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Nation loses its GUARDIAN ANGEL

Anisuzzaman passes away; he had Covid-19 with other health conditions, says son

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Though a man of literature he became the nation's conscience for his steadfast defence of democracy, all forms of freedoms and rights, and multifaceted contributions to society. Like a lighthouse, he always guided the nation with his wise counsel and contributed to build an enlightened country free from bigotry and fundamentalism.

Professor Anisuzzaman -- a name deeply

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With a cannula of an oxygen tank inserted into his nostrils, Covid-19 patient Mostafa Jamal Uddin walks out of Dhaka Medical College Hospital's corona unit as his son Mostafa Zahir Uddin wheels the oxygen cylinder. Zahir said after the condition of his 65-year-old father worsened yesterday, he was taken to different hospitals, including the DMCH, but he did not get admission in any of them. Right, the father and the son wait inside an ambulance which they hired to go to another hospital.



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

JOB CREATION Tall order ahead

Massive unemployment looms as experts predict jobs cuts for current and future migrants

PORIMOL PALMA

Bangladesh faces the challenge of massive job creation as several lakh migrant workers are likely to return in the coming months following a sharp decline in overseas jobs due to the coronavirus-induced global economic slowdown, experts said.

The majority of Bangladeshi workers in the Gulf and Southeast Asian countries, which host some 80 lakh of the country's more than a crore migrant workers, have been jobless for two to three months, according to Bangladeshi diplomats in those nations.

Undocumented workers, who work on daily basis, are facing more difficulties with no job and zero earnings. They have been depending on food assistance either from the Bangladesh missions or local charities, diplomats and migrants said.

Officials say an estimated 15 percent Bangladeshi migrant workforce could be undocumented. They are the first to get hit by the lockdowns enforced by different countries to check coronavirus contagion.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain, and Qatar have already asked Bangladesh and other South Asian countries to take back the migrants in jails and deportation centres. Some of the countries, including Kuwait, have declared amnesty to allow undocumented migrants to return home without penalty.

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Tk 2,500cr to help the youth, expatriates

Announces PM while opening cash-aid-to poor programme; 'shutdown eased for livelihood'

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday announced that the government would provide Tk 2,500 crore to two specialised banks to help the youths and expatriate Bangladeshis who became jobless amid the coronavirus pandemic.

She also declared that the government would give financial assistance to all mosques and 7,000 more Qawmi madrasas before the Eid-ul-Fitr.

The PM made the announcements while launching the disbursement of Tk 1,250 crore cash assistance among 50 lakh low income families hit hard by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Speaking at the programme through videoconferencing from the Gono Bhaban, Hasina said underprivileged people like



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Curbs on movement from May 17 to 28

Govt extends shutdown till May 30; no jamaat at Eidgah; ongoing namaz guideline to be in force

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has once again extended the ongoing shutdown of public and private offices till May 30 in an attempt to prevent further spread of the coronavirus.

All public transport will remain suspended during this period.

The cabinet division yesterday issued a circular in this regard.

The announcement came two days before the ongoing shutdown ends on May 16.

The extended shutdown will coincide with the holidays of the Eid-ul-Fitr which is likely to be celebrated on May 24 or 25.

According to the circular, movement of people will be restricted from May 17 to May 28.

Local administrations along with the law enforcers will control the movement so that people cannot move from one district to another or one upazila to another, according to the gazette.

People must stay at home during the period as the country is witnessing a growing number of deaths and coronavirus cases, the circular read, adding that people will not be allowed to come out of their houses between 8:00pm and 6:00am.

All essential services and vehicles carrying goods, however, will remain outside the purview of the circular.

Pharmaceuticals and other export-oriented industries would be allowed to continue operation with necessary health safety measures taken by the authorities.

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Consecutive days of over 1k new cases

14 more die

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The number of infections and fatalities due to novel coronavirus continues to surge with 1,041 new cases and 14 deaths reported yesterday.

With it, the total number of detected Covid-19 cases in the country reached 18,863 while the death toll hit 283, Prof Dr Nasima Sultana, additional director general at the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), said at an online briefing.

She also said 7,392 samples were tested in 41 coronavirus testing laboratories across the country in 24 hours till 2:30pm yesterday.

Meanwhile, Health Minister Zahid Maleque said the daily test numbers would be increased to 15,000, reports UNB.

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Plasma therapy trial to start next week

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

The government is hopeful that it would be able to "experimentally start" using convalescent plasma therapy for treating coronavirus patients from next week.

"We have completed all the procedures," Prof MA Khan, a haematologist at Dhaka Medical College Hospital, has told The Daily Star.

He urged the patients who have recovered from Covid-19 to enlist their names with the blood transfusion department at Dhaka Medical College to donate their plasma.

The government on April 18 formed a four-member technical committee led by Prof Khan to prepare a "study protocol" of plasma therapy and a guideline for this treatment method.

The committee submitted the report on April 27 recommending that the method be launched in the country as it had been approved globally for its ability to quickly develop a passive immune system in a patient to fight against Covid-19.

The Food and Drug Administration approved plasma therapy for the US on April 4, for it had not found any side-effect of the method. Indian Council of Medical Research approved it on May 8.

Even in Bangladesh, a 66-year-old doctor infected with Covid-19 has shown signs of improvement after receiving the therapy.

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First Covid-19 case detected at Rohingya camp

STAR REPORT

A Rohingya refugee has tested positive for the novel coronavirus at the Ukhiya refugee camp in Cox's Bazar.

This is the first case of Covid-19 infection among the refugees in Bangladesh.

Besides, a local living in the Ukhiya camp area was infected with the deadly virus, according to the UN Refugee Agency.

There were two positive cases from the refugee camp area -- one from the refugee population and the other from the surrounding host population, the UNHCR said in a statement yesterday.

The rapid investigation teams are probing both cases, and have already initiated isolation and treatment of the patients as well as contact tracing, quarantine and testing of contacts in line with the World Health Organization guidelines, it mentioned.

"Established procedures are in place to respond to



When the entire city is worried and nervous about the coronavirus onslaught, these street children seem not to care the least. They play joyfully in the fountain at Bijoy Sarani intersection in the capital as the temperature was high yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Double blow from deadly diseases

Man tests positive for Covid-19, dengue together raising alarm bells

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Fifty-three-year old Anisur Rahman has been suffering from fever for the last few days. He also had cough, muscle pain and breathing complications.

Rahman's daughter, who is a final-year medical student at a private medical college, suspected that her father may be infected with coronavirus.

"I took my father to a private hospital. His samples were tested for both coronavirus and dengue and he was found positive [for both]," Rahman's daughter, wishing not to be named, told The Daily Star yesterday.

"My father, who is in a critical condition, is now in the ICU at a private hospital. We are trying to shift him to Mugda General Hospital," she said.

Health experts' fears of a simultaneous outbreak of dengue and coronavirus seem to be coming true.

Experts opine the recovery battle for patients infected with both the diseases -- considered life threatening -- could be difficult.

As of today, 331 dengue patients have been admitted to different hospitals across the country. Of them, 264 are from Dhaka and 67 elsewhere, according to Directorate General of Health Services data.

Last year, 1,01,354 dengue cases were reported and of them 49,544 were reported from outside Dhaka. The number of deaths from dengue was 179 that year.

"It's a double blow. Both coronavirus and dengue are

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Nation loses

FROM PAGE 1

inscribed in the world of Bangla language, literature and culture – had been able to serve his people to his full potential both as an academic and as a participant to the events that profoundly impacted a broad swath of national life.

A scholar and leading intellectual of the country, who took part and led a number of cultural movements to change the society, breathed his last at a hospital yesterday. The report that he tested positive for coronavirus reached his family members hours after his death.

"My father died about 4:55pm," his son Ananda Zaman told The Daily Star.

He was 83. The academic, who made an immense contribution to Bangla language and literature through his research and writings, is survived by his wife, two daughters, and Ananda.

The National Professor had been suffering from kidney and lungs complications, and respiratory problems and had been undergoing treatment, Ananda said.

On April 27, the professor emeritus of Dhaka University was admitted to Universal Medical College Hospital after he fell seriously ill. He was shifted to CMH on Saturday as his condition was not improving.

Prof Anisuzzaman, one of the most prolific essayists of the country, was previously hospitalised for one week at the beginning of April.

A little before 11:00pm, the family learnt that he died with coronavirus. His burial will take place according to the health guidelines.

Hospital authorities in line with their procedure tested whether he died with the virus. They will hand over the body to family this morning, according to Ananda.

A pall of gloom descended on well-wishers after hearing about the loss of their friend, who has been awarded Ekushey Padak and Swadhinata Padak, two prestigious and the highest state awards given by the government of Bangladesh, for his contribution to education and literature.

As an academic, he made an immense contribution to improving Bangla language and literature, through his research and writings. Until the last day of his life he was the President of the Bangla Academy since 2012.

Professor Anisuzzaman, primarily belonging to the discipline of Bangla literature, left an indelible mark in other disciplines such as English, political science, history, economics and others.

The Government of India has bestowed on him the country's third-highest civilian honour – Padma Bhushan – for his distinguished service of high order in the field of Bangla literature and education.

In 1971, he was the secretary of Bangladesh Teachers' Association.

President Abdul Hamid, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, ministers, distinguished personalities, top leaders of different political and socio-economic-cultural organisations, educational institutions, and a host of people from different walks of life yesterday expressed deep shock and sorrow at the demise of the intellectual giant.

Professor Emiratus Serajul Islam Choudhury said that Anisuzzaman was an exceptional man in many ways.

He had the virtues of tolerance and commitment needed in a liberal person, Serajul said.

"Anisuzzaman had a style of writing where we can find scholarship, liveliness and ideas. His autobiography is full of valuable social, political, cultural and historical scholarship. His loss is irreparable," he said.

Writer and former Rajshahi University professor Hasan Azizul Huq said, "You cannot instantly understand what you have lost when you lose such a towering figure."

Azizul added, "He used to love everyone who went to meet him and received everyone with warmth."

Born in Kolkata in 1937,

Curbs on movement

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It is the sixth extension of the shutdown that was enforced on March 26 to check the spread of the deadly virus.

Most of the public and private offices have been shut since then. Some government offices involved in providing emergency services have been kept open on a limited scale.

NO EID JAMAAT AT EIDGAH

Meanwhile, the religious affairs ministry yesterday issued an urgent notice saying there would be no Eid jamaat at Eidgah or open grounds on the Eid-ul-Fitr due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

It asked people to offer Eid prayers

Plasma therapy

FROM PAGE 1

He was admitted to Evercare Hospital on April 25 and given the therapy on May 4 and 5.

"He is out of ventilation service now and doing quite well," Dr Arif Mahmud, head of medical service at Evercare hospital, said yesterday.

About a century-old convalescent plasma therapy has shown some efficacy in treating measles, chickenpox and rabies.

The therapy involves taking antibodies from the blood of a person who has recovered from Covid-19 and transfusing the antibodies into an active coronavirus patient to help improve the latter's immune system to fight the infection.

"Plasma taken from one blood donor can be used for treating two patients. But the unfortunate part

Anisuzzaman and his family shifted to Bangladesh, soon after the partition in 1947. He started his academic career as a lecturer at the Bangla department at Dhaka University. He also taught at Chittagong University.

He was also associated with research projects at the United Nations University. He was a Visiting Fellow at the University of Paris, North Carolina State University and the University of Calcutta, and a Visiting Professor at the Visva-Bharati of India.

Anisuzzaman was not only a very committed teacher but also a tireless researcher of Bengali culture, language and literature. His research into the reflection of the Muslim mind in the nineteenth century Bangla literature and into pre-nineteenth century Bangla prose were pathbreaking.

His book Muslim Manash O Bangla Sahitya (1964), was on assessment of the position of Bengali Muslims and the nature of their contributions in Bengali literature.

Swarup Sandhane (1976) was another important book on Bangla language and literary history. In the book, Anisuzzaman discussed the state of Bangla literature during the age of the Charyapada and related period.

In his Purono Bangla Gadya (1984), he shed light on literary conventions of Old Bangla prose before the 18th century.

Amar Ekattor (1997), his memoirs on liberation war, and Kal Nirabadhi (2003), his autobiography are two of his most loved books.

His first short story was published in the Nowbahar, a literary magazine in 1950. Since then he never looked back and successfully established himself in the field of research and original writing.

His writings on our national identity and educational, religious, historical, and social reconstruction are considered a treasure trove by book lovers and academics.

His other publications include Bangla Nari: Sahitye O Samaje, Ithas, vols. I & II (with others), Sardhashatavare Rabindranath, and Anisuzzaman has played a significant role in all democratic movements from the State Language Movement of 1952 to the Bangladesh liberation war in 1972 and for the restoration of democracy in Bangladesh in the 1980s and for the trial of war criminals later, having appeared as a witness before the International Crimes Tribunal. He remained a great champion for the cause of secularism.

He was a member of the Planning Commission of Bangladesh during the Liberation War and a member of the National Education Commission set up by the government after liberation. He was a pivotal figure in translating the Constitution of Bangladesh in Bangla in 1972. He also served as Chairman of the Trustee Board of the Nazrul Institute.

Anisuzzaman was one of the 17 intellectuals who protested the Pakistani government move to limit broadcasting Tagore songs on radio and television in 1967, they collected signatures for a petition and published it in several newspapers. One of the very first publications on language movement: 'Rastrabhasha: Ki o Keno' was written by him.

For his contributions to education, literature and society he was awarded the Nilkanta Sarkar Gold Medal from the University of Dhaka, Dawood Prize for literature from the Pakistan Writers' Guild, the Bangla Academy award for research, Begum Zebunnesa and Kazi Mahbubullah award, Channel 1 lifetime achievement award, Suha Kamal Sammanana from the Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, BRAC Bank-Samakal literary award and Chandrabati Academy lifetime achievement award.

at nearby mosques, following special instructions.

In the notice, the ministry listed at least 13 instructions for people and the mosque authorities to follow during Eid prayers.

According to the instructions, there will be no carpets in the mosques during prayers, entire mosques should be disinfected before prayers, and everyone will have to bring their own prayer mats (jainamaz).

There should be soap or hand sanitiser at the entrance of every mosque; people will have to maintain distance and follow health guidelines during offering prayers, the instructions added.

The PM said her previous government during its 1996-2001 tenure had established the Karmasangsthan Bank with an aim so that the youths become self-reliant by taking loan from this bank without any security and at a low interest rate.

"An amount of Tk 2,000 crore will be given to the bank to increase its loan amount so that our youths do not roam around remaining unemployed. Rather, they would be able to do business by taking more credit from the bank."

Hasina said expatriate Bangladeshis send huge amount of remittance to the country every year. "So, we had founded another specialised bank named Probashi Kalyan Bank so that the people can go abroad by taking loan from the bank instead of selling properties."

She said the government had earlier

of them, around 750,000 took shelter in Bangladesh since a brutal military crackdown was launched in Myanmar's Rakhine State in August 2017.

Asked, Mostafa Mohammad Sazzad Hossain, assistant communication officer of UNHCR Bangladesh, said there have been fears of virus transmission in the Rohingya camps since the beginning.

"In collaboration with the government, we have taken quite good preparations for isolation,

contact tracing, testing and treatment, maintaining the World Health Organization guidelines," he told The Daily Star.

Our Cox's Bazar correspondent reports: the IEDCR Field Lab in the district tested 3,464 samples since April 2, and 146 of those were found positive for the virus.

Of the Covid-19 patients, 131 are from Cox's Bazar, seven from Bandarban and six from Chattogram.

DGHS is campaigning to raise awareness on dengue and coronavirus infections.



Pickups carrying makeshift disinfection tunnels on Dhaka University campus yesterday. The demand for such tunnels has increased after the coronavirus outbreak. Experts, however, have warned against the effects the chemicals used in the tunnel have on human skin.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Job creation

FROM PAGE 1

Over the last few weeks, some 4,000 undocumented Bangladeshis were repatriated from jails and deportation centres in the Middle East, while another 29,000 are expected to return in the coming weeks, according to Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen.

The UAE said the migrants facing job losses in the private sector should be taken back by respective countries, and threatened to review labour relations with the nations that do not comply with the order.

Alarmed by the situation, the government has instructed the Bangladesh missions, mostly in 11 Middle Eastern countries, to begin diplomatic efforts with the host countries so that migrants are not laid off.

If there is no alternative, the governments should make sure that laid-off migrant workers get at least six months' salary. Bangladesh also urged the Organization of Islamic Conference countries to create a fund for the migrant workers.

Foreign Minister Momen also requested non-aligned Movement (NAM) countries, Turkey and India to develop a global consensus to protect migrants amid looming economic slowdown.

"This is a serious issue. We are requesting our friendly countries to help protect migrant workers because they are development partners of both host and sending countries," Momen told The Daily Star.

Economists and Bangladeshi diplomats say response from the global community will depend on the length of the pandemic.

CONSEQUENCES
Bangladesh ambassador to Saudi

Tk 2,500cr to help the youth, expatriates

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those from the hijra (third gender) and bede (gypsy) communities would also be provided with financial help.

She also opened the distribution of stipend and tuition fees from her education assistance trust fund among the students of bachelor's degree and its equivalent courses of 2019 academic year through mobile/online banking.

The premier said the government has relaxed the nationwide Covid-19 shutdown to some extent for the sake of the people's livelihood.

"Though the infection rate might increase slightly for relaxing the restrictions, I hope we will be able to bring it under control.

"If we compare with the developed countries, our healthcare services showed adequate efficiency. That's why we have been able to keep the disease under control to a large extent," she said.

"We know that the mosques are run with donations from the affluent people and the mosque committees. But we also have a responsibility in this regard. We have asked the authorities to prepare a list of the mosques... we will give financial assistance to all mosques."

She said the government has appointed 2,000 doctors and 6,000 nurses so that the coronavirus-affected people get proper treatment and services.

"We'll recruit more manpower like health technologists. The health ministry has been given instructions in this regard and they will assess what types of manpower they need."

The PM said the well-off people have come forward alongside the government to extend their support to the distressed people.

First Covid-19 case detected at Rohingya camp

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suspected and confirmed cases of Covid-19 in the host as well as refugee population of Cox's Bazar. Health staff within the camps have been oriented on Infection Prevention and Control (IPC), including the appropriate use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)," it added.

As of yesterday, samples from 108 Rohingya refugees were tested for the virus.

Some 1.1 million Rohingyas live in squalid camps in Cox's Bazar.

Arabia, Golam Moshi, said the Kingdom has been implementing Saudisation policy replacing the foreigners by locals for the last several years.

Then, the coronavirus pandemic pushed down the oil price in the global market to \$20 a barrel in April from \$70 in December last year. Thus, the Gulf countries are facing serious budget deficits.

Golam Moshi said around three lakh out of about 20 lakh Bangladeshis in Saudi Arabia are undocumented. Many of them will return, as soon as the flight operations begin.

"If the pandemic comes under control by June, migrants will try to stay and continue to work. If it goes beyond, they will be frustrated and decide to return home in large numbers," said another official of the Bangladesh Embassy in Riyadh.

He told The Daily Star that many of the development projects will go for job cuts and migrants would be the most affected.

Malaysian and Singaporean employers are also considering job cuts and advising their governments to rethink foreign worker recruitment policies.

Malaysian Employers' Federation Executive Director Shamsuddin Bardan recently told the Malaysian media that two million Malaysians, likely to become jobless, could be employed in sectors that recruit foreign workers.

THE WAY FORWARD
Economist Mustafizur Rahman, distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue, fears that a large number of migrant workers from the Middle East will return home once flight operations begin, as the companies will lay off migrants for

cost cutting.

"As migrants will return home and aspirant migrants won't be able to migrate for overseas jobs, it will create huge pressure on the domestic job market," he told The Daily Star.

He noted that every year, some seven lakh out of 20 lakh young people, ready for jobs, go abroad. To cater to these aspirants and returnee migrants, the government must take up job creation and development programmes, he said.

Agriculture, rural economy, small, medium and cottage industries have more scopes for job creation now, Mustafizur suggested.

However, he warned that fair prices for farmers' produce must be ensured by linking growers with markets and enforcing necessary regulations to encourage the youth to join the sector.

Mustafizur also suggested increased expenditure in infrastructure development to create jobs.

"For example, we have a good rural road network, but most of the roads need repair. This task would require a lot of workforce," Mustafizur said.

The expatriates' welfare ministry said it planned a Tk 200 crore programme for loans to the returnee migrants so they can invest and develop business.

Mustafizur said it's a good plan but the government needs to work on improving the business environment by removing bureaucratic red tape.

The number of people without work in the country would be between 1.30 crore and 1.50 crore, as estimated by independent analysts. This is about five times the official number of unemployed population of 27 lakh as per the latest Labour Force Survey (LFS) 2017.

Relief goods were also being distributed on behalf of the Awami League so that no one suffered for want of food and treatment, she added.

She called upon the people to keep confidence and mental strength and be ready to face any situation. She urged all to follow the health guidelines properly to protect themselves from Covid-19.

Hasina thanked the health workers, including doctors and nurses, officials of the administration, members of the armed forces and law enforcement agencies, saying that they have been working round the clock to contain the spread of the disease, putting their lives at risk.

While inaugurating the distribution of stipend and tuition fees among students, the PM elaborated on various steps taken by her government for the development of education sector.

"We have given the highest importance to education as educated nation is required to build a poverty-free nation," she said, adding that the government has taken steps to reach education to the people's doorsteps.

Through the mobile and online banking, stipend and tuition fees of Tk 111,40,43,800 will be disbursed among 2,09,674 students of bachelor's degree and its equivalent courses.

Education Minister Dipu Moni joined the video conference from her ministry, while Deputy Minister for Education Mohibul Hasan Nowfel was present at the ministry.

The premier later exchanged views with the beneficiaries of the cash assistance programme from Barguna, Shariatpur, Sunamganj and Lalmonirhat.

PM's Principal Secretary Ahmad Kaikaus moderated the video conference at the Gono Bhaban.

Company launches 'anti-coronavirus fabrics'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Zaber & Zubair Fabrics Limited (Z&Z), a sister concern of local garment exporter Noman Group, formally launched what it said anti-coronavirus fabrics in Dhaka yesterday.

The company launched the fabrics at a press conference at its Dhaka office.

The innovation and research team of Z&Z started developing the special fabrics more than two months ago, almost when the outbreak was first reported in the country.

Finally, the company could obtain the Certification on Compliance from the UK Certification and Inspection Limited in London for the European markets this week.

The company also obtained the US FDA Compliance certification for all types of fabrics and protective clothing for the American markets, said Anol Rayhan, senior brand manager at Z&Z said after the press conference.

The fabrics was sent to different labs in the Europe and the US for testing. The tests in the labs were successful, said Anol Rayhan.

14 injured as spinning mill workers, police clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogura

At least 14 people were injured as a spinning mill workers and police clashed in Bogura's Sherpur upazila yesterday morning.

The workers of Ronak Spinning Mill Ltd were demanding their salaries for the months of April, May and festival bonus before Eid.

The clash ensued when police charged truncheons and fired rubber bullets to bring the situation under control.

The wounded, including four police personnel, were undergoing treatment at Sherpur Upazila Health Complex, said police.

The workers and the mill authorities were locked in an altercation on Wednesday morning over sacking of four workers when the mill stayed closed from April 6 to May 1.

Consecutive

FROM PAGE 1

"The number of corona sample tests has multiplied in the last one month. As a result, we are now able to identify more infected people. The more infected people are identified, the less will be the chances of new infections.

"The number of daily tests will be increased to 10,000 soon and then to 15,000. The government has enough kits in stock."

He came up with the statement while speaking as chief guest at a reception organised marking the appointment of 5,000 nurses at the conference room of Directorate General of Nursing and Midwifery in the capital's Agargaon.

At the online briefing, Prof Nasima said of the newly detected coronavirus patients, 854 were in Dhaka and 287 elsewhere.

She said the country was passing the 10th week since the first case was reported on March 8.

"We're going through the 10th week when 7,093 new cases have been reported and 1,189 patients recovered. Sixty-nine deaths have been recorded till May 14," she said.

Among the latest deceased, two were aged between 71 and 80, five between 51 and 60, five between 41 and 50, one was between 31 and 40 and another between 21 and 30.

As of May 14, the recovery rate against the number of infections is 19.10 percent while the death rate is 1.5 percent.

Another 201 people were taken to isolation in 24 hours till 2:30pm yesterday while 3,031 were home and institutionally quarantined during the period.

Double blow

FROM PAGE 1

complicated. We have had a bitter experience with dengue last year," Dr ABM Abdullah, personal physician of the prime minister, told The Daily Star.

"If coronavirus is added to dengue, the situation will be further alarming," Dr Abdullah added.

He also urged for utmost caution to fight both the diseases.

On the coronavirus front, since the first case was reported on March 8, the death toll has risen to 283. And the number of total infections stood at 18,863 till yesterday.

Dr Shahnila Ferdousi, line director of Centre for Disease Control at DGHS, said Anisur Rahman's case is likely the first case with both coronavirus and dengue in the country.

She, however, said people should not worry. "If fever is under control and the patient has no coughing or breathing complications then they should rest and stay hydrated in the confines of their house," she said.

But she did patients should seek medical help if they have breathing difficulties.

DGHS is campaigning to raise awareness on dengue and coronavirus infections.

Detained children at Covid-19 risk

Unicef says, welcomes virtual courts to expedite their release

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The number of children detained has increased in the country since court proceedings were postponed in March amid Covid-19 outbreak, Unicef Bangladesh said yesterday.

"Their number is now almost twice the capacity of the juvenile centres," it said in a statement, adding, more than 1,000 children awaiting trial or sentenced for petty crimes are currently held in three correction centres.

With limited staff and logistical support, and with inadequate water, sanitation and hygiene facilities, it is exceptionally difficult for children and staff at the centres to practice physical distancing or to self-isolate to minimise the risk of Covid-19 infection.

"These facilities can become hotspots of infection," it added.

Amid this, seven children were released on Wednesday through setting up a virtual children's court. Several hundred can

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Amid all the hype of fancy hand sanitisers, rubbing alcohol and disinfectant liquid soaps that have come to the fore with the heightened hygiene awareness that the novel coronavirus has caused, it appears that some still have faith in good old 'Bangla Saban', a traditional laundry soap. The ball-shaped soap still being manufactured in large quantities, an indication that it still holds some market share. The photo was taken at Chattogram city's Rajakhali area recently.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Dampara Police Lines turning into Covid-19 hotspot

44 test positive, 137 quarantined

FM MIZANUR RAHMAN, Ctg

Despite a number of measures taken by the authorities to stop transmission of Covid-19 among law enforcers, Chattogram Metropolitan Police (CMP) Dampara Police Lines has become a coronavirus hotspot now, said police officials.

According to officials, in most cases the infected police personnel had no major symptoms except fever before being tested positive for coronavirus.

Close contact with the public while performing field duty, congested living condition in police barrack, not maintaining personal hygiene and lack of proper safety gears have put the personnel of CMP at high risk of being infected.

Till May 13 night, a total of 44 police personnel including the assistant commissioner (force) of CMP tested Covid-19 positive while 137 were sent for isolation and quarantine in different places assigned by CMP, said police sources.

Apart from that, a civil staff and a cook of police barracks were infected while three family members of police personnel also tested positive.

On Wednesday, 13 police personnel including an OC of Sadarghat Police Station tested positive while on Saturday, six police personnel including a traffic sergeant of CMP port division, an assistant sub-inspector and four constables tested coronavirus positive. The sergeant's wife and brother also tested positive the same day.

Meanwhile, five police personnel who were diagnosed with the virus left the hospital after their recovery.

After transmission started in Dampara Police Lines on the first week of April, authorities arranged three places including two convention centres in port city's GEC area and a private hotel at Chawkbazar area for police personnel with an aim to maintain social distancing.

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'Irreparable loss to the nation'

Condolences pour in for National Professor Anisuzzaman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country was left in a state of mourning after national professor, renowned academician Dr Anisuzzaman passed away at the age of 83 at Dhaka CMH yesterday.

The passing of one of the country's foremost intellectuals and a lighthouse for the nation drew floods of messages of condolences and tributes from all quarters.

A freedom fighter and professor emeritus of Dhaka University Dr Anisuzzaman passed away around 5pm.

One of the most prolific essayists of the country, Prof Anisuzzaman was admitted to Universal Medical College Hospital after he fell seriously ill on April 27. He was shifted to Dhaka CMH on May 9, as his condition was not improving.

President Abdul Hamid, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain, ministers, distinguished personalities, top leaders of different political and socio-economic-cultural organisations, educational institutions and people from different walks of life expressed deep shock and sorrow at the demise of the intellectual giant of our times.

In his condolence message, President Abdul Hamid expressed profound shock and sorrow at the death of the eminent educationist and renowned writer.

"Prof Dr Anisuzzaman was a shining star that guided the nation. He played a very significant role in improving the quality of education in Bangladesh. His death is truly an irreparable loss..."

The president prayed for eternal peace of the departed soul and conveyed deep sympathy to the bereaved family.

In her condolence message, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina expressed deep shock and sorrow at the death of the noted educationist.

With profound respect, the premier recalled the outstanding contributions of Prof Anisuzzaman to the field of education and all democratic movements including the 1952 Language Movement, 1969 mass upsurge and 1971 Liberation War.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

An all-rounder in humanitarian causes

MD ABBAS

Beyond formal frontline workers -- healthcare workers, law enforcement personnel, retail staff -- the Covid-19 pandemic's vanguard is also lined by many private individuals. These volunteers and relief workers do not step out of the safety of their homes due to official calls, but rather out of a sense of duty towards their people.

Dipak Shill is one such example. For the last one month or so, Dipak has been risking his own safety to bring it to others. From emergency transportation to relief work, Dipak has been everywhere during this time, and has rightfully garnered plaudits from those he's aided.

He has been taking relief materials to the doorsteps of the needful, on his motorbike, with his own fuel money ever since the pandemic hit the country. So far, he has delivered relief packs to at least 300 families, in areas all across Dhaka, including Demra, Tongi, Savar, Jatrabari, Wari, Madertek, Bashabo, Khilgaon, Chawkbazar, Lalbag, Kamrangirchar, Rong Market, Bosila, Art Bazar, Mohammadpur, Uttara, Rampura and Badda.

Dipak, central vice president of Bangladesh Chhatra Union, said all he wants is to stand by those who are suffering in these difficult months.

"Every day I go out on my motorbike wearing protective gears thinking that today I will help more people than yesterday," he said of his conviction.

Dipak's organisation Bangladesh Chhatra Union and its associate body Bangladesh Juba Union have been raising funds for the needy and distributing hand sanitisers and relief items among those who are suffering most from the outbreak of the deadly virus.



Dipak Shill

Dipak said he is delivering aid to those areas where many cannot reach due to the lack of transportation facilities.

Besides delivering relief, he also delivers grocery items, emergency medicines, children's food and other essentials whenever anyone contacts him.

About a week ago, Dipak dropped private university student Riman Khan to his village in Tangail on his motorbike.

Riman said his family had moved to their homestead when the government first announced the shutdown. Unfortunately, he could not accompany them due to some outstanding work in the capital. And then as the shutdown became more strict, he simply remained stranded in Dhaka.

"I was stuck in Sutrapur for over a month. I was getting frustrated and growing sick, both mentally and physically," Riman said.

He came to know about Dipak "dada" through an acquaintance. Contacted, Dipak wasted no time in picking Riman up and driving him all the way to Tangail.

"I have no words left to express my gratitude to Dipak dada," Riman told this correspondent over the phone.

RMG workers demo for arrears, bonus in Ashulia

STAR REPORT

At least 4,000 workers at East Narshingpur area of Ashulia yesterday demonstrated inside the factory in the morning demanding arrears, annual earned leave allowance and Eid bonus.

Workers said at least four of their colleagues received minor injuries when the police sprayed water with cannon and released 15 rounds of tear gas on the agitating workers at around 11:30am.

"We rejoined the factory on the first week of May and we have been doing our duty peacefully until Wednesday," said a worker, seeking anonymity.

"We were staging sit-in programme inside the factory as the authority is yet to pay our salary for April, and yearly earning allowance of last year. They [factory authority] are also yet to fix the date for paying Eid bonus," she added.

"We are passing a difficult time amid this shutdown. Homeowners are not waiving rent. Even, we wanted to accept 60 per cent salary for April but factory owner yet to pay that," said another worker, "We will starve if we don't get paid."

The Daily Star could not reach Arifur Rahman Sinha, managing director of Medlar Apparels Ltd. over phone despite multiple attempts. Text messages also went unreplied.

Md Rezwana Selim, a director of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), who deals with labour unrest said they are in discussion with the factory's management regarding the delayed payment. "The delay may be caused by international buyers delaying their payments," Selim said.

Jane Alam Khan, additional superintendent of police of Dhaka Industrial Police-1 told The Daily Star, they had to break and enter through the main entrance of the factory and used some tear gas shells and water cannon calm the unrest.

Jane Alam said the factory authority claim they have already sent the salary for April to workers' bank accounts, but workers say they are yet to be paid.

Flight ban in place till May 30

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh yesterday extended the ban on passenger flight operations with all countries, except China, until May 30 to contain the spread of Covid-19 in the country.

CAAB Chairman Air Vice Marshal M Mafidur Rahman made the disclosure in a video message, adding that flight operations on domestic routes will also be suspended until May 30.

Cargo flights, emergency landing, air ambulance, special flights, and relief-carrying flights will be outside its purview.

Biman Bangladesh Airlines yesterday also extended the ban on operations on its 17 international and seven domestic routes till May 30.

A number of countries, including the US, UK, Canada, Turkey, Sri Lanka, Australia, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, Bhutan and Nepal have operated special charter flights amid the suspension to take their citizens back.

The government has also facilitated charter flights to bring back its nationals from a number of countries.

Earlier this week, Mafidur Rahman told The Daily Star they were planning to resume at a limited scale after May 16 if Covid-19 situation improves or remains steady.

SBMCH gets first kidney dialysis unit

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

A kidney dialysis unit with 10 machines has been installed at Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital (SBMCH) in Barishal.

The authorities of the public hospital said the government took the initiative to support kidney patients -- especially those infected with coronavirus and in urgent need of dialysis.

The machines were procured from Japan, said Dr Manabendra Das, registrar of the Department of Nephrology at SBMCH.

Hospital Director Dr Bakir Hossain, who inaugurated the unit on Tuesday, said 10 more machines will be set up soon and then 20 patients can undergo kidney dialysis at a time.

Through the inauguration, the hospital has got the first-ever kidney dialysis unit in its 52 years of history, said the authorities.

The dialysis would be cheaper than that of private hospitals or clinics, they confirmed.

Talking about the issue, Dr Manabendra Das said a kidney patient, who needs dialysis twice a week for six months, have to spend around Tk 2.5 lakh at private healthcare centre.

However, SBMCH is offering such a package for only Tk 20,000, Dr Das told this newspaper.

Khasru Alam Sikder from Baherchar village in Patuakhali -- who is the first patient admitted to the unit -- said, "I am very happy to receive the service. Now, I need not go to Dhaka or a private clinic to get a dialysis."



Slowly but surely, streetside shopping is coming back to Dhaka. Sellers have started to display colourful clothing items, bed sheets and luggages at their makeshift stalls in the capital's Gulistan, as Ramadan enters the last 10 days. During regular times, this would already be underway by now. However, due to the pandemic this year, it's only now that sales are picking up, and not without objections from conscious corners of society. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Petition seeks 'yellow zone' at private hospitals

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh (HRPB) yesterday filed a writ petition seeking its directive on authorities concerned to set up "yellow zones" at entrances of every private hospital, clinic and diagnostic centre.

Advocate Manzill Murshid submitted the petition digitally, requesting the HC to pass an order on the government to supply personal protective equipment to doctors, nurses and staff at yellow zones who will conduct tests of emergency patients and provide treatment during the pandemic.

In the petition, HRPB prayed to the HC to issue a rule asking authorities to explain why they should not be directed to take necessary steps in this regard, and to direct respondents to show cause why their failure to protect people from coronavirus should not be declared illegal and unconstitutional.

Chairman of advisory committee for prevention of infectious diseases, health secretary, additional secretary (hospitals) of health ministry, director general of directorate of health services and president and secretary of Bangladesh Private Clinics and Diagnostics Owners Association have been made respondents to the required rule.

If a yellow zone is set up at the entrance of private hospitals and clinics, patients will be tested instantly and they will be classified on the basis of test reports and then necessary treatment can be given to them, said Advocate Manzill Murshid.

He told this newspaper that officials concerned of the HC are likely to hear on the petition on May 18.

Fakre Alam passes away

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Fakre Alam, a poet and special correspondent of Dainik Kaler Kantho, passed away in Jashore yesterday at the age of 65.

He had been suffering from cancer for a long time. He was taken to hospital after he fell ill, where a doctor declared him dead.

Alam began his career as a journalist in 1985, and worked at various national publications. He received numerous awards and honours, including Monajit Uddin Memorial Award, Bazlur Rahman Memorial Medal and TIB Investigative Journalism Award.

He also wrote 34 books on poetry, journalism and Liberation War.

He is survived by his mother, wife, two sons and a daughter.

Alam's body was taken to Jashore Press Club around 4:30pm and kept there for fellow journalists to honour him. His namaz-e-janaza was held at Jashore district school ground, and he was buried at his family graveyard.

Irreparable

FROM PAGE 3

"We have lost a valiant freedom fighter and a luminary. The nation will forever remember his invaluable contributions," she said. The prime minister prayed for eternal peace of the departed soul and conveyed profound sympathy to the bereaved family.

Speaker of the House Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, opposition leader Raushan Ershad, Anti-Corruption Commission Chairman Iqbal Mahmood, a host of ministers and state ministers including Liberation War Minister AKM Mozammel Haque, Land Minister Saifuzzaman Chowdhury, Road Transport and Bridges Minister and Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader, Law Minister Anisul Huq, Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal, Education Minister Dr Dipu Moni, Industries Minister Nurul Majid Mahmud Humayun, Information Minister Hasan Mahmud, Planning Minister MA Mannan and Expatriate Welfare Minister Imran Ahmad, among

others, expressed deep shock at the demise of Prof Anisuzzaman.

Different socio-cultural, professional bodies and educational institutions -- including University Grants Commission, United Nations Association of Bangladesh, Sammilita Sangskritik Jote, Sector Commanders Forum (Liberation War, 1971), Chhayanaut, Forum for Secular Bangladesh and Trail of War Criminals of 1971, Sammilito Samajik Andolon, Sammilito Sangskritik Jote, Dhaka University, Jahangirnagar University, Begum Rokeya University (Rangpur), Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik and Krishok Sramik Mukti Andolon -- also expressed their condolences.

Meanwhile, political parties including Awami League, Jatiya Party, Workers Party, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, Gonoforum, Bangladesh National Awami Party and Bangladesh Chhatra Moitree and distinguished personalities also expressed deep shock at the passing of Dr Anisuzzaman.

Detained

FROM PAGE 3

be released in the next two weeks, Unicef said.

Welcoming the initiative, Tomoo Hozumi, Unicef representative in Bangladesh, said, "The wellbeing and protection of children must be at the centre of our response to Covid-19."

Meanwhile, several virtual children's courts are expediting the trial of children to release them from juvenile centres to avoid their possible infection with Covid-19, according to the statement.

The first-ever such court in the country began operating on Tuesday.

The Supreme Court established the courts with support from Unicef, which also provides technical support to the Department of Social Services and the juvenile centres to manage the court procedures.

Unicef said it is also working with the SC special committee on child rights and law ministry for improved justice for children, including child-friendly courts.

BSRM continues support in fight against Covid-19

CITY DESK

Steel manufacturers BSRM Group has continued to provide support throughout the country during the Covid-19 pandemic.

BSRM handed over a cheque to prime minister's relief and welfare fund last month. Dr Ahmad Kaikaus, principal secretary of Prime Minister's Office, received the cheque, said a press release.

Recently, BSRM employees contributed a day's salary to the group's fundraising programme to help those in need.

Chattogram Metropolitan Police Commissioner Mahbubur Rahman received a cheque to stand by more than 2,500 families of the port city. Additional commissioners Amena Begum, SM Mostak Ahmed Khan and Khamol Kumar Nath also received cheques.

BSRM Group also handed over another cheque to the Chattogram deputy commissioner's office. Md Kamal Hossain, ADC (general) of the office, received it. Another cheque was handed over to SM Rashidul Hoque, superintendent of Chattogram District Police.

BSRM is frequently providing high-quality personal protective equipment for medical staff of various hospitals in Dhaka and Chattogram. As part of the programme, a good number of PPE were handed over to DMP Commissioner Shaiful Islam for distribution.

The company's business partners also helped it donate food for labourers. During lockdown, labourers are out of work, so they were happy to receive the support.

Dampara Police Line

FROM PAGE 3

Additional Deputy Commissioner (Headquarters) of CMP Md Moinul Islam told The Daily Star, "Over 7,000 members of CMP are performing duty across the city in this critical time and as per the duty ratio, the number of Covid-19 patients is not significant."

"We have done some stratification to stop the transmission and taken some strict measures to keep the infection number low," the ADC added.

ADC Moinul said, "We are trying our best to aware our police force who live in barracks to maintain social distance and hygiene at all time."

According to CMP, six police members are in isolation unit and eight in flu corner of Dampara Police Lines Hospital, one in Chattogram Field Hospital, 34 are in CMP School, six in Mansurabad Police Lines, and 12 are in Premier University Dormitories for quarantine. Apart from that 70 police of different police stations are in quarantine.

CMP sources said a traffic police constable, aged around 50, of north division of CMP traffic barracks first tested positive last month. After the detection, CMP separated those police personnel aged over 50 from the force and stopped assigning them duty considering the high risk of infection.

In barracks, basins have been installed with soap in every floor while electric hot water pots were also set up. Apart from that egg, milk, and healthy food are distributed among 1,800 police personnel every day.

However, field level police personnel said avoiding public contact while on duty is the main challenge as more people are going out of their houses. They also alleged that the number of protective gear is not enough.

Seeking anonymity, a sergeant of traffic port zone told this correspondent, "We are provided with just two face masks, a bottle of hand sanitiser and one set of PPE for use. We personally sourced face masks, hand sanitiser and gloves to keep ourselves safe as the items provided were not enough."

A traffic constable also said that they were just provided a few masks and one set of hand gloves from the office.

The higher authorities instructed them to wear raincoats for safety but it's quite impossible to perform an eight-hour duty wearing raincoat under the scorching sun, he said.

"We heard that we will be given PPE within few days," he added. A nayek of CMP who lives in a dormitory said, "Most members of police are frightened but they are reluctant to maintain social distance inside the barracks at all times."

Mostak Ahmed, additional commissioner (traffic) of CMP said, "We have arranged protective gear for all traffic police personnel and we are distributing those."

Amir Jafar, deputy commissioner (headquarters) of CMP, told The Daily Star, "We asked the police stations' officers-in-charge to keep stations neat and clean and maintain all hygiene and distancing directives."

Containment

FROM PAGE 12

and ask for whatever would be needed. Then the people delivering the products were asked to leave the goods at the entrance of the neighbourhood. We had people pick the goods from there and take them to the flats after disinfecting the packages," he said.

No outsider has been allowed in the area since, and only those who have no other choice are allowed to go outside and after they return, security guards spray disinfectants on them or their vehicles.

There are proper hand washing facilities at the gate of each building and "a disinfection tunnel" is being built at the entrance, he said.

In another part of the city, after a Buet teacher's mother tested positive on March 23, residents placed similar restrictions on the teachers' quarter near Dhakeshwari Temple on Dhaka University campus. Two others in that teacher's flat tested negative afterwards.

Since then, everyone has stayed indoors unless there is an emergency and there has been no second case in the quarter, said Prof Pran Kanai Saha, president of the residents' association.

"We are not allowing any outsiders; drivers and house staff are not allowed unless there is an emergency," he said.

For grocery and other needs, the association made arrangements similar to the ones in Tolarbag.

The residents will continue to follow the guidelines until it is safe to return to normalcy, he added.

NOT SO GOOD ELSEWHERE

On March 23, the day the two neighbourhoods imposed the restrictions, a total of 282 people from 75 areas in the capital tested positive for coronavirus.

There were 11 cases in Jatrabari, seven in Razarbagh and two in Mohakhali, 12 in Mohammadpur and three in Tejgaon.

But over the weeks, the number of positive cases went past 7,000 in Dhaka and these five areas are now hotspots in the city.

3 Meherpur

FROM PAGE 12

served several notices to the owner asking to vacate the house as they were to demolish it, the report added.

Contacted, Maqbool said all the allegation were false as he did not receive any such notice from the owner and had been regularly paying the rents.

His claims, however, could not be independently verified as The Daily Star could not get hold of the house owner despite several attempts.

Yadul said he had heard about the case and he got all the supporting data to substantiate the news story in question.

Scientists

FROM PAGE 12

"However, even with the seismic data there was an important missing piece of information without which the data could not be interpreted. We needed to know the seismic properties of the iron-sulfur alloy thought to make up the core of Mars."

The Insight probe is a lander that measures the planet's "vital signs" such as its "pulse" (seismology), "temperature" (heat flow), and "reflexes" (precision tracking), Nasa explains.

Previously, it has found activity of seismic quakes, called "Marsquakes", which helps identify geologic layers in the planet.

"The exploration of the deep interiors of Earth, Mars and other planets is one of the great frontiers of science," said Nishida. "It's fascinating partly because of the daunting scales involved, but also because of how we investigate them safely from the surface of the Earth."

RMG owners want

FROM PAGE 12

festival bonus is equivalent to one-month basic payment," China told The Daily Star by phone.

She said as per the proposal of owners in yesterday's tripartite meeting at Srana Bhaban, a grade seven worker will get Tk 2,050 as bonus as his or her basic salary is Tk 4,100.

"We want bonus as much as basic salary of a month," China said after the meeting.

Talking to The Daily Star, Amirul Haque Amin, president of National Garment Workers Federation, said it was fully illogical that the owners were now proposing cutting of 50 percent bonus after they had curtailed 35 percent gross salary of April.

Monnujan Sufian, state minister for labour and employment, also asked the owners to pay 100 percent bonus, according to a ministry statement yesterday.

After the meeting, Mohammad Hatem, vice-president of Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association, said, "This is our proposal for this Eid as our business is not going well. We are just continuing our business now. We are not making profits."

Monnujan chaired the tripartite meeting of owners, union leaders, and government high-ups.

China said the proposal of bonus payment was not finalised in the meeting as they would hold more meetings.

She added that three days' holiday for Eid in the garment sector was finalised, and payment of salary for the month of May in first 10 days of June was finalised.

Virus causing global

FROM PAGE 12

ones will be infected or die from the novel coronavirus.

It also pointed to the psychological impact on vast numbers of people who have lost or are at risk of losing their livelihoods, have been separated from loved ones or have suffered under drastic lockdown orders.

Global death toll

FROM PAGE 12

"HIV has not gone away -- but we have come to terms with the virus."

'SMEARING'

The prospect of the disease hanging around leaves governments facing a delicate balancing act between suppressing the pathogen and getting economies up and running.

And with more gloomy forecasts emerging from the US, Trump has increasingly looked to pin the blame on China, where the virus first emerged in December.

US security agencies accused Chinese hackers of attempting to steal intellectual property related to treatments.

"China's efforts to target these sectors pose a significant threat to our nation's response to Covid-19," the FBI and the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) said, without giving evidence to support the allegations.

TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL BANGLADESH
Social movement against corruption

Special Anti-Corruption Investigative Journalism Awards 2020 on COVID-19 Response

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) is inviting submissions of both print and electronic media reports for Special Anti-Corruption Investigative Journalism Awards on COVID-19. Winners will be awarded for the best-adjudged investigative reports on corruption in COVID-19 crisis response published or broadcast in Bangladeshi print and electronic media during March 8 to December 31, 2020.

For more information, please visit:
www.ti-bangladesh.org/sija-COVID-19

Deadline for submission: 15 January 2021

Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board
Sustainable Social Services in CHT Project
Rangamati
www.chtdb.gov.bd

Memo No. 29.31.2084.017.039.298.20-630 Date: 14-05-2020

e-Tender Notice
(Open Tendering Method)

This is to notify all concerned that the following tenders have been published through e-GP Portal.

Tender ID & Reference No.	Name of works	Publishing & closing date
ID No: 460289, 29.31.2084.017.039.298.20-630; Dated: 14/05/2020	Print and supply of different printing items i.e. Report form register file cover file board project brochure profile and other forms of the project titled Sustainable Social Services in Chittagong Hill Tracts under CHTDB Rangamati.	14-May-2020 09:00 & 31-May-2020 13:00
ID No: 460332, 29.31.2084.017.039.298.20-630; Dated: 14/05/2020	Supply of Office Stationery Items.	14-May-2020 09:00 & 31-May-2020 13:00
ID No: 460426, 29.31.2084.017.039.298.20-630; Dated: 14/05/2020	Supply and Installation of IPS & IPS Battery at SSCHT Project Head Office District offices and Upazila Offices.	14-May-2020 09:00 & 31-May-2020 13:00
ID No: 460445, 29.31.2084.017.039.298.20-630; Dated: 14/05/2020	Supply learning materials for the para centers of Sustainable Social Services in CHT Project under CHTDB Rangamati.	14-May-2020 09:00 & 31-May-2020 13:00

The interested firms/persons may visit the website: (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) to get the details of the tender.

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)

Sd/-
Dr. Prakash Kanti Chowdhury
Project Director
Phone: 0351-71203
Email: icdx3rd@gmail.com

GD-848

VACANCY
at the Embassy of Japan in Dhaka

The Embassy of Japan is seeking a qualified candidate for the following position for immediate appointment.

a) Ambassador Residence Bearer

REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS:

- 1. EDUCATION :** H.S.C or equivalent. Education qualification could be relaxed for the experienced candidates.
- 2. AGE:** from 25 to 35 years old.
- 3. OTHER SKILLS:** Applicant should be able to communicate in English. At least 05 (Five) years experiences performing the duties of a butler or bearer. Understanding of laundry, ironing and other housekeeping. A high standard of cleanliness and hygiene. Excellent interpersonal skills and being able to work well in a team. A high standard of professionalism.

HOW TO APPLY

All applicants are required to submit:

- (1) Curriculum Vitae including contact information including phone numbers, permanent and current address and e-mail addresses
- (2) 01(One) recent passport size coloured photo with the applicant's name on the back.
- (3) Photocopy of all relevant academic records and certificates.
- (4) Photocopy of National ID Card.
- (5) Nationality Certificate (Local Chairman / Commissioner).

Please indicate "Application for Residence Bearer" for on the front side of the envelope.

The deadline for the application is 27 MAY, 2020. Only short-listed candidates who pass the first screening will be notified of the date for the interview.

Embassy of Japan, Plot No. 5 & 7, Dutabash Road, Baridhara, Dhaka-1212

GD-849

Govt measures to help 10 lakh

FROM PAGE 12

The government has also abolished license and permit of yarn distribution to remove middlemen from the distribution system. Bangladesh Small Industry Corporation will distribute yarn directly to the weavers under a rationing system. There are 3 lakh looms in the country that meet 80 percent of the total demand.

Bangabandhu's promise to keep the price of cloth affordable for all is fulfilled by this order, says Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha. It is also hoped that this initiative will improve significantly the dilapidated condition of the 10 lakh weavers in the country.

DP DHAR CALLS ON BANGABANDHU

DP Dhar, Chairman of policy planning in the Indian external affairs ministry, today calls on Bangabandhu and submits a detailed report on the recently concluded emissary-level discussion between India and Pakistan. It is reported that they discuss wide-ranging issues, including the upcoming Indira-Bhutto summit. DP Dhar headed the Indian delegation at the Indo-Pak emissary-level meeting.

FAIR-PRICE SHOPS ACROSS THE

COUNTRY

Bangabandhu today declares that 4,200 fair price shops will be established across

the country within a week. He makes the declaration during a meeting with Bangladesh Mahila Parishad. Earlier, the women's organisation brought out a procession demanding immediate measures to control price hikes and bring back Bangladesh stranded in Pakistan.

BRAZIL RECOGNISES BANGLADESH

Brazil today accords recognition to Bangladesh. So far, 71 countries have recognised the newly-independent Bangladesh.

The government of Spain has informed the Bangladesh foreign ministry about its decision to establish diplomatic relationships with Bangladesh.

SHORTAGE OF LIFE-SAVING DRUGS

Acute shortage of life-saving drugs in the local markets is putting lives of one crore patients at risk. The worst sufferers are tuberculosis and diabetic patients. In some cases, the prices of essential medicines have increased 100 to 200 percent. Stoppage of import, setbacks in local production, poor distribution system and market manipulation are identified as the major reasons behind such unusual price

SOURCE: May 16, 1972 issue of Dainik Bangla.


World Health Organization
Bangladesh

VACANCY NOTICE

World Health Organization (WHO) invites applications from the interested and eligible candidates for the following position under Special Service Agreement

- Immunization and Outbreaks Officer, SSA7

For further details on the terms of reference and deadline for applications, please visit our website:
<https://www.who.int/bangladesh/about-us/employment> and
<http://www.searo.who.int/bangladesh/about/employment/en/>

Qualified female candidates are highly encouraged to apply

 WHO has a smoke-free environment and does not recruit smokers or other tobacco users.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Ministry of Road Transport and Bridges
Road Transport and Highways Division
Admin Section
www.rthd.gov.bd

e-Tender Notice (OTM)

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of goods as mentioned in the following table:

Tender ID	Description	Last selling date and time	Closing date and time	Opening date and time
460171	Supply of Brand Laptop, Desktop Computer, Laser Printer, Scanner and UPS.	27 May 2020 17:00	31 May 2020 12:00	31 May 2020 12:00

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP Portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) is required.

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Md. Liaquat Ali Khan
Senior Assistant Secretary
Phone: 9584128

GD-849

UNGA meet unlikely in September: UN chief

The coronavirus pandemic makes it "unlikely" that world leaders and thousands of other participants will be able to gather in New York in September for the annual UN General Assembly, Secretary General Antonio Guterres has said.

Clashes in Kashmir after troops shoot dead civilian

Hundreds of angry demonstrators clashed with government forces Wednesday in Indian-administered Kashmir after soldiers shot dead a young man at a checkpoint, officials and locals said.

Taliban claim deadly attack on Afghan army base

The Taliban said they carried out a deadly attack yesterday on an Afghan army base after the government ordered forces to resume strikes against the militants.



A medical worker prepares to take a swab sample from a student to be tested for the Covid-19 novel coronavirus as senior students prepare to return to school in Wuhan in China's central Hubei province yesterday.

UK approves Covid-19 antibody tests

REUTERS, London

Britain is in talks with Swiss drugmaker Roche Holding AG to buy an accurate COVID-19 antibody test, following the lead of the European Union and United States, which had already given preliminary approval to the tests.

Mass antibody testing with millions of kits is being considered by many countries as a way to speed the reopening of economies devastated by the lockdowns and social distancing measures put in place to slow the spread of the new coronavirus.

A Public Health England laboratory concluded on May 7 that the Roche test detected the exact antibodies prompted by the virus, but the findings were only made public late on Wednesday.

"This has the potential to be a game changer," Edward Argar, Britain's junior health minister said yesterday.

"The test requires a blood sample to be taken by a qualified healthcare professional and processed in a laboratory," Roche said, adding that it was one of the most accurate tests on the market with over 99.8 specificity.

"This level of accuracy is vitally important because there are a number of viruses with very similar antibodies to Covid-19, including the common cold, and other SARS strains, which can produce a positive result in some less accurate antibody tests."

The test can deliver results in 18 minutes, Roche added.

CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC LATEST UPDATES

DEATHS NEAR 300,000

The novel coronavirus has killed at least 297,259 people since the outbreak first emerged in China last December, according to an AFP tally at 1100 GMT yesterday.

JAPAN LIFTS VIRUS EMERGENCY Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has lifted a state of emergency imposed due to the coronavirus for the majority of the country but kept it in place for top cities Tokyo and Osaka.

NEW ZEALAND LOCKDOWN ENDS New Zealanders mingled with friends and hit the shopping malls for the first time in seven weeks as a national lockdown ended and businesses faced a "new normal" minimising the constant threat of coronavirus.

4.4PC FRENCH INFECTED A study led by the Pasteur Institute says a mere 4.4% of the French population - or 2.8 million people - have been infected by the novel coronavirus, much higher than the official count of cases but way too low to achieve so-called "herd immunity".

MALDIVES EXTENDS LOCKDOWN The Maldives extended its lockdown for another two weeks as the former tourist hotspot reported its fourth coronavirus fatality and the pandemic spread rapidly in the congested capital Male.

SPEECH CAN SPREAD VIRUS Microdroplets generated by speech can remain suspended in the air in an enclosed space for more than ten minutes, said a study. Taking into account the known concentration of coronavirus in saliva, scientists at Researchers at the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) estimated that each minute of loudly speaking can generate more than 1,000 virus-containing droplets capable of remaining airborne for eight minutes or more in a closed space.

Trade deal 'doesn't feel the same'

Says Trump as he steps up attack on China over pandemic

AGENCIES

US President Donald Trump yesterday said he was very disappointed in China over its failure to contain the novel coronavirus, saying the worldwide pandemic cast a pall over his U.S.-China trade deal.

The coronavirus outbreak originated in Wuhan, China, in December and was spreading silently as Washington and Beijing signed a Phase 1 trade deal hailed by the Republican president as a major achievement.

"I'm very disappointed in China," the Republican president said in an interview broadcast Thursday on Fox Business Network.

"They should have never let this

happen. So I make a great trade deal and now I say this doesn't feel the same to me. The ink was barely dry and the plague came over. And it doesn't feel the same to me," Trump said.

Under the Phase 1 deal signed in January, Beijing pledged to buy at least \$200 billion in additional US goods and services over two years while Washington agreed to roll back tariffs in stages on Chinese goods.

A Chinese state-run newspaper has reported that some government advisers in Beijing were urging fresh talks and possibly invalidating the agreement.

Trump said again he was not interested in renegotiating.

While US intelligence agencies said the virus did not appear to be

manmade or genetically modified, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said early in May there is "a significant amount of evidence" the virus came from a laboratory in Wuhan. His comments followed Trump's assertion on April 30 that he was confident the coronavirus may have originated in a Chinese virology lab.

Meanwhile, Beijing yesterday accused the United States of smearing China after Washington alleged Chinese hackers were attempting to steal research on developing a vaccine against the coronavirus.

The claims have added fuel to tensions between the global superpowers, who have traded barbs over the origin of the pandemic that has killed 300,000 people.

India to feed millions of migrant workers

AFP, New Delhi

India will provide free food grains to millions of migrant workers hardest hit by a weeks-long lockdown as well as offer employment under a rural jobs programme, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said yesterday.

The government will spend 35 billion rupees (\$463.06 billion) on food for nearly 80 million migrant workers over the next two months, Sitharaman told a news conference.

The allocation is part of a 20 trillion rupee (\$266 billion) fiscal and monetary package to prop up the ailing economy. Millions of workers have fled large towns and cities after they lost their jobs during the lockdown, which is aimed at curbing the spread of the novel coronavirus.

"The government is concerned about migrant workers," Sitharaman said, and had provided funds to states to provide shelter, food grain and transport for migrants.

Since April, the government has spent 100 billion rupees to offer work to near 23 million



unemployed people in rural areas under the ongoing rural job guarantee programme, she said.

The government also plans to extend a bank loan interest subsidy programme for affordable housing to rented housing for migrant workers, she said.

On Wednesday, it announced new credit lines by offering bank guarantees on loans of over \$60 billion to small businesses, shadow banks and power companies.

In an address to the nation on Monday,

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the package was equivalent to 10% of India's gross domestic product, and was meant to support workers and businesses reeling from the impact of the prolonged shutdown.

Under lockdown since late March, India has reported more than 78,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19 among its 1.3 billion population, with over 2,500 deaths from the lung disease.

Economists said new measures would have a limited impact on the government's fiscal spending as large parts of funding for migrant workers, farmers and small businesses was through state-run banks and financial institutions.

Nevertheless, Sonal Varma, an economist at Nomura, estimated that the federal fiscal deficit is expected to touch 7% of GDP in 2020/21, double an earlier estimate of 3.5%, mainly due to a sharp fall in revenue collection.

In April, the unemployment rate rose to 23.5% from 8.7% the previous month, data released by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy, a Mumbai-based think tank, showed.

Re e-Tender Notice (Tender No. pri/jail-1 Dall articles of Pirojpur jail) e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of the goods.

Dairy Development Research Project Bangladesh Livestock Research Institute Savar, Dhaka-1341 Memo No. 33.05.2672.106.07.001.20-940 Date: 14-05-2020 e-Tender Notice e-Tender will be invited through the National e-GP Portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) for procurement of following goods.



Uproar in France as Sanofi says US to get vaccine first

World leaders demand vaccine for all

AFP, Paris

The French government cried foul yesterday after its homegrown pharmaceutical giant Sanofi said it would reserve first shipments of any COVID-19 vaccine for the United States, slamming the move as "unacceptable" in a crisis that has killed nearly 300,000 people worldwide.

Sanofi's chief executive Paul Hudson sparked the controversy after announcing that US patients would get first choice because their government was helping to fund the vaccine search.

His comments drew outrage from officials and health experts, who noted that the Paris-based multinational has benefited from tens of millions of euros in research credits from the French state in recent years.

"For us, it would be unacceptable for there to be privileged access to such and such a country for financial reasons," France's deputy finance minister Agnes Pannier-Rumacher told Sud Radio Thursday.

Around 140 former and current world leaders, including South African President Cyril Ramaphosa and Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan, and health experts yesterday called on officials to ensure that any vaccines found be made available "for all people, in all countries, free of charge."

"Now is not the time to allow the interests of the wealthiest corporations and governments to be placed before the universal need to save lives," the signatories said ahead of the World Health Organization's annual meeting next week.

"Access to vaccines and treatments as global public goods are in the interests of all humanity."

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার জেলা সমাজসেবা কার্যালয় লালমনিরহাট (dss.lalmonirhat.gov.bd) দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

STOCKS		COMMODITIES		ASIAN MARKETS				CURRENCIES			
DSEX	CSCX	Gold	Oil	MUMBAI	TOKYO	SINGAPORE	SHANGHAI	USD	EUR	GBP	CNY
Closed	Closed	\$1,721.60 (per ounce)	\$30.06 (per barrel)	32,122.89	19,914.78	2,522.31	2,870.34	BUY TK 83.95	89.73	101.63	11.67
								SELL TK 84.95	93.53	105.43	12.27



Star BUSINESS

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TAMING CORONAVIRUS RAMPAGE

March will be viewed as watershed for digital Bangladesh

MUHAMMAD ZAHIDUL ISLAM

The pandemic, it seems, was the big bang the digital Bangladesh charge needed to level up.

Holed up in their homes, people turned to the internet for over the last months to work, buy stuff, for entertainment and lessons.

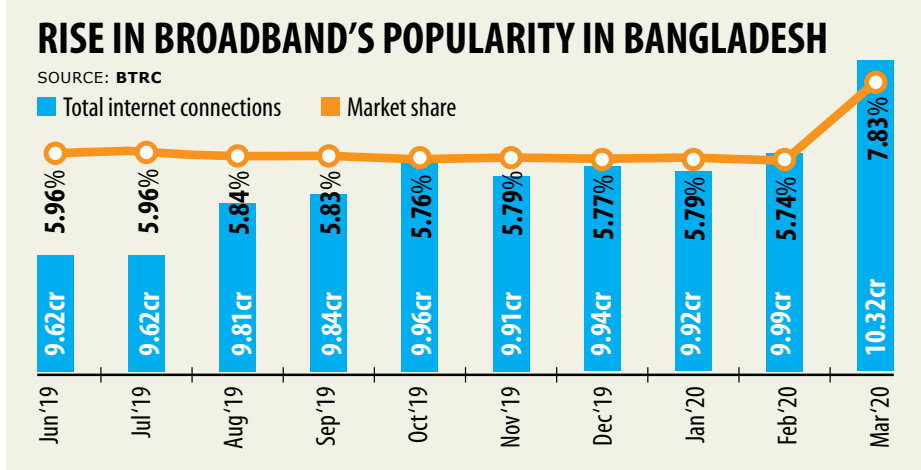
The spike in activities boosted the consumption of international internet bandwidth.

A good number of the people who have locked themselves after the first coronavirus cases were reported in Bangladesh on March 8 have connected their homes with broadband internet for faster and more economical internet connection.

And many of them were using the internet before but by way of mobile data.

In the last few weeks, sector leaders said that people are using more digital services than ever before and consuming the highest level of internet bandwidth in their life. But there had been no exact numbers.

The picture became clearer yesterday when the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) published its latest report on the country's telecom sector.



It showed broadband connections rose 31.10 per cent in March from the previous month to 80.84 lakh.

Active internet connections crossed a milestone of 10 crore users, reaching 10.33 crore in March in total.

There are not many countries in the world that can pride themselves on having 10 crore active internet connections.

It is true that 10 crore active connections don't mean that 10 crore users are actively using it, but still, this is not a minor achievement for a country like Bangladesh.

So, the third month of 2020 will be remembered as a watershed moment for the digital Bangladesh agenda.

Historically, Bangladesh is a mobile internet-dominated market but broadband is the real internet for carrying out high volume work.

Even one can find fixed broadband connections at the residences of senior executives of mobile operators. It doesn't mean that mobile internet is bad; it is just that broadband feels more solid in hand.

I personally helped three of my friends and colleagues to get broadband connections during the pandemic. These people predominantly relied on mobile internet when at home. But when the issue came to a home office, they decided to get a broadband connection without a second thought.

There are other internet users who had not taken broadband connections at home but the changing situation has prompted them to change the way they had looked at it and have now made the plunge.

Thanks to their inclusion, Bangladesh was able to add 23.41 lakh new connections to broadband internet network in March alone.

This is also a very good news just before

the World Telecommunication Day to be observed on May 17 across the globe.

Every year, the International Telecommunication Union, the international agencies and a good number of digital service and internet-related bodies and firms publish rankings and Bangladesh always lags only because of fixed broadband connectivity though we have excellent performance in other areas.

The achievement in March might not be incorporated in the coming rankings but it will surely be reflected in the studies for 2020 and Bangladesh's position will go up.

This is because the rankings are largely titled towards fixed broadband.

In terms of bandwidth use, broadband users are consuming a few times higher bandwidth than mobile internet users do.

With less than one crore active connections in the broadband segment, they are consuming about 70 per cent of the country's total bandwidth.

During the shutdown, mobile operators' bandwidth use increased 20 per cent, while it is 30 per cent for broadband. Soon after the BTRC published the report, I talked to some industry leaders and they shared another insight.

They said the broadband industry has about one crore connections, not 80.84 lakh, because not all of them are reported as individual connections though their consumption is counted.

To conclude, I must say that Bangladesh is moving towards digitalisation as a nation and we are moving in the right direction in terms of digital service acceptability although some challenges exist.

If the government and regulators address the challenges, it will catalyse the industry to move faster than ever.

ICT sector wants a Tk 5,000cr bailout package of its own

STAR BUSINESS REPORT



Trade bodies in the digital services sector yesterday pushed for a stimulus package of Tk 5,000 crore in the upcoming national budget to help the ICT industry buck the economic headwinds caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

Syed Almas Kabir, president of the Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services (BASIS), put forward the demands on behalf of five trade bodies.

The other four are the Internet Service Providers Association of Bangladesh (ISPAB), the Bangladesh Association of Call Centre and Outsourcing (BACCO), the Bangladesh Computer Samity (BCS), and the e-Commerce Association of Bangladesh (e-CAB).

Though the government has already declared stimulus packages worth Tk 95,619 crore to stave off an economic meltdown, the ICT and digital service-related companies might not be able to comply with the banks' requirements to avail loans from the bailout packages.

"So we need a separate stimulus package for the ICT industry," Kabir said.

The ICT companies can barely provide any collateral, which is a prerequisite for the loans, he said, adding that most of the firms in the sector do not have any land and previous records of taking loans.

Banks can take into consideration the ICT companies' client base, transaction records and the volume of orders while providing loans to them, Kabir said, while calling for a 2 per cent interest rate for such loans with a grace period of one year.

Call centres and outsourcing businesses have already started to bear the brunt of the pandemic, said BACCO President Wahidur Rahman Sharif.

So immediate steps are needed for the sector such that it can work seamlessly for the 'digital Bangladesh' vision of the government, Sharif said.

"This is an intellectual property-based industry, so the government should adopt a different approach while giving loans to the companies in the sector," said BCS President Shahid-Ul-Munir.

ISPAB President MA Hakim said the internet service providers are already shouldering a huge burden of value-added tax imposed by the revenue administration this fiscal year.

VAT has been brought down from 15 per cent to 5 per cent. "But we are not getting any rebate," he said, adding that the ISPs' operational costs have skyrocketed as a result.

"This issue should be addressed in the upcoming budget or customers may face bill shocks," Hakim said, while requesting the government to declare internet service as an information technology-enabled service (ITES).

Digital commerce should be declared a tax-free industry at least for the next three years, said Shomi Kaiser, president of e-CAB.

The trade bodies also urged the government to initiate steps so that all the ministries and divisions begin to use ICT services in full from next fiscal year.

Local ICT companies can be awarded some development works regarding e-governance and other online services of the government, they said.

These steps will bolster the government's digitalisation efforts and help ensure social distancing, which is an effective tool to avoid coronavirus infection, said the leaders of the trade bodies.

They urged the local companies and government agencies to use homegrown software, which they said could help them remain resilient during the times of economic downturn.

The trade bodies also demanded the full withdrawal of taxes from the ICT and ITES industries.

They suggested the government take measures like tax reductions to encourage digital payments, which will help people fight the pandemic.

Products used to ensure cybersecurity bear higher import tax, which, they said, should be withdrawn.

The ICT entrepreneurs also called for streamlining e-delivery processes to give a fillip to the sector.

Singer Bangladesh's 2019 profit shored by AC sales

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Singer Bangladesh's profits rose 12 per cent to Tk 103 crore in 2019 even though its consumer appliance sales dropped off.

Its performance has been propped up by air conditioner sales, which rose about 49 per cent to Tk 204 crore. Sales of its flagship product sewing machine surged 62 per cent to Tk 79 crore in 2019.

Its television sales raked in Tk 255 crore, down 6.72 per cent from the previous year.

Its consumer appliance sales fell 6 per cent to Tk 255.48 crore. However, its home appliance sales rose 19.23 per cent to Tk 1,104 crore.

Overall, its turnover rose 14.2 per cent to Tk 1,548 crore.

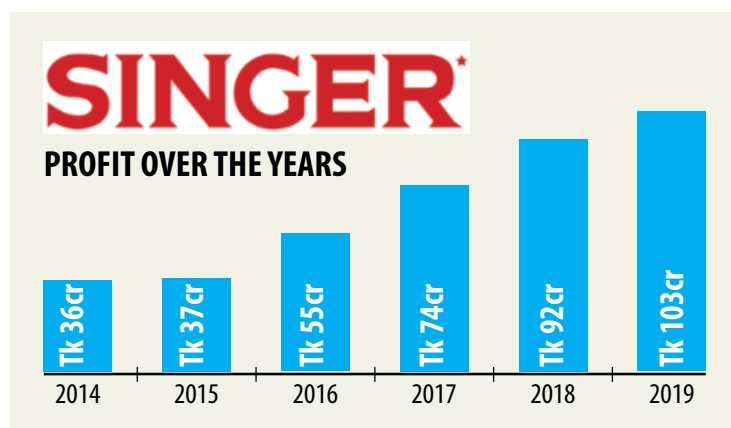
This has prompted the Singer

Bangladesh board to announce a 77 per cent cash dividend for 2019 after a pause of one year; in 2018, the company had announced a 30 per cent stock dividend. Fatih Kemal Ebiçlioglu, chairman of Singer Bangladesh, presided over the virtual annual general meeting.

Also at the board meeting yesterday, the company increased its authorised capital from Tk 100 crore to 250 crores.

"There is no doubt that 2020 will be a challenging year for the company due to the pandemic," said MHM Faiz, its chief executive officer.

In a globally linked economy, the knock-on effects of the coronavirus outbreak will impact Bangladesh like any other country and will infiltrate through its economy



thereby eroding the important purchasing power of the middle-class, he said in the annual report.

And yet, the company expects to roll out new product range to cater to various segments in this

emerging market and expand its e-commerce channels, he added.

In 2019, the company invested Tk 29 crore for purchasing International Appliances (IAL) from Shanghai Sonlu Shangling

Enterprise. Last year, IAL's revenue reached Tk 255 crore with an operating profit of Tk 10 crore.

Originally a manufacturer of domestic sewing machines, the American company has been operating in Bangladesh since 1905.

In 1983 it got listed on the stock exchanges. Arçelik, an Istanbul-based home appliances company holds 57 per cent of Singer Bangladesh's stakes, which it purchased in 2019 for \$75 million, and the rest is held by the public.

Its shares closed at Tk 147 on March 25, the last day of trading before the countrywide general shutdown took place.

Singer Bangladesh currently owns 405 stores and works with about 1,000 wholesale dealers.

BB driving with its eyes closed amidst the economic tempest

AKM ZAMIR UDDIN

Without data, companies are deaf and blind, it is often taught in business schools.

And seeing that the Bangladesh Bank has stopped preparing its major economic statements since February on the pretext of ongoing shutdown, it is safe to say that the country's central bank is just tottering along in this crucial moment.

The major statements of the central bank -- the balance of payments, the growth of reserve and board money and their multiplier effect, import, government borrowing, private sector credit growth and many other statistical reports -- have not been published for two months now.

Some of the statements even were not prepared since January, prompting economists to question how the central bank would be fighting the recession in the days ahead without any financial data.

The reports would have informed the central bank, the government, the foreign multilateral donor agencies and the economists' recommendations and policymaking in

coming out of the pandemic-induced slump.

"This is a great omission and foolishness of the central bank," said Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of the Policy Research Institute and a former economist of the International Monetary Fund.

The Daily Star yesterday communicated with officials of the six departments that prepare the major statements: Banking Regulation and Policy, Monetary Policy, Research, Statistics, Agriculture credit and Payment Systems.

The concerned officials of all the departments informed that their higher-ups have not given them any instruction to prepare the statements.

But the managing directors of banks said they are ready to send all required data if the BB asks.

The BB's department amid this critical moment is rather bizarre as the Federal Reserve System, the European Central Bank, the Bank of England, the Reserve Bank of India and all other central banks are now publishing the statements often.

All the BB appears to be doing of late is shooting off notices, one after another, almost

every day. But in the absence of the statements, there is no scope to know what impact its measures are having on the economy.

The central bank has so far announced measures amounting to about Tk 80,000 crore in soft loans to large, medium and small businesses in the industrial and service sectors, and growers and entrepreneurs in the farm sector.

Besides, the government has started borrowing heavily from the central bank in the wake of the revenue shortfall and for implementing its stimulus packages.

To manage liquidity, the central bank is now using the reserve or high-powered money, which usually has a great impact on the financial sector as it speeds up the growth of broad money and boosts the money multiplier.

"But we do not have any information on the latest growth of reserve and board money after February as the Statistics Department has stopped providing information," said an official of the Monetary Policy Department requesting anonymity.

The correspondent then reached out to

the Statistics Department, which is also responsible for preparing the monthly statement of the balance of payments (BoP) and private sector credit growth.

The last statement on BoP was prepared in January and that on private sector credit growth in February.

The Statistics Department will prepare the statements once the shutdown is lifted, the officials said.

The research department of the central bank is dedicated to preparing the government borrowing statement every week. But it did not prepare the report since the third week of March.

Although The Daily Star on Wednesday published a report on the latest government borrowing status, it did so by collecting data from another department that is not responsible for doing so.

The country's trade deficit stood at \$9.64 billion in the first seven months of the fiscal year, and the situation has definitively changed for the worse given the collapse in exports. But we remain in the dark.

In February, credit growth to the private

sector dropped to 9.1 per cent, the lowest since at least 2008, which is as far back as the BB data goes.

"The growth is supposed to fall further in the last few months due to the ongoing recession. But how we can know the actual situation?" said Zahid Hussain, former lead economist of the World Bank's Dhaka office.

The government will have to seek financial support from multilateral and donor agencies to recover from the economic fallout. But the agencies will first look at the country's BoP.

"They would get the BoP statement from the central bank website, which is for January. As a result, this will hamper in getting the expected support from them."

Besides, the BB will be unable to take any time-befitting decision due to unavailability of the required data, he added.

Asked why the BB has stopped preparing the statements, Serajul Islam, its spokesperson, said he would give his opinion after looking into the matter. But he never got back with a comment.

TAMING CORONAVIRUS RAMPAGE

Next fiscal year's budget priorities must be aligned with the needs of the pandemic-hit economy



ZAHID HUSSAIN

The coronavirus-infected economy requires dealing with the disease burden and the economic devastation caused by measures to contain the virus.

The combined supply and demand shock cannot simply be countered by expansionary macroeconomic policies. Measures to improve the quality of regulation and public service delivery are equally important.

The focus of fiscal 2020-21's budget must be to limit the damage due to shaky business and consumer confidence rooted in the fear of the virus.

Large fiscal packages are needed to expand healthcare provision, protect payroll, delay tax payment, avert unnecessary bankruptcies, shore up the financial system and help the informal sector households survive the pandemic.

We need to ramp up the capacity of the health system to deal with health risks. The physical and human capital deficits in the health system at the national and local levels are painfully evident.

Restructuring existing health-related expenditure to focus more on COVID-19-related capacity building is needed, but not at the expense of reducing the provision of non-COVID-19 care.

Fiscal policy can play a supportive role in slowing the spread of the virus.

The binding constraints are mostly technological and institutional.

The challenge is to nudge incentives of the actors, open entry points for wider collaboration and provide funding for procuring tests, tracing technology, isolation, treatment facilities, PPEs, drugs, and vaccines (when available).

The decision on the level of these existential spending must err on over rather than underbudgeting. It could be

2-3 per cent of GDP if the institutional capacity permits.

The losses suffered by the poor and the vulnerable are tremendous. A large proportion of the households don't have enough cash and food to survive.

Existing and new cash transfer programmes need to be funded to reach the affected poor and the vulnerable in the urban and rural areas.

The targeting strategy has to broaden outreach to increase the number of beneficiaries. Benefits per person also need to increase to reverse the COVID-19 impact on poverty.

Keeping businesses afloat is the other challenge. Many of the measures taken by the Bangladesh Bank (BB) and the government are in the right direction.

They are short of what is needed until both the global and the Bangladesh economy get moving.

BB is partially refinancing bank loans under directed interest rates without sharing risk.

Making this work may require increased reliance on state-owned banks because they benefit from implicit government guarantees.

Stronger governance and accountability of public banks will be needed to produce the intended results.

The crisis has exposed the administrative weaknesses in delivering fiscal support. This is glaring in the food distribution system and the delivery of financial support to businesses.

To increase the probability that those who need the support get them, the assistance package should err on the side of simplicity in regulation and delivery.

The challenge for the announced assistance packages is to achieve the best trade-off between speed and targeting.

Bangladesh has excelled in the past in doing both by forging partnerships between the state and non-state actors. A coordinated effort is not visible yet.

Assisting economic recovery amid uncertainty about the virus spread is a double-edged sword.

Its success in assisting the recovery could end up steepening the spread curve if the mitigation measures are undermined.

Focus on building resilience by investing in food security, economic diversification and education will be critical.

The United Nations has warned that coronavirus protective measures could jeopardise food security around the world.

The government must ensure that

the country has enough food stock and people continue to have access.

The current food stock and hopefully a good boro harvest should not breed complacency.

Rising food export barriers and stockpiling by countries may create volatility in international food markets.

Keeping the prices of the essentials affordable through proper market intervention will be needed to ensure food security.

Agricultural activities could be affected in poultry, livestock and fisheries by the need for more than usual social distancing.

Policy support, both fiscal and regulatory, will be needed to keep functional the complex web of food producers, input supply,

development efforts in the post-COVID recovery period.

Before the outbreak of the pandemic, Bangladesh was already in a learning crisis as evidenced by high numbers of learning poverty.

The education system is facing a new storm with school closures impacting millions of children and youth. The closure coincided with a key assessment period.

COVID-19 spread may happen in waves. Preparedness is crucial. This includes introducing protocols for screenings in schools, rolling out hygiene practice campaigns, imposing school closures, offering distance learning and using closed schools for emergency purposes.

All these have budgetary implications

enough to eat.

Boosting aggregate demand beyond disaster relief is not wise if conditions are not right.

When confidence returns locally and globally, there will be pent-up demand from consumers who postponed buying nonessentials.

However, concerns about the possible return of restrictions, if the infection rate continues to rise, will likely lead to precautionary saving by consumers and low investment by firms.

The government should be ready to act depending on which way the demand goes. This is tricky in a dual budgeting system with process inflexibilities.

Will the government be able to mobilise the necessary resources? Opportunities for increasing tax revenues are limited.

Tax cuts should, in fact, be preferred to expenditure increases when the two deliver equivalent amounts of cashflow benefits. This will save transaction costs, ease access barriers and increase liquidity.

The fiscal space may shrink due to revenue reducing policy response for containing the spread and the economic impact of the virus.

A broad range of essential medical products needed in the treatment of COVID-19 cases is still subject to import duties and taxes despite the government's removal of tariffs on 17 medical products.

Reducing taxes on all essential goods and raw materials including medicines, ventilators, hand sanitisers, surgical masks, personal protective equipment and staple food items for next fiscal year deserves serious consideration.

A combination of austerity, international financial assistance and exchange rate flexibility can smooth the adjustment.

Fiscal austerity measures, including exploring opportunities for savings from non-essential non-development and development expenditures, will help.

Small savings from several line items in the budget, particularly subsidies, block allocations and low priority projects in the annual development programme could add up to something substantial.

The austerity measures are unlikely to be enough to prevent a rise in the budget deficit.

We should not hesitate to run a deficit when it is required to reverse the increase in poverty and maintain output at the potential.

Increased hunger and bankruptcies of the small guys are not acceptable outcomes. A relatively low debt economy can well withstand any increase in debt needed to prevent such outcomes.

Accessing the new avenues of international assistance, including seeking suspension of bilateral debt service payments, opened by COVID-19 can ease the burden.

The government has reportedly approached the Asian Development Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank for about \$2.5 to \$3 billion support from their COVID-19 emergency and concessional funding windows.

Given that the needs are larger, it is difficult to understand why, as reported in this newspaper on May 7, the finance ministry has decided not to avail the temporary debt service suspension facility extended by the Group of 20 major economies.

The G20 nations are offering to freeze bilateral government loan repayments until the end of 2020 to help tackle the health and economic crises triggered by the pandemic.

If Bangladesh avails the facility, it could potentially defer paying about \$300-350 million in debt obligations to the G20 countries.

The suspension period starts from May 1 and lasts until the end of 2020.

Creditors may consider a possible extension during 2020.

Both amortisation and interest payments will be suspended. The repayment period will be 4 years, with a one-year grace period.

The conduct of monetary policy cannot be subordinated to the vagaries of the foreign exchange market at a time like this.

Increasing exchange rate flexibility to tackle excess demand for foreign exchange will preserve taka liquidity in the banking system. This will help accommodate domestic financing of the deficit.

Transparency is needed to make sure increased regulatory forbearance, fiscal and monetary expansion do not enhance macroeconomic risks, inflation and financial stability in particular.

BB has slipped in updating and reporting data on key economic indicators of late. Lags are growing. Central banks all over the world have not stopped macroeconomic monitoring and disclosure because of the virus. BB must not fall behind.

The writer is an economist



RASHED SHUMON

processing plants, transportation and internal trade.

COVID-19 has unmasked the economic and social risk of depending on one sector for the bulk of exports and employment. Both policies and politics get beholden to the sector.

Several industries will emerge from the pandemic. These include manufacturing, e-commerce, global services sector, health care and biotechnology, logistic services, renewable energy and agriculture.

Each of these could provide investment opportunities.

Coronavirus has brought to the fore the criticality of vibrant agriculture, agribusiness, digital economy, manufacturing, and logistics. We have to begin to take full advantage of the tools, skills and new technologies.

We need enhanced skill

that will need accommodation.

Educational administrators and policymakers need fiscal support to introduce new learning modes that can reach everyone, to prepare for emergencies and to make the system more resilient.

Supporting aggregate demand demands creative thinking. This is not a normal slowdown.

Stimulating demand above the constrained capacity may lead to rationing and inflation rather than an increase in activity.

The concern about supply constraints is not a major issue if much of the spending goes toward redistributive items such as buying food, making utility, rent and debt repayments.

Even if there are some rationing and inflation, the outcome will still be desirable if poorer households have

Leaden-footed NBR sitting on Tk 800cr of VAT refunds

SOHEL PARVEZ

The ongoing pandemic stands to leave a lasting legacy of bankruptcies and redundancies. Which is why, government all over the world are scrambling to prop up their businesses as much and as fast as they can.

One of the ways they are helping bleeding businesses is by accelerating tax and value-added tax refunds.

But over in Bangladesh, the response from the state appears to be rather leaden-footed.

Businesses are yet to get the refund of advance tax (AT) although more than 10 months have passed since the revenue authority levied the fiscal measure on the import of goods by firms, said industry operators.

Refund claims involving at least Tk 800 crore related to AT are pending at the field offices of VAT.

In December, BSRM, one of the largest steel mills in Bangladesh, applied for a refund for July, but it hasn't got the money back yet.

The fund is blocked, which would have come in handy in the current scenario, said Aameir Alihussain, managing director of the steel-maker.

His reaction comes as the country's burgeoning steel industry came to a halt as sales tumbled because of the shutdown.

Sales have dipped 70 per cent as almost all construction activities have stopped.

"We are paying more VAT in advance than we collect from customers. But there is no refund system yet."

Alihussain went on to raise questions about the rationale behind the AT in the first place.

"It is not logical. Crores of our working capital are being blocked. It increases our financial cost and it is not helping us to be efficient."

The tax should be removed immediately because it affects businesses unnecessarily, he added. About Tk 90 crore of refund claims

made by TK Group has been pending since it applied in January, said Md Shafiqul Ather Taslim, director for finance of the leading commodity importer and processor.

"We have not collected bills in the last two months owing to the coronavirus crisis. It would be helpful to meet operational expenses if we are reimbursed quickly," he added.

Imposed for the first time in July under the new VAT system, the AT would be adjustable with the total payable VAT in their returns and the tax paid in excess would be refunded to businesses, according to the NBR.

It levied the tax to ensure that firms maintain records of sales and purchases properly to adjust or seek refund against imported goods. The idea is to widen the VAT net and curb the scope of money laundering through trade mis-invoicing.

In reality, AT refund process has remained cumbersome and difficult although the fiscal year is coming to a close within one and a half months.

Contacted, Abdul Mannan Shikder, a member for VAT at the revenue board, said: "We have already issued a letter to all commissioners to pay the undisputed refunds. And they are doing it."

The field offices have been instructed to give feedback within 15 days, he added.

In practice, there has been little progress.

One of the agencies that received applications but could not reimburse is the Jashore VAT Commissionerate.

"This is because there are errors in applications," said Zakir Hossain, commissioner of the office, adding that he is targeting to complete all the applications within May.

A senior official of the Dhaka North VAT Commissionerate said the field office would initially clear refund claims of VAT-exempted sectors such

as poultry and fish feed.

Until January, it received more than Tk 180 crore AT refund claims.

The field office is yet to complete its procedures with the Bangladesh Bank and the Office of the Controller General of Accounts (CGA) to start processing refund claims, said Md Shawkat Hossain, commissioner of the Dhaka East VAT Commissionerate.

As per rule, each commissionerate of VAT has to open an account at the BB through the CGA office. After the account opening, VAT offices are given cheque so that they can issue a refund to businesses.

The Dhaka East VAT Commissionerate sent a letter to expedite the matter of opening an account and issuance of cheques to settle the refund claims, Hossain said.

"We will go to the CGA office once the offices reopen," he said, adding that nearly Tk 100 crore of refund claims are pending at the field office.

The Chattogram VAT Commissionerate is also facing a similar problem, with more than Tk 500 crore AT refund claims from ship-breaking yards and ship scraps and large importers.

"We applied to the accounts office nearly three months ago so that it recommends the central bank to open an account. It is yet to be settled," said Mohammed Enamul Hoque, commissioner of the VAT Commissionerate Chattogram.

The office has completed the paper works for 16 applications involving refund claims for Tk 112 crore.

City Group would have benefited if the refund claims were settled fast, said Biswajit Saha, its director for corporate and regulatory affairs. The group has filed refund claims of Tk 127 crore.

GPH Ispat applied for a refund of Tk 25 crore, said its Managing Director Mohammed Jahangir Alam.

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.

Four things that demotivate your best employees and how to avoid them

Do you love your job? As a manager or CEO, you're probably delighted with your paycheck at the end of the month. Your employees, on the other hand, will punch in at 9 and out again at 5, but with less responsibility, there is more time to reflect upon their role in the office. And so the question really shouldn't be whether or not you love your job, but whether your employees love theirs?

LACK OF FACE TIME

In today's active workplace, managers must make sure all employees, especially the ones who work remotely, are engaged. Employees should have a frequent feedback system and be made to feel as if their opinions are valued. A lack of real-time, face-to-face communication among teams and with managers can leave employees feeling less connected to the organization, hence demotivating them.

PLAYING FAVOURITES

Every organization needs to nurture top talent, but creating an elite group of people who are given special development opportunities or the best projects can and will often backfire. Playing favourites can be anything from taking one team out to lunch to celebrate some achievement, but not



giving other teams the same treatment when they achieve something alike. When talented individuals see themselves as having no future in the company, they're going to look elsewhere.

UNNECESSARY REWARDS

According to researchers at Harvard Business School, external rewards and punishments can work well for algorithmic tasks but are detrimental for heuristic ones. Rewards aren't demotivating if they are unforeseen and offered only after the task is complete. Offering it at the beginning will inevitably focus people's attention on obtaining the reward, rather than solving the problem.

When managers use rewards to motivate, that's when they are most demotivating.

MICROMANAGEMENT

Micromanagers can really get under the skin of personnel. There's nothing worse when trying to do your routine job, then to have someone breathing down your neck the whole time, trying to control your process. When CEOs or managers start to follow this, employees feel like no one has confidence in them, and that inevitably triggers disengagement and apathy towards the job at hand.

OROBI BAKHTIAR

The rich and influential creep into relief list!

Even a pandemic does not stop them

A report in this daily about the name of the industries and commerce affairs secretary of Brahmanbaria Awami League being in the list of “beneficiaries” of the government’s open market sales (OMS), which targets the poorest and most vulnerable sections of society, has left us stupefied. More so because, in the list, there are also the names of more than a dozen of his relatives. The OMS programme offers a subsidised rate of TK 10 per kg of rice to those affected by loss of income during this pandemic, including beggars, transport workers, rickshaw-van pullers, day labourers, tea stall workers and members of the third gender community. The person in question has numerous other flashy titles such as member of the central FBCCI (Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industries) and general secretary of Restaurant Owners’ Association in Brahmanbaria. Most importantly, he is an OMS dealer himself.

Are we to believe that this person and his relatives are so poor that they can only buy rice at TK 10 per kg? There is little doubt that this is a gross example of the greed and dishonesty of some public officials who do not think twice about usurping what rightfully is entitled to the needy and vulnerable.

The worst part is that this is hardly a one-off anomaly. Names of 84 other people, who according to locals are affluent and do not need assistance, can be found in such lists in the municipality area. The allegations that the rich and influential, including ruling party members, were named in the OMS list prompted the district OMS programme authorities, headed by the Deputy Commissioner, to investigate the matter. We are thankful that this team unveiled this shocking irregularity in what was supposed to be an endeavour to alleviate the sufferings of low-income people who are now jobless. But it is still disturbing to know that there have been numerous other incidents of irregularities in various government relief programmes. According to a report, 49 public representatives have been suspended for relief distribution related irregularities during the pandemic. Meanwhile, the ACC has filed cases against 20 individuals including 14 local government representatives for their alleged involvement in misappropriation of subsidised rice meant for the poor and vulnerable.

The PM has repeatedly warned against such corruption but it seems such warnings have not been taken seriously by some public officials. As shameful as these revelations are, the government now must take a much harder line than it has against those who have been found guilty of using their political clout to grab government relief and make some money out of it at a time of national crisis. These individuals must be punished under the law and made an example of and those public bodies responsible for enabling the irregularities must be held accountable.

Remarkable work by Bangladeshi scientists

Genome sequencing can help vaccine development

A team of Bangladeshi scientists at the Child Health Research Foundation (CHRF) led by Dr Senjuti Saha has successfully managed to complete the genome sequencing of SARS-CoV-2 virus in Bangladesh, as this newspaper reported on Thursday. It is a remarkable achievement that will play a significant role in developing a vaccine for this deadly virus. Vaccines will be injecting RNA of the virus into the body of patients to help it build antibodies against the disease. In order for it to work, the RNA in the vaccine needs to match the RNA of the particular virus strain.

As the strain of the virus constantly keeps mutating, it is necessary to know the type of virus strain hitting the country. Although the genome sequencing of the virus has been done thousands of times around the world, this is the first time it has been done in Bangladesh, getting us one step closer to knowing what type of particular vaccine is necessary to protect the people in this country. Furthermore, genome sequencing of the virus will help scientists determine which country it came from and when it came into Bangladesh, helping them make better predictions such as when the virus will reach its peak. The team of scientists has also made the sequencing protocol public, letting vaccine makers know what needs to be incorporated into their vaccine design, and giving other laboratories in the country a chance to use it to train themselves to start sequencing samples.

This achievement once again illustrates what our scientists can achieve with the right support. We hope the government takes notice of this and acknowledges the importance of what this group of bright scientists has managed to do. In order for scientists to follow up and accomplish crucial breakthroughs like this, they have to be supported financially and in other ways. This accomplishment provides further proof that increased support and investment in various scientific fields is justified and, in fact, a necessity—the times we live in demands it!

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

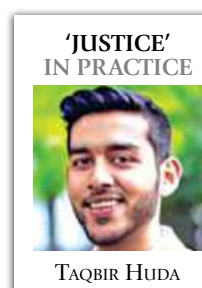
letters@thedailystar.net

Take care of your mental health

When the lockdown first began, it seemed unusual but tolerable. Over time, it has proven to be challenging in many ways as we remain within the confines of our homes day in, day out. The unprecedented situation resulting from the pandemic has taken a toll on the mental health of many of us. And the overuse of digital gadgets is adding to the burden. Also consider the impact of the endless torrent of negative news coming every day. As a result, depression, stress, frustration and anxiety are becoming commonplace. We have to make conscious efforts to uplift our mood during these strange times. Whatever we do, we must ensure that we don’t let depression get the best of us.

Nawal Siddiqui, Chattogram

Why we need to stop using the term ‘working mothers’



‘JUSTICE’ IN PRACTICE

TAQBIR HUDA

THE annual celebration of the Mother’s Day brings with it the usual outpouring of love and appreciation for the primary caregivers in our families, but it also tends to bring to the fore some of the deeply ingrained conceptions (and misconceptions) about motherhood in our society. One of the most common issues, of course, relates to how society distinguishes “working mothers” from the rest and continues to vilify them. While the vilification of working mothers is a social problem that needs to be uprooted, I would like to take this opportunity to take a step back and highlight a less obvious problem. I voice my contention with the unabated use of the exclusionary term “working mothers”—based on the very simple logic that all mothers work.

In creating a sub-category of mothers with the qualifying verb “working”, the implication, quite literally, is that mothers outside this category are somehow not “working”, even though they very much are. By labelling one end of this (socioeconomically constructed) binary as “working mothers”, we are naturally left with terms like “stay-at-home mothers” or “housewives” (which often comes with a tinge of condescension) in order to identify the remaining category of mothers. These terms, by tying such mothers to a state of passivity (“stay” or “home”), place in our heads this false image of inactivity and immobility, and therefore non-work.

The real differentiator between mothers is not whether they “work” or not (since it is pretty indisputable that there can be no motherhood without work)—it is whether they are getting paid for the work they are doing. So why the discrepancy?

To put it simply, “working mothers” get paid to do their work because their output is assigned an economic value in the hyper-capitalist world that we find ourselves in, while “stay-at-home mothers” are denied payment because the output of their work does not

immediately contribute to the holy grail of Gross Domestic Product at the end of that particular financial year (that magical formula that a group of mostly white, middle-aged men devised), and therefore is denied any economic and functional value.

This is not to say that the unpaid work that “stay-at-home mothers” do cannot be assigned an economic value, because feminist interventions in economics in recent times has shown that it very much can be attached to a monetary value. For instance, a report by the South Asian Network on Economic Modelling (SANEM) found that when the total unpaid work in Bangladesh was assigned an economic value, it made up over 48 percent of the country’s GDP in 2017. It also confirmed that the overwhelming majority of unpaid work in the country is conducted, unsurprisingly, by women.

Therefore, all mothers are quite literally “working mothers” and both groups do work that can be economically valued,

of women who do engage in paid work, not least because of the social stigma and guilt tripping they face every waking moment for “choosing a career over their children” (since many live in societies where the two c’s of adulthood—i.e. children and career—are, funnily enough, always mutually exclusive for the mother, but never for the father). So, to be clear, I am not in the slightest disputing the need for sub-categorising this group of mothers (so we are able to better highlight their experiences and struggles, etc.). I am merely proposing that we use an identifying term that does not, by default, peddle capitalist myths and deny recognition to the very real work done by the other category of mothers whose labour has long been denied any economic or functional value.

I also understand the absolute need to recognise that a good many stay-at-home mothers were simply never given the choice to have a career. But that does not mean we should refuse to grant due



There can be no motherhood without work.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

but the free market economy dictates that only one group does work that ought to be economically valued and remunerated, while the work done by the other group should not.

I totally understand the need to have a specific term to identify the subcategory

recognition to the work they have to do, even if they had little or no choice in the matter. Nor should we ignore the reality that many mothers have fully exercised their own autonomy in choosing to maximise the time they spend with their children without it being superimposed.

Palestine and the Nakba



SHAMSHER M CHOWDHURY

NAKBA Day signifies the date of the beginning of the forced Palestinian mass exodus from their land in 1948 by Israel. In Arabic, the word Nakba literally means “disaster”, “catastrophe”, or “cataclysm”. This occurred when more than 700,000 Palestinian Arabs—about half of pre-war Palestine’s Arab population—fled or were expelled from their homes during the 1948 Palestine war. Between 400 and 600 Palestinian villages were sacked during the war, while urban Palestine was almost entirely extinguished. “Nakba” also refers to the period of the war itself and events affecting Palestinians from December 1947 to January 1949.

The precise number of refugees, many of whom settled in refugee camps in neighbouring states, is still unknown. It can be safely assumed, however, that around 80 percent of the Arab inhabitants of what became Israel (half of the Arab total of Mandatory Palestine) left or were expelled from their homes. About 250,000-300,000 Palestinians fled or were expelled before the Israeli Declaration of Independence in May 1948.

Factors involved in the exodus include Jewish military advances, destruction of Arab villages, psychological warfare, and fears of another massacre by Zionist militias after the Deir Yassin massacre which caused many to leave out of panic. Other factors include direct expulsion orders by Israeli authorities, voluntary self-removal of the wealthier classes, absence of

an organised Palestinian leadership at that time, and an unwillingness to live under Jewish control. Any student of history will recall that the unprovoked Deir Yassin massacre took place on April 9, 1948, when around 120 fighters from the Zionist paramilitary groups Irgun and Lehi killed hundreds of Palestinian Arabs in Deir Yassin, a village of roughly 600 residents near Jerusalem.

Subsequently, a series of laws passed by the first Israeli government prevented

the support and solidarity of Bangladeshis for their Palestinian brothers and sisters in their struggle for justice and statehood are steeped in history. Since its very birth in 1971 as an independent state, people in Bangladesh have all along stood steadfastly with the just cause of the Palestinians. Bangladesh has not for once wavered in its stance, which is built on the universal principles of democracy, human rights, liberty, history and justice, the same values on which the glorious

indicted on corruption charges earlier this year, is the latest incarnation of this toxic mind-set. Sadly, he has sympathisers in the outside world as well. The powerful Zionist lobby ensures that. The most recent manifestation of that is the “dead on arrival” so-called Deal of the Century that validates aggression, illegal occupation and annexation coming out of the Trump administration. Even many Jews in Israel and outside laugh it off as a cruel joke. Bangladesh does not maintain any



Palestinian refugees leaving the Galilee in October-November 1948.

Arabs who had left from returning to their homes or claiming their property. Consequently, they and many of their descendants remain refugees till this day. The expulsion of the Palestinians has since been described by many historians as ethnic cleansing. The status of the refugees, and in particular Israel’s continuous and obstinate refusal to grant them their legitimate right to return to their homes or to be compensated, are key issues in the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The events of 1948 are commemorated by Palestinians both in Palestine and elsewhere on May 15—now known as Nakba Day—the day after the Gregorian calendar date for Israeli independence (May 14, 1948) or Yom Ha’atzmaut in Hebrew. Nakba Day was inaugurated by Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat in 1998. The Palestinian conflict is arguably the longest running instance of injustice and human tragedy in modern history.

While many vested quarters would want to push any discourse on this conflict into the background, for the people of Bangladesh, it has a special place in their

Bangladesh War of Liberation was based. So deep is the commitment of Bangladesh to the just cause of Palestine and its people that even Israeli offers of assistance to Bangladesh during our war of independence in 1971 were summarily rejected by the Bangladeshi government-in-exile. The country staunchly supported the Palestinians against Israel during the Yom Kippur war in 1973 and dispatched a medical team and relief supplies for Palestinians even when the country itself was recovering from the ravages of the 1971 war. Firmly believing that the Palestinian struggle is also our struggle, about 8,000 Bangladeshi youths reportedly fought alongside the Palestinian people and sacrificed lives. Bangladesh recognised Palestine as a state very early on and maintains a warm and friendly relationship with it. In 1978, Bangladesh was elected by the OIC as the Vice President of the Al-Quds Committee.

Over time, hardliner Israeli leaders have sought to distort history and alter geography. Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who was formally

diplomatic relations with Israel and has consistently reiterated that it will not have diplomatic relations with Israel until there is an independent Palestine along the pre-1967-war border. While Bangladesh does not deny Israel’s right to exist as an independent state, it maintains that such a state can exist alongside an independent Palestine, in other words, Bangladesh stands for a two-state solution. A September 2011 statement published in the *Jerusalem Post* by an Israeli government spokesperson said, “We have no conflict with Bangladesh. We want dialogue. We want people-to-people relations.” Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina responded firmly, “We have been continuing our support to the Palestinians, and occupation of their land by the Israelis is never acceptable.” This is where Bangladesh stands and will continue to stand until such time as a just solution, ensuring the establishment of a Palestinian state acceptable to the people of Palestine, is found.

Shamsheer M Chowdhury, BB, is a former Foreign Secretary of Bangladesh.

We need a national action plan to contain the Covid-19 fallout

BARKAT-E-KHUIDA

LIKE most countries, Bangladesh is going through an unprecedented crisis following the Covid-19 pandemic in terms of both health and economic outcomes, with increasing number of infected cases and deaths from Covid-19, and severe economic losses in terms of production, exports and remittances, resulting in considerable unemployment, loss of income and rising poverty. Bangladesh's GDP growth, averaging around 8 percent during the past few years, is projected to grow at between 2 percent and 3 percent in 2020, according to the World Bank. With around 20 percent of the population under the poverty line and another 10 percent living in extreme poverty, Bangladesh is quite vulnerable to economic shocks resulting from the global pandemic. According to an IMF estimate, over 2 million people could be added to the ranks of poor people in Bangladesh in 2020. At present, the reported number of unemployed people ranges from 10 million to 15 million compared to 2.7 million in 2017.

The government has been taking various measures to contain the fallout from the pandemic, including the stimulus packages (Tk 1 trillion, equivalent to 3.6 percent of GDP) and its ongoing safety net and relief programmes. However, since the pandemic will not fade out in the near foreseeable future, there is a need for a National Action Plan for three years, as has also been indicated by the prime minister recently. To me, the Plan should have two broad goals: (1) ensure healthy lives, and (2) ensure livelihood by bringing the economy back to its pre-crisis level in a phased-in manner. The Plan should involve all relevant government agencies and other concerned stakeholders; focus on six critical areas relating to health and economic well-being (as discussed below); and have time-bound measurable targets, clearly defined roles and responsibilities of different implementing agencies, as well as a monitoring framework to track the performance of the Plan.

The immediate priority is to contain the fallout from the pandemic by enhancing the capacity and resources of the health sector to reduce the spread of the virus. Economic policies will be needed to protect against the impact of the decline in economic activity, and ensure that soon after the pandemic starts receding, the process of economic recovery can begin in a phased-in manner with due regard given to health safety standards. Economic policies should include targeted monetary, fiscal and financial market measures to support affected households and business establishments.

First, the crisis caused by the pandemic has exposed the weaknesses of health system in most countries, including Bangladesh. Bangladesh's health programme suffers from several major weaknesses. Under the present context, it needs to be considerably strengthened by ensuring: (1) adequate number of testing facilities; (2) adequate number of treatment centres, equipped with properly functioning ICU units including ventilators; and (3) frontline workers properly equipped with PPEs, gloves and masks. This calls for greater public sector investment. The health ministry should use this opportunity to lobby for considerably larger funding, preferably to the tune of 4 percent of GDP, as recommended by the WHO. It should also take needed reform measures and ensure greater involvement of development partners, NGOs and the private sector.

Second, given the importance of the agriculture sector in ensuring food security and providing employment to around 40 percent of the labour force, the National Action Plan should ensure that: (1) farmers receive loans; (2) supply of agricultural inputs at the field level is maintained; and (3) farmers receive fair price for their products. Otherwise, it could have serious demotivating effects on the farmers. In addition to what has been allocated under the stimulus package, the concerned ministries, especially the agriculture and food ministries, should identify implementable strategies in the Plan to

ensure the safety and security of this sector.

Third, there is rising unemployment and loss of income, especially among workers in the low-wage informal sector, the self-employed, the youth, and several lakh returnee migrant workers. Therefore, the National Action Plan should: (1) ensure food security for them by distributing essential food items at the local level (allocation for safety net programmes needs to be raised to around 6 percent of GDP);

and its share of the GDP, this sector deserves urgent attention. In addition to what has been allocated under the stimulus package, the industries ministry should come out with implementable strategies to take the sector to its pre-pandemic level and beyond by the end of the Plan period.

Fifth, the RMG sector, the major source of foreign exchange earnings and providing employment to around 4 million people, especially females, is

the crisis faced by the sector, the government, together with BGMEA and BKMEA and in collaboration with our foreign buyers, should identify implementable strategies in the Plan to ensure that exports can reach its pre-pandemic level and beyond by the end of the Plan period. Further, over-reliance on garments exports should be gradually reduced, and efforts should be intensified to diversify our export basket and explore new markets for our products.

Sixth, a major concern relates to the large number of returnee migrant workers, and hence, substantial declines in remittances for at least during the foreseeable future. Since most of them are unskilled and semi-skilled, the Plan should identify their training needs (IT, electronics, vocational, technical, nursing, paramedic, etc.) and make provisions to impart training to them. Such training should be possible within the timeframe of the Plan. With training and enhanced skills, they should be able to get into higher paying jobs, which would enable them to send higher amounts of remittance than what they had sent during the pre-pandemic period to the benefit of both their households and the national economy. Further, those who received training but are not able or willing to get jobs overseas can be productively utilised in the domestic production process.

The National Action Plan would require substantial additional funding. The question is: where will such funding come from? It is obvious that internal resources mobilisation will be lower because of the considerable slowdown in economic activity and declines in export earnings and remittances. What, then, would be needed is to downsize and delay less relevant projects, revisit existing projects and cut costs wherever feasible, resort to deficit financing to the extent needed, and seek project funding from development partners and financing from international lending agencies.

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The Covid-19 crisis has exposed the underbelly of Bangladesh's health system which needs substantial reforms and funding.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

(2) make provisions for their job creation; (3) identify their training needs; and (4) make provisions for their training in the areas of IT, electronics, vocational, technical, nursing, paramedic, etc. This will require concerted efforts of a large number of ministries and the private sector.

Fourth, given the major contribution of the cottage, micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in terms of generating employment, especially female employment, to a sizeable proportion of the labour force

facing an unprecedented crisis on account of considerable decline in demand for RMG products globally and as a result of "lockdown" hampering domestic production. The overall export declined by 13 percent to USD 29.49 billion in the first ten months of FY 2019-20, compared to the corresponding period of the last FY. The RMG sector export earnings declined by 14 percent to USD 24.47 billion during the July-April period of FY 20, compared to the corresponding period during the preceding year. To address

RTI/FOI ACTS

Another Victim of the Covid-19 Pandemic

SHAMSUL BARI AND RUHI NAZ

ONE of the institutional casualties of the global Covid-19 pandemic is people's right to information. The Right to Information (RTI) Act, also known as Freedom of Information (FOI) Act in many countries, hosts the transparency regimes in around 130 out of some 210 countries affected by the pandemic. All of them fell victim to government lockdowns, imposed to fight the menace, making most of them inoperative almost instantly.

The physical closure of most public offices makes it difficult to implement this law. But while alternative arrangements were made for many essential services to continue, this was not the case for people's right to information. People were not told if they could still submit their RTI/FOI requests and whether they would receive responses. At a time when they needed most to know how their governments were dealing with such a cataclysmic crisis, they had no one to turn to. And at a time when governments needed to be most transparent and accountable to the people, the efficacy of the law was blunted.

As many governments adopted RTI laws more to enhance their democratic credentials than to promote transparent governance, it is not surprising that countries have rushed to take advantage of the disruption caused by the pandemic to muzzle these laws.

There is a message for RTI enthusiasts in this: whatever their commitment, the Covid-19 pandemic has proven the universal inclination of governments to hide unpleasant facts from the public. This is evident from their penchant to deter public scrutiny of their work and muzzle critics who question the veracity of their claims. Controlling or curtailing people's right to information is natural for governments. The RTI community must take this into account to determine future strategy to overcome it.

Public reaction to the secretive stance of governments has varied between countries. The more vociferous reactions came from countries where transparency regimes and/or a democratic culture are of a longer vintage. RTI/FOI groups in these countries came together to voice their concerns and suggest measures to safeguard the institution. They reminded governments about the importance of people's participation in efforts to tackle the grave crisis which is best ensured by giving them access to all critical information.

However, in countries where the RTI regime is yet to take root and the use of the law is limited even in normal times, there seems to be little public concern about the almost total stoppage of all RTI-related processes during the Covid-19 lockdown. In

Leading transparency and anti-corruption organisations from across Europe have produced a set of ten recommendations on how governments can ensure transparency of emergency procurement carried out during the coronavirus pandemic.

Bangladesh too, while social media and the press abound with comments and questions on government efforts to deal with the pandemic, no noises are heard about the fate of the fledgling RTI regime of the country. The Bangladesh Information Commission went into total lockdown since late March after announcing that there would be no more complaint hearings till further notice. People were not told if and how the RTI regime would operate during the lockdown. There was no government release either about any alternative mechanism for this purpose. It perhaps indicates the low estimation of the law in the eyes of the public, the Information Commission, and the government alike. As

the law aims at empowering citizens vis-à-vis the state, there is no point in blaming only the Information Commission or the government for this state of affairs, if citizens do not care about it.

The lockdown similarly affected the situation in the normally more vibrant RTI scene in neighbouring India. However, online applications have now resumed and the Central Information Commission began limited complaint hearings in late April, though State Information Commissions remained largely inactive.

A Canadian access-to-information specialist made the forecast that "overwhelmed FOI units will be months in recovery. And responses to substantial FOI requests related to the Covid-19 crisis are likely a year away."

Lamenting about this sorry state of affairs, Toby Mendel, a leader of the global transparency movement, commented: "We've got, on the one hand, this incredible need for accountability and, on the other hand, the institutions of accountability are operating well below their normal levels."

Harvard University Health-Law Professor I. Glenn Cohen told *The New York Times*: "Public health depends a lot on public trust. If the public feels as though they are being misled or misinformed their willingness to make sacrifices—in this case social distancing—is reduced." He hoped that "perhaps the lasting legacy of the Covid-19 pandemic will be a generational recommitment to restore custody

of critical health-and-safety information to its rightful public owners."

Leading transparency and anti-corruption organisations from across Europe have produced a set of ten recommendations on how governments can ensure transparency of emergency procurement carried out during the coronavirus pandemic.

The recommendations recognised that rapid purchase of equipment such as medical supplies was necessary but reminded governments that EU directives required them to keep a written justification for procurements and make them public. While emergency direct procurement was legal, it must be the exception, even during the pandemic, and should be judged on a case-by-case basis. These are good reminders for all governments.

A spokesperson of the European transparency group reminded governments that "the role of civil society watchdogs and investigative journalists is crucial in investigating wrongdoing, and they can be allies of government in fighting corruption, but they cannot do their job without information."

Apart from civil society groups, the International Conference of Information Commissioners (ICIC) reminded governments about their responsibilities during this critical time. They released a statement in mid-April entitled "Access to Information in the context of a global pandemic," in which they recalled that the impact of Covid-19 had brought unprecedented challenges for the society, both nationally and globally, and reminded governments about their responsibilities to deal with them diligently. They recognised that public authorities must make significant decisions affecting public health, civil liberties and people's prosperity, but reminded them simultaneously of the importance of maintaining people's right to access information in all circumstances. Equally importantly, they recognised their own

responsibility to take a pragmatic approach, for example around how quickly public bodies respond to information requests.

Signatories to the statement included representatives from most of the Information Commissions of the world, though South Asia was only represented by Punjab (Pakistan) and Nepal. Whatever may be the reason for the absences, there is no denying that we are all faced with a pandemic of enormous destructive force. It requires the combined efforts of all concerned, governments and the people alike, to fight the menace and to recover from the damage caused by it, both medically and economically. People's participation in the recovery process will be vital for real success. For that, it is essential that people are taken into confidence and given access to all pertinent public information that enhance their trust in the government. Where such trust existed, people were seen to respect government lockdowns more willingly than where that was not the case.

Finally, once the pandemic is over, there will surely be serious stock-taking and national and international audits of how the crisis was handled by governments. Transparency groups will most certainly use the RTI/FOI Acts to assess government accountability. The Information Commission of Canada has rightly warned: "Because it is impossible to implement measures to ensure transparency retroactively, now is the time for government institutions to ensure that appropriate decision-making documentation safeguards and practices are in place."

Despite the setbacks, public sentiments expressed during the crisis raise hopes that RTI/FOI regimes worldwide will rise like the proverbial phoenix from the ashes of the Covid-19 pandemic with greater grit and energy.

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QUOTABLE Quote



MEISTER ECKHART
(1260-1328)
German mystic

What we plant in the soil of contemplation, we shall reap in the harvest of action.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Book part
- 5 "Gone With the Wind"
- 9 Used a stopwatch
- 10 Make Suitable
- 12 Give a speech
- 13 Barber's tool
- 14 Taking it easy
- 16 "Where did -- wrong?"
- 17 School near Windsor
- 18 2012 candidate
- 21 Decimal base
- 22 Mechanic's place
- 23 Stunned
- 24 Namely
- 26 Hockey's Bobby
- 29 Coloring need
- 30 Gobi setting
- 31 Columnist Smith
- 32 Looking intently
- 34 Musical set in Argentina
- 37 Swear
- 38 Penalized
- 39 Old newsman
- 40 Like some wines
- 41 Dick Tracy's love

DOWN


- 1 Buccaneer
- 2 Warring woman
- 3 Arrive
- 4 Genesis garden
- 5 Road goo
- 6 Nabokov novel
- 7 Tearing down
- 8 Orbital point
- 9 Apartment sign
- 11 Hector's home
- 15 Pasture activity
- 19 Metal sources
- 20 Fuming
- 22 Spanish cat
- 23 Week part
- 24 Quiz show fodder
- 25 Frat torture
- 26 Egyptian god
- 27 Frees of suds
- 28 Wild party
- 29 Staff symbol
- 30 Blue hue
- 33 Bank statement
- No.
- 35 Golf peg
- 36 Throw in

WRITE FOR US. SEND US YOUR OPINION PIECES TO dsopinion@gmail.com.

YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS


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

BEETLE BAILEY BY MORT WALKER



BEETLE GIVES IT HIS ALL AND THEN SOME. WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

BABY BLUES BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT



I CAN BELIEVE HOW MUCH BABYSITTERS COST. I KNOW. BUT JUST BE GLAD THAT CHLOE WAS AVAILABLE. AND THAT SHE KNOWS HOW TO HANDLE KIDS. ANYBODY WHO GIVES ME TROUBLE GETS A REALLY NEGATIVE REVIEW ON BRATSIFFER.COM.



READY FOR RESUMPTION: Preparations were underway at Allianz Arena as the Bundesliga gets back to business after a two-month break due to the coronavirus pandemic. Borussia Dortmund host Schalke in the first game back Saturday at the Signal Iduna Park. PHOTO: COLLECTED

Dortmund brace for 'most unusual' derby upon return

AFP, Berlin

Borussia Dortmund's young stars Erling Braut Haaland and Jadon Sancho will be hunting more goals on Saturday in "the most unusual derby in history" against Schalke as the German Bundesliga returns behind locked doors.

Dortmund usually expect 82,000 spectators at Signal Iduna Park for a derby, but the stadium will be near-empty with only a handful of media and officials admitted. Even national team coach Joachim Loew will not be allowed in.

"It will be the most unusual derby in history," former Dortmund captain

Sebastian Kehl said. Normally, a home derby against Schalke comes alive "through the fans, from their emotions, from the enthusiasm in the stadium," Kehl added.

Dortmund are looking to close the four-point gap behind leaders Bayern Munich, who visit Union Berlin on Sunday.

While league action in England, Spain and Italy is still at least a month away, the German Football League (DFL) has drawn up detailed hygiene guidelines to restart.

The Bundesliga is set to become the first top European league to return during the pandemic.

At games around the country, substitutes will wear masks, celebrations will be replaced by

elbow taps while handshakes and hugs before kick-off are a no-go.

"A lot of things will start from scratch on Saturday," Dortmund winger Julian Brandt told Sky. "There will be no real advantages and disadvantages to playing home or away. In the end, it depends on who best accepts this situation and can best deal with it."

The pressure is on Haaland, 19, and Sancho, 20, to continue their goal-rich partnership, despite the empty terraces, and steer injury-depleted Dortmund to victory.

Haaland was in stunning form when the league was suspended in mid-March with nine goals in eight Bundesliga appearances since joining from Salzburg. Sancho also

terrorised defences with 14 goals and 16 assists in 23 league games.

At third-placed RB Leipzig, Timo Werner is aiming to move closer to his goal target for the season against Freiburg on Saturday.

"Not many players my age have scored 20 goals in a season and I've done it twice," said the 24-year-old who has netted 21 times this term. "I'd like to score 30 in a season."

Julian Nagelsmann's Leipzig trail leaders Bayern by five points following draws against Leverkusen and Wolfsburg.

Robert Lewandowski, the league's top scorer is back from injury, and looking to add to his 25 goals this season on Sunday against Union in Berlin.

Reminiscence: The match I did not witness

With our first bit of coronavirus-induced sports nostalgia – each of us recounting our first live match experiences – out of the way, let's flip to the other side of the coin. Sports fandom is built as much upon first-hand experiences as it is tapping into folklore, sampling stories and events that were before our times, and getting caught up in the drama and romanticism seen through the most vivid lens – the mind's eye. This current round of reminiscence calls upon those at The Daily Star Sport and beyond to revisit sports stories that they have only heard or read about, and left the rest up to their imaginations. One small rule: no looking up of scorecards – just recounting from memory.



India skipper Kapil Dev bludgeons one to the leg side while scoring 175 not out and in the process lifting India from dire straits to a tide-altering win during the 1983 World Cup match against Zimbabwe in Tunbridge Wells. PHOTO: COLLECTED

SAKEB SUBHAN in Tunbridge Wells, 1983

Nine for four. 17 for five. 266 for nine. 129-run last-wicket partnership. Do-or-die, the captain steps up with 175 not out. All these figures, except the first two and the last, may be woefully wide of the actual.

It is an obvious one because those who turned up at Tunbridge Wells that day were the only ones to have seen perhaps the most important innings in history. As far as I can tell, the BBC was covering a concurrent match elsewhere, so there were no video cameras at Kent to capture the action.

What I know is gleaned from Idols, a book written by Sunil Gavaskar in the 1980s that, ridiculously now it seems, bracketed non-Test players like Rajinder Goel and Padmakar Shivalkar with the likes of Garry Sobers, Viv Richards, Dennis Lillee, Imran Khan, Ian Botham, Richard Hadlee and Kapil Dev. A bit of the rest is from Kapil Dev's autobiography Cricket My Style.

It was the summer of 1983. India were outsiders. Rank. They were supposed to be bundled out of the tournament. They were abject in the 1975 and 1979 world cups, having failed to win a single match. On this day in Kent, the 'dull dogs' of ODI cricket were on the brink of exit – Test babes Zimbabwe could well have been statistically proven to be a superior team.

In a must-win match, they had India four wickets down on nine runs. One of the bowlers who wreaked early havoc on a green pitch was Kevin Curran; the name of the other seamer has by now escaped memory.

At nine for four, out strode that outlandishly gifted individual: captain Kapil Dev. In the remembered words of Gavaskar:

he knocked it about for a while. Gavaskar recalled how everyone was nervous in the dressing room, because Kapil had a reputation for going hell for leather when backed against the wall. But that summer's day, where the show was reserved only for the eyes of those present, was different.

As partners kept deserting him, he moved past his century. This was a 60-over match -- that was the format for the first three World Cups. Before the innings ended, there was a lunch break. At any rate, the players went in before the innings ended, and captain Kapil was fuming -- Gavaskar thought the ire was caused by the ineptitude of the top-order batsmen. By the time Kapil came into the dressing room, however, he found it empty with only a glass of cold water on the table.

As he said in his autobiography, he took that as the team asking him to cool down. If he did, it was not evident in what followed. He hammered the very bowlers that caused his teammates so much trouble and with Kirmani, took the score past competitive to a winning one. In the process he overtook Glenn Turner's 164 and his eventual 175 not out was the then highest score in ODIs.

It remains his only century in ODIs. But it changed the world. That was the spark that ignited India's march to an astonishing World Cup triumph, beating the mighty West Indies in the final. India's cricket market boomed and the path was set for India to become the predominant superpowers of world cricket that it is today.

It may have been against lowly Zimbabwe, but the circumstances under which the innings was played and the impact it continues to have makes it the most seminal knock in limited-overs cricket – at least in my mind's eye.

WI won't be coerced to tour England

AFP, London

West Indies cricketers will not be "coerced" into touring England if they are reluctant during the coronavirus crisis, according to West Indies chief executive Johnny Grave.

They are due to travel to play a three-Test series, which has been postponed until July at the earliest.

Grave said a "wide pool" of players had been consulted and none of them would be obliged to tour.

"There will be no coercing players into this tour," Grave told BBC Radio, adding that he was optimistic the series would go ahead but would depend on whether it was deemed safe.



Barcelona forward Antoine Griezmann and Real Madrid midfielder Luka Modric continued to work on shaking off any rust that may have built up during their unexpected break from football, as teams across La Liga hold individual training sessions in anticipation of a restart to the season. PHOTO: COLLECTED



Alli robbed at knifepoint

REUTERS

Tottenham Hotspur and England midfielder Dele Alli was robbed at knifepoint at his London home in the early hours of Wednesday and the assailants got away with hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of valuables, British media reported.

Alli, 24, and his adopted brother Harry Hickford were reportedly hurt in the incident after two men wielding knives broke into the player's home in Barnet and threatened them.

"Two males gained entry to the property and stole items of jewellery, including watches, before fleeing," the Metropolitan Police said in a statement. "Two male occupants at the property suffered minor facial injuries after being assaulted. They did not require hospital treatment. No arrests; enquiries into the circumstances continue."

Alli and Hickford's girlfriends as well as a friend were also in the house when the incident occurred, the reports said, adding that the occupants were playing cards when the robbers broke in.

"Thank you for all the messages," Alli wrote on Twitter. "Horrible experience but were all okay now. Appreciate the support."

Alli is due to return to training with Spurs next week ahead of a possible resumption of Premier League matches in June following the coronavirus pandemic.

Tottenham urged anyone with information to assist the police after reports he was attacked by robbers and ordered to hand over valuables.

'I'm the luckiest among my peers'

Cricket is undoubtedly the most beloved and followed sport in Bangladesh. People across the country get excited just to see the likes of Tamim Iqbal and Mushfiqur Rahim in action and to know their stories. It is the men's team that is often highlighted but during this nationwide lockdown due to the coronavirus pandemic, The Daily Star tried to contact women cricketers and shed light on their struggles and hardships and to ask why they chose the profession. In today's entry, we unveil the story of opening batter Sharmin Sultana, who made her debut in a win against South Africa at home in 2017.

MOSTAFA SHABUJ

The backstory of most athletes usually entails the struggles and hardships they faced before realising their dreams. Even most of the players who made it to the Bangladesh women's national squads had either to fight against their families' will or against the taunts from a male-dominated society -- sometimes they both.

However, Sharmin Sultana, who played 13 ODIs for Bangladesh since her debut in 2017, considers herself to be one of the luckiest players as she had the support of her family and everyone around her.

"I am probably the luckiest among [women] cricketers as I did not face any obstacles when I chose cricket as a career. My family members, relatives and even my neighbours supported me," said Sharmin.

It is quite usual in Bangladesh that when growing up with a male sibling, the female is often at a disadvantage, but it was very different for Sharmin, who grew up with her elder brother Rashedul Islam in Bogura.



Bangladesh opener Sharmin Sultana doing push ups with her nephew on her back -- completely safe and relaxed -- perfectly depicts how the right-hander's family always created a supportive environment to help build her career. PHOTO: COLLECTED

"My family supported me the most in my decision to play professional cricket. There was no discrimination between us

between Sharmin and I. If I got a shirt, they would get her one too. If they bought a bat for me, then Sharmin too would get one. There was a sense of building up her confidence as she grew," said Rashedul, an immensely proud older brother who makes it a point to remind everyone that his sibling is a national cricketer.

In Bangladesh and throughout the subcontinent, people will be hard pressed to find female children playing sports -- an activity usually reserved for the boys. But not this one. She has a history of playing around the neighbourhood and in different localities ever since she was a kid.

Just after her SSC exams in 2010, Sharmin saw an ad in a newspaper saying there was a club tournament in Dhaka. "Ritu [Moni] Apu from Bogura was playing for Azad Sporting Club in the tournament and to say the truth, I did not know back then that girls in Bangladesh could play cricket [professionally]."

Sharmin immediately told her parents and brother that she also wanted to play cricket for her nation and her family agreed and helped her in every way possible.



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SHAH CEMENT

Containment successful in 2 areas

Tolarbag, Buet set examples

MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Although Dhaka has by far the highest number of coronavirus cases in the country, two neighbourhoods at the heart of the city have managed to crush the Covid-19 curve.

Tolarbag in Mirpur and a Buet teachers' quarter were among the first few neighbourhoods in the capital with positive cases.

Residents in both areas took prompt action and with assistance from police, placed tough restrictions on people's movement on March 23. With contact tracing, testing and adherence to rules, they managed to avoid further transmission.

On April 12, just over two weeks into the government-enforced shutdown, Tolarbag was the hotspot with 17 positive cases and two deaths. Nine of them had recovered after taking treatment in hospitals and the rest did not need hospitalisation.

"We first identified the people who have been in contact with the two victims. We listed around 200 people and sent their samples for testing. Seventeen tested positive," Subhashis Biswas, president of Tolarbag Flat Owners' Association, told The Daily Star.

The association also requested the city corporation's assistance in enforcing the restrictions.

"We collected phone numbers of nearby grocery and drug stores and distributed them to all 672 flats. We requested the residents to order online or call the stores

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



Vehicles clog a street in Customs intersection area of Chattogram city yesterday noon. Despite the ongoing shutdown, the presence of vehicles on streets in the port city has increased in the last couple of days, due to a lack of monitoring by the authorities.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

3 Meherpur journo sued under DSA

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Three journalists, including the editor and the publisher of a local newspaper in Meherpur, have been sued under the Digital Security Act for publishing a report that allegedly defamed the reputation of a former lawmaker.

The accused are Emon Ahmed, publisher of the daily Meherpur Pratidin, Yadul Momin, editor of the newspaper, and Al Amin, joint editor of the daily.

Sabuj Hossain, nephew of former independent lawmaker from Meherpur-2 (Gangni) Maqbool Hossain, filed the case with Gangni Police Station on Wednesday, said Obaidur Rahman, officer-in-charge of the police station.

According to the case statement, the newspaper on May 11 published a "false and fabricated" report and shared it on various digital platforms to damage the reputation of Maqbool, who is also a former president of the district Awami League.

The report mentioned that Maqbool rented a house in Meherpur city about 26 years ago and had been refusing to leave it despite repeated calls from the owner of the house, which was declared abandoned by the Meherpur municipality years ago.

Meanwhile, the municipal authorities

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Virus causing global mental distress: UN

Calls for urgent action to address the suffering

AFP, Geneva

The coronavirus outbreak risks sparking a major global mental health crisis, the United Nations warned yesterday, calling for urgent action to address the psychological suffering brought on by the pandemic.

While protecting physical health has been the main concern during the first months of the crisis, it is also placing huge mental strains on large swathes of the global population, the UN said in policy brief.

"After decades of neglect and underinvestment in mental health services, the Covid-19 pandemic is now hitting families and communities with additional mental stress," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned in a video message launching the brief.

"Even when the pandemic is brought under control, grief, anxiety and depression will continue to affect people and communities," he said.

The UN brief highlighted the mental strains on people fearing that they or loved

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

Govt measures to help 10 lakh weavers



DP Dhar, chairman of policy planning in the Indian external affairs ministry, calls on Bangabandhu on May 15, 1972.

May 15, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

AGENCY AND QUOTA-PERMIT SYSTEM ABOLISHED

In an order issued by Prime Minister Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, all forms of dealership, distributorship and agency for cloths produced in local mills are banned today. To ensure proper distribution and fair price, from now on, cloths will be sold by Cloth Traders Samity.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



RMG owners want to give worker's half pay as bonus

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDDHA

Garment factory owners yesterday proposed paying workers 50 percent of their basic salaries as Eid bonus.

Union leaders termed the slashing of bonus payment double blow to the workers within less than a month.

On April 29, the government asked the closed factory owners to give workers 65 percent of their gross salaries of April. Some factories were yet to do so.

And now the owners proposed paying 50 percent of the workers' basic salaries as Eid bonus, said China Rahman, general secretary of IndustriALL Bangladesh Council, Bangladesh chapter of IndustriALL Global Union.

"We did not agree with the proposal. We demanded bonus as per the labour law that means a

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Scientists simulate core of Mars for the first time



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Researchers at the University of Tokyo have simulated the interior of Mars for the first time, revealing details about the Red Planet's seismic properties for the first time.

The scientists used seismic waves similar to hugely powerful sound waves and measured how quickly the waves passed through a molten iron sulphur alloy thought to be in the centre of the alien planet.

"Nasa's Insight probe is already on Mars collecting seismic readings," said Keisuke Nishida, from the University of Tokyo, who led the study.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



PRAYER TIMING MAY 15

Fazr Juma Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 3-47 12-30 5-00 6-37 8-00
JAMAAT 3-57 1-15 5-15 6-47 8-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING

RAMADAN MAY SEHRI IFTAR			
21	15	6:37	
22	16	3:47	6:38
23	17	3:46	6:38



SHY SUMMER VISITOR

Indian Pitta spotted in Chakjora village of Bogura's Shahjahanpur upazila on May 12. The colourful bird migrates to Bangladesh during summer to breed. It is usually shy and remains hidden in the undergrowth where it picks insects, mainly earthworms.

PHOTO: MOSTAFA SHABUJ



Global death toll rises to 300,000

WHO warns virus may never go away as EU agency offers vaccine hope

AFP, The Hague

The European Union's medicines agency suggested yesterday that a vaccine for the coronavirus could be ready in year, even as the World Health Organization warned that the disease may never go away.

World leaders past and present have insisted that any eventual vaccines and treatments should be made available to everyone free of charge, with the global death toll from the disease rises to 300,000.

The pandemic has caused massive social and economic upheaval across the planet and while some nations have begun easing punishing lockdowns, fears of a second wave have kept many businesses shuttered and people confined to their homes.

Washington ratcheted up tensions over the crisis by accusing China of trying to steal research, and US President Donald Trump upped the rhetoric with a colourful phrase that was likely to infuriate Beijing.

"We just made a great Trade Deal, the ink was barely dry, and the World was hit by the Plague from China. 100 Trade Deals wouldn't make up the difference -- and all those innocent lives lost!" Trump tweeted.

With the race to find a vaccine gathering pace, the European Medicines Agency said one could possibly be ready in a year based on data from trials under way.

Announcing the forecast at a video news conference, Marco Cavaleri, the EMA's head of biological health threats and vaccines strategy, stressed that it was a "best-case scenario".

"We know also that there may be delays," he said, voicing skepticism over reports a vaccine could be ready as early as September.

And world leaders were among 140 signatories to a letter published yesterday saying any vaccine should not be patented and that the science should be shared among nations.

"Governments and international partners must unite around a global guarantee which ensures that, when a safe and effective vaccine is developed, it is produced rapidly at scale and made available for all people, in all countries, free of charge," it said.

A vaccine could allow countries to fully reopen from shutdowns that have battered economies and thrown millions of people out of work.

But the WHO cautioned Wednesday that the virus may never be wiped out entirely.

"This virus may become just another endemic virus in our communities and this virus may never go away," said Michael Ryan, the global health body's emergencies director.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4