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Your Right to Know

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**BANGLADESH
UPDATE**

1,034
New cases in 24hrs

15,691
Total cases

239
Deaths

2,902
Recoveries

**GLOBAL
UPDATE**

284,834
Deaths

4,221,404
Total cases

Test rate still very low

Experts say citing tests per 1,000 in other affected countries; record daily surge takes total cases past 15,000

MOUDUDD AHMED SUJAN and WASIM BIN HABIB

The country reported a record single-day surge of detected coronavirus cases -- 1,034 -- as the tally crossed the 15,000 mark, while 11 new deaths took the death toll to 239.

With testing facilities being gradually ramped up, 7,208 individuals' samples were tested in 35 laboratories in 24 hours till 2:30pm yesterday. Beginning on January 28, 1,29,865 samples have been tested as of yesterday, shows data from the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Experts however said the number of tests was still inadequate compared to the country's population and other coronavirus-hit countries.

They reiterated that testing was extremely crucial as it helps mitigation efforts, equipping investigators with the knowledge to examine the characteristics, prevalence and spread of any disease.

In a country of about 168 million people, the testing rate is only 0.71 per 1,000 people as of Saturday, according to ourworldindata.org.

The rate is higher in India and Pakistan. In India, it is 1.17 tests per 1,000 and 1.28 in Pakistan.

This rate is 34 per thousand in Spain, 41 in Italy, 12.7 in France, 15.8 in Turkey and 18.71 in the United Kingdom, according to ourworldindata.org.

In the United States, slightly more than 26 tests are being done per 1,000 people while it is 28.3 in Canada.

Among the European countries, Iceland tops the list with around 156 tests per 1,000 people. Other countries are far behind this Nordic country of 364,134 people, shows the data.

Experts in Bangladesh said with the existing number of daily tests, it was difficult to predict how fast the disease was spreading.

"We've no way other than increasing the test numbers to know the real situation. Otherwise, we will not be able to take the right decision for the days ahead," Prof Ridwanur Rahman, a medicine and infectious disease specialist, told The Daily Star yesterday.

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A 120-bed quarantine centre being readied by AL Muslim Group at its factory in Ulail area of Savar on the outskirts of the capital. The apparel manufacturer will keep any of its workers, suspected to have contracted the novel coronavirus, at this facility. The photo was taken on Sunday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

CORONAVIRUS INFECTION

Crowded barracks put cops at risk

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Despite protective measures taken by authorities, the number of infection in the police force has been on a rapid rise with around one hundred officials across the country testing positive for Covid-19 daily over the last one week.

According to Police Headquarter (PHQ) officials, overcrowded accommodation in police barracks and mismanagement of unit chiefs are to blame for the sorry state of the force.

As of yesterday, the total number of infected case reached 1,756, which was 1,549 the previous day, according to PHQ data.

Of the infected cops, 810 are from Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP). Only 1,153 police officials were infected across the country just a week ago on May 5.

Around 1,933 police personnel were sent into quarantine over the last 24 hours. Around 2,870 officials were in quarantine till yesterday, which now stands 4,803. So far, 165 police personnel have recovered while seven have died from the infection, shows the PHQ database.

Speaking to The Daily Star yesterday, a PHQ high official said that they took preparations in January to create awareness and had a standard operational procedure (SOP) about how to fight the spread of the virus sent to all police units.

"But some unit chiefs, especially in DMP, have failed to follow the SOP. PHQ has already started taking action against the officials," said the official.

Shafiqul Islam, commissioner of DMP, however, blamed overcrowded barracks for the sorry state.

Around 28,000 police personnel are living in barracks in Dhaka with around 30 officials in every single room, Shafiqul told The Daily Star yesterday.

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ARMED FORCES, FAMILIES
345 admitted
to CMH so far

ISPR release also says
6 including 4 retired
army personnel died

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Four retired and two serving members of the army died of Covid-19 as of yesterday, said a press release of the Inter Services Public Relations Directorate.

Of the deceased, four retired members were aged above 70. They had been suffering from different incurable illness, the release said.

The ISPR also said 345 serving and retired members of the Armed Forces and their family members have been admitted to the Combined Military Hospital in Dhaka as of yesterday after getting infected with Covid-19.

Of them, 88 have returned home so far after recovering from Covid-19. All other patients are in

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Infections creep up in RMG belts

Since factory reopening, at least 58 workers infected at 35 units in Ashulia, Gazipur, N'ganj, Ctg

REEFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

With more and more garment factories reopening every day, the deadly coronavirus appears to be spreading among workers in the industrial belts in Ashulia, Gazipur, Narayanganj and Chattogram.

As of yesterday, at least 58 workers from 35 garment factories got infected with the virus, said the industrial police.

The number of infected workers was 43 on Sunday. Of them, 35 were male and nine female, according to Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association.

Earlier on April 28, two RMG workers tested positive for the virus just a couple of days after the factories started reopening.

The industrial police said 1,750 factories in different industrial belts across the country ran operation yesterday. The number was 1,382 on April 28.

Of the infected workers, 36 are from 19 factories in Ashulia, 12 from nine factories in Gazipur, five from three factories in Narayanganj, three from three factories in Chattogram, and two from a factory in Mymensingh.

Asked about the reopening of factories and the rise in Covid-19 infections among RMG workers, Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of the Policy Research Institute, said, "We have messed it up."

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'TREATMENT DENIED' Father passes away after son dies showing symptoms

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

Tragedy struck a family early yesterday in Narayanganj when a man's death from fever, cough and respiratory problems -- allegedly after hospitals in Dhaka denied him admission -- was followed swiftly by his grieving father's demise from cardiac arrest.

The father and son have been identified as Yar Hossain, 60, and Rimon Saud, 24, of Chattogram's Shiddhirganj.

Family members said that the father succumbed to cardiac arrest within an hour of learning of his son's untimely death after he was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital with Covid-19-like symptoms.

Rimon's cousin Masum Saud told journalists his condition deteriorated around 3:00am.

He was then rushed to different hospitals in

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Suspected Covid-19 patients, including some clad in PPE, wait outside the gate of the capital's Mugda General Hospital to be tested yesterday. Many of them alleged they did not get tokens for the test even though they showed up there on the previous two or three days. Asked, the hospital authorities said they were overwhelmed.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Tk 10 a kg rice programme extended

Will go on for another month

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The government has extended Food-Friendly Programme for one more month, while the OMS programme for around 13 lakh listed people in urban and semi-urban areas will continue to help the low-income people hit hard by the shutdown.

Under the Food-Friendly Programme, the food ministry, through its dealers, sells rice for Tk 10 a kg among another 50 lakh listed beneficiaries for five months a year. Usually, the programme continues until April, but this year, the ministry has stretched the time until May.

"We have decided to extend it for one more month due to the current situation. We may have to extend further if the situation demands," Food Secretary Nazmanara Khanum told The Daily Star yesterday.

Upon receiving an additional budgetary allocation from the finance ministry, the food ministry yesterday wrote to the director general of Directorate General of Food to take necessary steps for updating the list of beneficiaries and distributing the rice before Eid-ul-Fitr.

Signed by Shameem Hasan, a deputy secretary of the ministry, the letter was also sent to all divisional commissioners, deputy commissioners, and district food controllers.

"We have issued the directive so that the needy get the rice before Eid. The authorities concerned have to update the list before that," Shameem told this newspaper.

Under the Food-Friendly Programme introduced in 2016, 50 lakh families can buy 30kg rice a month for Tk 10 a kg.

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