondent.

"Two weeks ago, my mother started feeling feverish. All of us had flu-like symptoms but recovered fast, so we didn't worry too much. In fact, in the last few days, her fever was coming down. This morning she woke up, gave directions to the domestic help to cook for the day... and then all of a sudden, she started having breathing problems. She was sitting in a chair, experiencing laboured breathing and within 10-15 minutes she stopped breathing completely," described Abrar.

He called an ambulance immediately to their home on Tajmahal Road, but the vehicle took a further 40 minutes to arrive.

"At 10:35 am, we entered the DMCH emergency and I was looking for a doctor or a nurse to attend to her, but a nurse told me to stand in line and take a token.

"I went to the admission counter, bought a token and came back. Then

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A man checking out a panjabee while wearing a helmet to avoid exposing his face at a store on New Elephant Road in the capital. People started shopping at different malls reopened yesterday after one and a half months. Inset, shoppers enter a market in Gulistan through a booth that sprays disinfectants on them.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON, ANISUR RAHMAN



## Some sectors reopening to help the poor

Says PM

UNB, Dhaka

Mentioning that people are suffering a lot due to the shutdown, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the government was trying to reopen some sectors gradually so that the poor could earn their livelihoods.

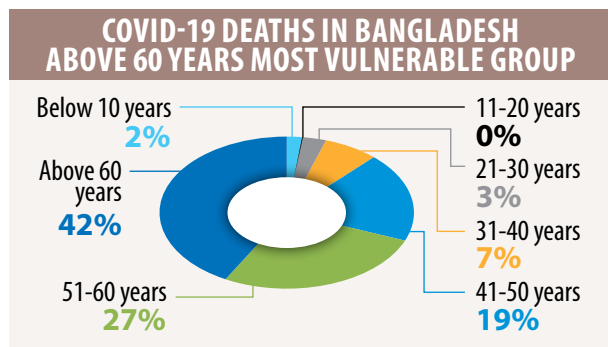
"We're trying to reopen some [sectors] gradually. We're taking measures so that people can earn their livelihoods because this is the month of holy Ramadan," she said while receiving donations for her relief and welfare fund.

Over 55 government, private organisations, and educational institutions gave donations to the Prime Minister's Relief and

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## Highest surge in single day

887 test positive for Covid-19; 14 reported dead in 24 hours



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Covid-19 outbreak in the country turned grimmer yesterday as health authorities reported a new record of coronavirus infection and a spike in fatalities.

As many as 887 people tested positive over the past 24 hours, taking the count of new cases to 14,657, the highest single-day surge so far. Fourteen people died with coronavirus infections over the same time, bringing the death toll to 228.

The surge in positive cases coincided with the reopening of markets and clothing stores in the country. Amid a growing impact on the economy, the government has

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## REOPENING OF MALLS, MARKETS

## Some guidelines grossly ignored

Street vendors back despite restrictions

RASHIDUL HASAN and FIROZ AHMED

On the first day of the reopening of some markets in the capital yesterday amid the Covid-19 outbreak, many shoppers and store staffers were found to have flouted the directives of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, laying people's health safety on the line.

DMP on May 7 issued at least 12 directives for the city dwellers who would visit shopping malls and markets during the pandemic in an attempt to curb the spread of the virus.

Visiting different markets in Islampur, Dhanmondi, Panthopath, Nilkhet, Science Lab intersection and Elephant Road area, these correspondents found that the DMP directives were blatantly disregarded in almost everywhere.

Besides, roadside vendors were seen selling dresses in the footpaths near Gausia Market, New Market, and Baitul Mokarrom area where most of the buyers and sellers seemed oblivious to the health directives.

Public health experts think if this situation goes on, more people will get infected with Covid-19 in the coming days, which will be difficult for the government to tackle.

Talking to this correspondent, a public health expert, also a member of the eight-member expert panel formed by the government to assist the health ministry to tackle the Covid-19 outbreak, said they recommended that markets and shopping malls should not be opened before Eid, considering it would be difficult for the authorities to make people follow the health directives.

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## Protection now polluting

Study finds 14,500 tonnes of waste in masks, gloves, bags generated in first month of shutdown

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Around 14,500 tonnes of hazardous plastic waste have been produced from the single use surgical face masks, gloves, hand sanitiser bottles, and polythene bags in the first month of the shutdown, says a study report.

About 11.2 percent of this waste apparently are surgical face masks, 21 percent polythene-made normal gloves, 20 percent surgical gloves, 40.9 percent single use polythene shopping bags, and 6.4 percent empty bottles of hand sanitisers.

The study findings were disclosed at a virtual press conference yesterday.

Environment and Social Development Organisation (ESDO) conducted the study titled "Covid-19 Pandemic Pushes the Single Use Plastic Waste UP: No Management, No Protection: Pose High Health and Environmental Risks".

The study exclusively focuses on hazardous plastic waste generating from the single use of plastic protective gear by

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## A ray of hope for patients

Eminent medical experts say on remdesivir made by Eskayef to treat Covid-19 in the country

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

When there was no effective drug to treat Covid-19 patients in the country, anti-viral generic drug Remdesivir, brought by Eskayef Pharmaceuticals Ltd, offers a ray of hope, Dr ABM Abdullah, personal physician of the prime minister, said at a discussion yesterday.

In this context, speakers in the discussion urged the drug regulatory authority to complete the necessary testing and, after being satisfied, issue the marketing authorisation as per the procedure as early as possible so that presently ailing patients can get the benefit of the drug.

Noted medicine specialists and physicians participated in the event, jointly organised by Bangladesh Society of Medicine (BSM) and the Eskayef Pharmaceuticals Ltd, at a city hotel.

"They [Eskayef] have done a great job and I thank them. This is a very good and time-befitting medicine," said Prof ABM Abdullah.

"I thought it might take six months to get the drug in Bangladesh, as it was recently approved in the United States. It is a very good initiative that you [Eskayef] are going to supply the drug in the local market."

He urged the Eskayef Pharmaceuticals authorities to take all initiative to make the drug available in the local market immediately.

Earlier, Dr Robed Amin, a professor of medicine at Dhaka Medical College, talked about the novel coronavirus, and

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## Gonoshasthaya kits to be tested today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) will begin the performance trial of home-grown Covid-19 testing kit developed by Gonoshasthaya Kendra today.

Gonoshasthaya Kendra Founder and Trustee Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury yesterday told The Daily Star, "The BSMMU authorities have informed us over phone that they will start the trial of our kit tomorrow [today]."

"They have sought 200 kits from us. We are now waiting for a letter from the BSMMU. We will supply the kits as soon as we receive the letter."

The BSMMU will conduct trial of the Rapid Dot Blot, developed by Gonoshasthaya Kendra scientist, on 400 samples.

"Initially, they [BSMMU] said they will conduct trial on 1,200 samples, but later they revised the sample size and made it to 400," Zafrullah said.

The tests done by the

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A policeman with his face buried in his arms sits at the tennis court of Jatiya Press Club after several hours of being on duty wearing PPE on Topkhana Road. In the scorching heat, one of his teammates fainted not long before the photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## People handling the dead still exposed

An expert says bodies can transmit for up to 9 days

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Health workers and police personnel who come in close contact with unidentified dead bodies for conducting autopsies and enquiries are at a high risk of Covid-19 infection.

The virus is capable of sustaining inside dead bodies for several hours and can transmit among people nearby, said virologists.

Prof Sultana Shahana Banu, head of the virology department at Dhaka Medical College, said, "Coronavirus may not spread from the upper portion of a body, but it sustains inside the body especially in nose, throat and lungs from a minimum of two hours to maximum nine days.

"So, there is a risk of infection during autopsy procedure."

She also suggested to test all the dead bodies before conducting autopsies at this time of pandemic.

Meanwhile, policemen posted at different stations, teachers of forensic departments and morgue assistants at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College, and Sir Salimullah Medical College said that a sense of Covid-19 infection gripped them since the virus started spreading within communities.

Abul Hasan, officer-in-charge of Shahbagh Police Station, said any dead body related to a police case needed to be checked thoroughly by them. Depending on the checkups, they submitted reports to officials carrying autopsies.

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