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Amphan inflicts massive damage

Death toll reaches 12; more than 2 lakh houses damaged; embankments washed away; a million people affected; govt estimates Tk 1,100cr damage



PINAKI ROY, RASHIDUL HASAN and MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Cyclone Amphan has left behind a trail of destruction in the country's coastal areas, affecting more than a million people in nine districts in Khulna and Barishal divisions.

At least 12 people were killed and nearly 2.20 lakh houses damaged by the cyclone that swept through the south-western part on Wednesday with a wind speed of over 150 kilometres per hour.

It destroyed standing crops, vegetables and fruits on 1.76 lakh hectares of land, uprooted millions of trees and damaged fish farms, said officials.

More than 200 bridges and culverts were damaged in the coastal districts. According to a primary estimate, the cyclone caused damage worth around Tk 1,100 crore, Shah Kamal, senior secretary at the disaster management and relief ministry, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Also, around 100 villages were submerged as onrushing water breached protection embankments.

Water Resources Minister Zahid Faruk said 7.5 kms of protection embankments were washed away at 84 points in 13 districts.

"We will repair these embankments soon," he said in a statement.

Apart from the nine coastal districts, many areas in 17 adjacent districts

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A youth, aided by three children, trying to salvage paddy from an inundated field in Kathurakathi village of Barishal Sadar upazila yesterday, hours after Amphan ravaged through the area. Bottom, a house destroyed by the cyclone in Dhalchar in Charfasson upazila of Bhola.

PHOTO: TITU DAS/ COLLECTED



Coastal farmers take the brunt

SOHEL PARVEZ

Cyclone Amphan has caused 40,800 farmers of shrimp, finfish and crab losses worth Tk 217 crore in the south and southwest coastal divisions, according to preliminary estimate by the Department of Fisheries.

Officials linked the losses mainly to the flooding of farms due to the cyclone.

"It appears that the post-larvae shrimps that were stocked by farmers in enclosures were partially washed

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A night with howling winds

WASIM BIN HABIB, from Khulna

The roaring, howling sound was what stayed with us all night.

Bunkered down with my ailing mother on the top floor of an eight-storey hospital in Khulna, all we could hear was the sheer pandemonium caused by the powerful storm, which started to pound the southwestern district since late afternoon on Wednesday.

By evening, Cyclone Amphan, which meteorologists a few days ago were calling one of the most dangerous storms in decades, was perilously close as it unleashed strong winds, bringing sheets of rain.

The cyclone hammered

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KEY POINTS

- Houses damaged completely **55,667**
- House damaged partially **1.62 lakh**
- Crop damage **1.49 lakh** hectares
- Loss in fisheries sector **Tk 325cr**
- Bridges, culverts damaged **200**
- Embankments damaged **150km**

SOURCE: DISASTER MANAGEMENT MINISTRY

BANGLADESH UPDATE



1,773 New cases in 24hrs



28,511 Total cases



408 Deaths



5,602 Recoveries

GLOBAL UPDATE



332,104 Deaths



5,150,039 Total cases



CYCLONE AMPHAN

72 people killed in West Bengal

CM Mamata Banerjee urges PM to visit state

THE HINDU ONLINE

The casualties due to Super Cyclone Amphan in West Bengal increased to 72, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said yesterday. Of them, 15 are from Kolkata, she added.

Mamata who addressed a meeting with senior government officials at State Secretariat to access the damage due to the cyclone said that she hasn't seen such a disaster in her life.

"I haven't seen a disaster in my entire life. I will ask the Prime Minister to visit the State and see for himself," she said.

The chief minister said that the Union Home Minister Amit Shah had called her and she told him about the enormity of the disaster.

Mamata said that the impact of the cyclone was so much

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Take prompt steps to help affected people

PM directs authorities

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday directed the authorities concerned to take prompt measures to provide money and relief materials to Amphan-affected people, and reconstruct their houses.

She gave directives to

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Cases, deaths double in two weeks

DGHS reports 22 deaths, 1,773 new cases yesterday

MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

The numbers of Covid-19 cases and deaths have more than doubled in less than two weeks.

Yesterday, the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) daily briefing reported the highest number of deaths - 22 -- and positive cases -- 1,773.

With this, the death toll now stands at 408 and the number of positive cases at 28,511. The country detected its first Covid-19 case on March 8.

Eight weeks after that, the number of detected cases jumped to 12,425, and 199 people died by May 8.

Experts earlier warned that positive cases will rise in May.

In a report submitted to the DGHS in the

first week of this month, an eight-member committee appointed by the government said the outbreak might peak in the third or fourth week of this month and the situation would remain unchanged for almost two weeks, or until the first week of June.

The health ministry in late March formed the committee to supervise, monitor and support the coronavirus response.

Record shows that in the last 10 days, the number of positive cases persistently remained over 1,000 except on May 12 and May 16 when the number was 969 and 930 respectively as a result of fewer tests conducted.

The total number of tests was below 7,000 on those days.

Speaking to this correspondent on Wednesday, Prof Muzaherul Huq, former

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COMMENTARY

Inhuman behaviour by some hospitals

MAHFUZ ANAM

Yesterday, we published a caption story of the 24-year-old Jhuma sitting on the footpath in the vicinity of Shahid Minar in a state of near collapse, supported by her husband, Shujan, standing next to her. Our photographer, Anisur Rahman, who has the habit of occasionally starting his work after taking his Sehri, met this young but distraught couple at five in the morning.

Here is what the couple narrated to Anis.

Jhuma was expecting to give birth a month from now. She already knew she was going to

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Beximco hands over first batch of remdesivir to govt

JAGARAN CHAKMA

Beximco Pharmaceuticals yesterday handed over the first batch of its antiviral drug remdesivir that has shown the most promise in treating Covid-19 patients by cutting the duration of symptoms from 15 days to 11.

The delivery took place on the day the drug administration gave emergency authorisation to the company to market the drug with the brand name Bemsivir IV.

A Beximco spokesperson said the drug would be provided free of cost to the government hospitals, and would not be sold at drug stores as per the requirement of Directorate General of Drug Administrations.

The price of a vial of Bemsivir would not be over Tk 5,500 including taxes, Rabbur Reza, chief operating officer of

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Police stop vehicles on Ashulia Highway near Ashulia Bazar on the outskirts of the capital around 11:00am yesterday, amid a nationwide shutdown enforced to contain the spread of novel coronavirus. The law enforcers sent back anyone who failed to come up with a valid reason for leaving the city. Many seeking to travel to their village home to spend Eid with their families had to go back.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

CRUSHED UNDER IRON RODS 13 die as truck falls into a ditch

MOSTAFA SHABUI, Bogura

Thirteen people, including two children, were crushed to death when a truck overturned and plunged into a ditch in Gaibandha's Palashbari yesterday morning.

The crash happened around 8:00am on Rangpur-Bogura highway in Dublagari area, Matiur Rahman Sarkar, in-charge of Gobindaganj Fire Service and Civil Defense, told The Daily Star.

"Around 10:00am, we got a call, reporting that a truck had fallen into a ditch. We reached the spot by 10:30am, and with the help of the locals, we removed the truck with a rescue vehicle and found iron-rods.

"Then one of the firefighters noticed that the water in the ditch was turning red. So we removed the rods, and the bodies there were," Matiur said.

The children were aged between seven and 10, and nine men were between 18 and 45 and two other men were much older, he added.

"The victims must have been travelling on the iron-rods and covered under a sheet of tarpaulin, because it was raining and there were law enforcers checking if people were travelling defying the coronavirus restrictions."

It took the officials one and a half hours to find the bodies, he said.

Manjur Ali, a resident of the area, said there was no sign that there were people crushed under the vehicle.

A team of police from Palashbari reached the scene around half an hour after the crash and they also didn't realise that so many people had died, said Masudar Rahman Masud, officer-in-charge of Palashbari Police Station.

The truckers managed to flee the spot, said Abdul Quader Zilani, OC of Gobindaganj Highway Police Station.

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Mango growers hit hard by cyclone

2 lakh tonnes of mangoes drop

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

At least 2 lakh tonnes of mangoes, which is around 16 percent of the country's total annual production, have fallen off the trees because of cyclone Amphan, said the Department of Agricultural Extension.

According to the farmers, however, between 20 and 50 percent of the total annual production of mangoes have been damaged.

The mango growers said the fallen mangoes were lying on the grounds of their orchards as none was there to purchase those.

They also sought immediate government intervention and suggested procurement of those mangoes by the fruit processing industries.

Sorof Uddin, senior scientific officer of Bangladesh Agriculture Research Institute, said the district administrations could take urgent initiatives to save those mangoes from being wasted.

"Mangoes fall from the trees in storms almost every year. A government policy ensuring good use of the dropped mangoes could help the farmers to alleviate their losses," he said.

Sorof himself lost some two tons of mangoes out of 12 tons on his orchard in Rajshahi.

According to meteorologist Omor Faruk, the Amphan hit Satkhira at a speed of 151km per hour while it hit Rajshahi region at a speed of 59km per hour.

Farmers of the southern districts in Khulna division, who provide a quarter of the country's total mangoes, suffered the worst.

SM Liakat Ali, a mango grower in Satkhira Sadar upazila, said at least 50 of his trees out of 250 were completely uprooted while rest lost their branches.

"I can't think properly after seeing such a loss," he said.

Liakat had been expecting a

production of 300 maunds of mangoes, but after the cyclone, he doubted survival of even 20 maunds.

"I didn't collect the mangoes that have fallen from the trees. Locals collected some while most of the mangoes were lying in the orchard," he said.

Shahadat Hossain, another mango grower at Dighalia in Khulna, said he expected 40 tonnes of mangoes from his orchards on a 13-acre land. Around 24 tonnes of his mangoes fell off the trees due to the cyclone.

Unlike Liakat, Shahadat collected some of the dropped mangoes for sending those to relatives and friends and making pickles.

Those in Rajshahi division that fetch over 50 percent of the country's total mango production claimed a loss between 20 and 50 percent.

Anwar Hossain Polash of Bagha said more than half of his mangoes were lost. He was expecting 24 tonnes of mangoes from his orchard.

Some locals purchased his mangoes that fell off from the trees at a rate of Tk 30 per kg whereas the regular market price was at Tk 70.

Even trucks were not available for carrying the mangoes that fell off the trees, he said.

Ismail Khan of Shibganj in Chapainawabganj said 20 percent of his mangoes fell off.

Most orchards in Naogaon, the country's highest mango producing district, also faced the crisis.

According to Mohammad Yousuf, DG of Department of Agricultural Extension, the production cost of mangoes mostly depends on how much care has been put to produce the fruit.

The production cost for mangoes is at Tk 78,000 per tonne in Chapainawabganj while it is Tk 60,000 in Rajshahi, Tk 22,000 in Naogaon, Tk 4,100 in Satkhira and Tk 1,975 in Chuadanga, he said.



Submerged vehicles are seen in a flooded alleyway after the landfall of Cyclone Amphan in Kolkata, yesterday. India and Bangladesh began a massive clean-up yesterday after the fiercest cyclone since 1999 killed at least 84 people, leaving a trail of destruction in its wake.

PHOTO: AFP

Amphan inflicts massive damage

FROM PAGE 1

were affected.

The cyclone made landfall on the Digha coast in India on Wednesday afternoon, ravaging parts of West Bengal. It then moved towards Bangladesh on Wednesday afternoon, lashing the Sundarbans in its path. It claimed at least 72 lives in West Bengal.

Shah Kamal said they succeeded in keeping the casualty and damages to a minimum though Amphan was an extremely severe cyclone.

"We had formed a coordination committee comprising public representatives and members of the armed forces to face the natural disaster.

"We have once again proved that Bangladesh is a role model in tackling any natural disaster."

The cyclone hit 26 districts, of which three to four were very badly affected, he added.

More than 24 lakh people were moved to 14,636 permanent and temporary shelters in 19 coastal districts before the cyclone hit the country's coast.

DEATHS
At least 12 people were killed and three others injured as the cyclone battered the coastal districts on Wednesday.

Of the dead, two drowned and five were killed as trees fell on them.

The deaths were reported from Kalapara and Galachipa upazilas of Patuakhali; Charfashion and Borhanuddin upazilas of Bhola, Mathbaria and Indurkani upazilas of Pirojpur, Sadar upazila in Satkhira, Chowgachha upazila of Jashore and Sadar upazila in Jhenidha.

DESTRUCTION
Amphan totally or partially damaged 82,000 houses in Khulna Division and another 60,000 in Barishal Division. It caused tidal surges that washed away several embankments in low-lying coastal areas.

Our correspondents from the two divisions reported that the cyclone rendered tens of thousands of people homeless, destroying thatched houses and uprooting trees.

Abdur Rakib from Dakkhin

Shakuchia village in Bhola's Manpura Upazila said he and his family members spent Wednesday night at a cyclone centre.

When he returned home yesterday morning, he found that it had gone under water.

"We are yet to get any help," Rakib told this newspaper yesterday afternoon.

Another affected villager, Mansur Gazi from Shyamnagar in Satkhira, used to run a small grocery shop.

He along with his family members took refuge in a nearby cyclone shelter and spent Wednesday night there.

Yesterday morning, he went out of the shelter to check on his shop.

To his dismay, Mansur found that his grocery shop was completely destroyed by the cyclone. His house was also damaged.

"I used to run my family with the earnings from the small shop. But now everything is gone. I don't know how we will survive," he said.

According to sources at Khulna Divisional Commissioner's Office, 5,800 lakh people were affected in the three worst-hit districts -- Khulna, Satkhira and Bagerhat.

More than 32 kms of embankments were partially damaged and 133 villages went under water in the three districts due to heavy rains and tidal surges. Besides, mangoes worth around Tk 150 crore were damaged in Khulna Division.

Over 10,000 shrimp enclosures were washed away in Satkhira, Bagerhat and Khulna, according to fisheries offices in the districts.

Md Anwar Hossain Hawlader, commissioner of Khulna Division, said they were yet to complete the assessment of the damage.

"We are getting data from the district and upazila level and are still assessing it. We have not yet received information from some remote areas such as Dakkhin Bedkashi in Koyra upazila."

The commissioner said they were trying their best to provide assistance to the affected people in the region.

Barishal Divisional Commissioner Yamin Chowdhury said onrushing water damaged protection embankments and

A night with howling winds

FROM PAGE 1

the windows and glass doors of the nearly empty hospital; the wind roared with full fury, with each renewed howl carrying the threat of destruction of all in its path.

The sound was incredibly loud. Entirely inhuman.

Pieces were flying off. I heard the sound of bits of tin roof being lifted off a house close to the hospital and being buffeted about. A section of timber from a nearby building came off and the branches spread were scattered across the road.

The sound was disconcerting. And the splashes of rain were driving in through the cracks in the sliding windows. For moments, it felt there would be something that would come through the windows.

The lights went out before the storm peaked. It was almost pitch-black outside, making it difficult to see anything around us. But the chaotic chorus of nature's wrath, the roar of the wind and the creaking of the trees, helped us get an idea of the scene outside the hospital window.

As the night wore on, as the cyclone swirled onto land, I sensed things, but it was not worse than we were actually

imagining. I was waiting for daybreak to see just how bad things are.

First light yesterday revealed some destruction, yet not as severe as I feared. Trees in some parts of the city rolled over. Power lines were down in many areas, corrugated iron wrapped around a number of structures told a dual tale of destruction.

Meanwhile, people walked around with a dazed look.

Yesterday was still windy. I got phone calls from family members, relatives and friends in Satkhira, one of the areas worst hit.

They informed that a huge number of mud huts and trees were uprooted, roads washed away, crops destroyed and embankments broken down, inundating many villages.

They said they were left without power. Since midnight, I could not hear from them because the telephone network was down.

"I have never heard such a violent noise of cyclone in my life. It was worse than the cyclone in 1988. I'll never forget the roaring sound," one of my relatives from Kaliganj upazila in Satkhira told me over phone yesterday noon.

Zuckerberg 'confident' Facebook can stop US election interference

AFP, London

Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg said yesterday he was "pretty confident" his company could help prevent attempts to influence the political outcome of the US presidential election later this year.

Zuckerberg told the BBC in an interview that the social network was better prepared to counter online misinformation campaigns but admitted Facebook was "behind" during the 2016 election which Donald Trump won.

13 die

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Gobindaganj Upazila Nirbahi Officer Ramakrishna Barman told The Daily Star that most of the victims had their national identity cards and seven bodies had been handed to the families.

The seven victims are Shamsul Alam, 65, of Pirganj, Rangpur; Shoaib, 7, of Pirganj, Rangpur; Mohsin Ali, 18, of Palashbari, Gaibandha; Mizanur Rahman, 27, of Ulipur, Kurigram; Shariful Alam, of Kunia, Rangpur; Ishaq Khan of Pirganj, Rangpur; and Al Amin, 14, of Pirganj, Rangpur.

The victims were mostly garment workers and they got on the truck in Gazipur, the UNO added.

Gaibandha district administration is giving each family Tk 10,000, he said.

Cases, deaths

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adviser (Southeast Asia Region) of the World Health Organization, said there are many people left beyond the coverage of sample testing.

"We won't be able to tell the actual rate and spread of infection until we can increase the number of daily tests," he said, suggesting that the government increase tests.

Prof Dr Nasima Sultana, additional director general (administration) of the DGHS, said the highest number of tests -- 10,262 -- were conducted in 47 labs in 24 hours from Wednesday morning. Four new labs are now conducting tests.

Of the 22 reported dead in 24 hours since Wednesday morning, 10 were from Dhaka, eight from Chatogram, three from Sylhet and another was from Mymensingh.

Of them, 19 were male and three female, the DGHS official said, adding that two of them were aged between 11-20, one between 31-40, two between 41-50, 10 between 51-60, three between 61-70, two between 71-80 and the other two between 81-90.

Meanwhile, 395 Covid-19 patients have recovered since yesterday, taking the total number of recoveries to 5,602, she added.

Around 154 people were put into isolation in the last 24 hours.

72 people killed

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that Nabanna building the State Secretariat was shaking due to the cyclone.

She said that she will visit the affected areas after three to four days once connectivity is restored.

"There is no telephone connection and there is no electricity in the parts of the state," she said.

The chief minister also said that there is scarcity of drinking water in the South 24 Parganas and North 24 Parganas districts and asked officials to ensure water supply in these districts.

Mamata said that forest department will have to plant trees on water footing as about 40% of trees of the affected areas have damaged.

The airport in Kolkata lay under water and several neighbourhoods in the city of 14 million people have had no electricity since the storm struck, according to residents.

After the storm passed people were trying to retrieve articles from the rubble of their shops in the city.

Pradip Kumar Dalui, an official in the state's South 24 Parganas area, said that storm waters breached river embankments in several places, flooding over half a dozen villages, that were home for more than 10,000 people.

Beximco hands over first

FROM PAGE 1

Beximco Pharma, told The Daily Star.

Private hospitals treating Covid-19 patients will be able to buy it for Tk 4,800 because they are exempt from taxes.

A critically ill Covid-19 patient will need between six and 11 vials.

Developed by American biopharmaceutical company Gilead Sciences, remedeivir was originally developed to treat the Ebola virus, but it did not work.

However, it turned out to be effective in helping Covid-19 patients based on the ability to disable the mechanism by which certain viruses, including the coronavirus, replicate themselves and potentially overwhelm their host's immune system.

While Gilead has a patent on

remdesivir, international trade rules allow nations defined by the United Nations as least-developed countries, including Bangladesh, to manufacture the drug for the local market without patent fees.

Six local companies -- Beximco, Eskayef (SK-F), Incepta, Beacon, Healthcare and Square -- are making the generic version of the drug.

"We are pleased to be the first generic company in the world to introduce this very important drug for treating the hospitalised Covid-19 patients," said Nazmul Hassan, managing director of Beximco Pharma, in a statement.

The first batch of the medicine was handed over by Hassan to Health and Family Welfare Minister Zahid Maleque at a ceremony at the health ministry.

Coastal farmers take the brunt

FROM PAGE 1

away. Embankments were also damaged in various areas such as Satkhira's Shyamnagar and Ashashuni," said DoF Additional Director General Md Ramjan Ali.

The fisheries department estimated that shrimp, finfish and crab farmers in the southwest division of Khulna were mostly affected, followed by farmers in Barishal, the southern coastal division.

Shrimp farmers, who export to Europe and the Americas to help the nation earn \$500 million annually, were worst hit.

Nearly Tk 175 crore of 18,450 shrimp farms in the southern coastal regions were lost due to the cyclone.

Also 21,700 finfish farms suffered losses due to Amphan.

In addition, it affected 176,000 hectares of crops, including standing Boro paddy, vegetables, and mango, said the agriculture ministry in its initial estimate.

The amount of loss of crops in monetary terms was not calculated, said the agriculture ministry.

"Mango growers in Satkhira suffered the biggest loss due to the cyclone," said Agriculture Minister Muhammad Abdur Razzaque at a virtual media briefing yesterday.

Farmers in the southwest district of Satkhira grew mangoes on 4,000 hectares and the cyclone damaged up to 70 percent of those mangoes.

Take prompt steps to help

FROM PAGE 1

start providing the support from yesterday, said a media release issued by the Press Wing of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

The work on calculating the overall damages caused to houses, embankments and roads by the cyclone started yesterday morning. Besides, distribution of relief materials and pure drinking water, and repairing of damaged power supply lines in cyclone-hit areas also began.

"The prime minister has been monitoring the situation round the clock and giving necessary directives," said PMO Secretary Md Tofazzel Hossain Miah.

Following the directives of the PM, all district and upazila level officials have already been asked to work in coordination with the ministries and organisations concerned to estimate the damages and take measures accordingly, he said.

The PMO secretary and directors

in coordination with the deputy commissioners of the affected districts have already started work to estimate the damages caused by the cyclone.

The PMO officials will also remain active during the Eid holidays. The PMO always remains open, including on public holidays, due to the novel coronavirus lockdown.

The premier has been clearing files regularly offline and online and giving necessary directives considering the overall situation.

She also joined the meetings of the cabinet, Ecnc, budget and the National Disaster Management Council as well as video conferences with leaders and grassroots officials from 64 districts in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The PMO has tirelessly been working for the last two days to safely evacuate people to cyclone shelter centres, arranging food and treatment facilities for the affected people, and to maintain social distancing.

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have twin boys. At 3:00am on Thursday, she experienced premature labour pain. She and her husband went to clinics in the area and everyone refused to admit her as she had fever. Using the internet, they found the name of a clinic in Mirpur with its own ambulance service. They availed themselves of the service and thought their troubles were over.

On reaching the clinic, they were told it could not admit her without a no-Covid certificate because of her fever. The two were advised to go to Dhaka Medical College Hospital. On reaching the DMCH emergency, they were told to go to the specialised Covid unit. The couple justifiably feared being infected and hence refused to go there and took refuge on the footpath when our photojournalist Anis met them.

By this time, her bleeding had started, and she had nowhere to go and none were helping them. She was desperate and delirious. Anis hailed an ambulance that happened to accidentally pass by and pleaded with the driver to take Jhuma to some clinic on humanitarian grounds. The driver, having first refused, reluctantly agreed seeing the desperate condition Jhuma was in.

The driver took them to clinics in other areas, and being continuously refused, the couple decided to seek refuge in the locality where they reside. One ramshackle clinic back in Gazipur agreed to admit her, on condition that they do not reveal its name or address, where she gave birth to twins by a C-section at 12:40pm in the afternoon. As of yesterday, both the mother and the twins were well.

The story ended happily.

But it could, just as well, have not. Jhuma was in labour with twins which meant that something had to be done within a limited time and that she needed medical attention immediately. Each clinic that refused her literally condemned her to a dangerous eventuality which could have proven to be fatal for her or her



Writhing in labour pain, 24-year-old Jhuma resting her head on her husband Shujan on a footpath near Shaheed Minar in the capital around 5:00am on Wednesday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

twins or both.

How could the clinics and hospitals throw out a pregnant woman in labour? A minimum examination would have revealed that she was in no position to be shuttled from one clinic to another. At one stage, her bleeding had started, and even then she was shown the door. Except for fever, which can come from myriad reasons, including labour, Jhuma had no symptoms resembling those of Covid-19.

Recently, we have been publishing many stories of patients being routinely denied treatment for having fever, cough or respiratory issues. (See our story "Victims of denial", published yesterday, May 21, 2020). The requirement being demanded is a "no-Covid" certificate before admission. Except for a limited number of places -- 23 testing booths, whose locations are not well known -- and all government hospitals in the city, one cannot get such a certificate from anywhere else. If one is lucky to reach such a place and have themselves tested, the result takes anywhere between three to seven days to come.

So, what happens to patients in the

meantime?

Emergency patients afflicted with serious non-Covid ailments are routinely dying after being denied treatment. A health ministry directive issued last Monday clearly specifies that no patient can be refused treatment if there are treatment facilities. Such directives are meaningless to patients who are suffering and in some cases dying due to lack of treatment.

If nothing else, let us make special arrangements for pregnant women to receive treatment in these trying circumstances. More specifically, special arrangements must be made for expecting mothers who are in the last phases of their pregnancy, during which all sorts of emergencies may occur.

Post script

A simple solution would be that every hospital should have facilities to test for Covid-19 and admit patients accordingly. It can be mentioned here that the testing kit from Gonoshasthaya Kendra could provide the perfect solution if its claim proves to be correct. Yet, bureaucratic delay is holding its permission. Just imagine the difference such a testing facility would make.



The closer Eid gets, the more people seem to flout health directives and swarm stores and roadside stalls without a care in the world. Be it a family with children choosing a dress from a street vendor in Gausia or locals waiting in queues to get inside a market in Badda or two women shopping at a clothing outlet in Dhanmondi, physical distancing still remains a far cry in the capital. The photos were taken throughout this week.



PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON ANISUR RAHMAN FIROZ AHMED

Worth the risk? People forgo social distancing in capital for Eid shopping

HELEML ALAM and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

People busy with Eid shopping at markets and shops in the capital are too reluctant to maintain physical distancing and health guidelines. Such an act is not only putting them at the risk of contracting coronavirus, but also spreading it to others.

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

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

Visiting different markets, these correspondents found that the DMP directives were disregarded in almost everywhere. Besides, roadside vendors were seen selling dresses in the footpaths where most buyers and sellers seemed oblivious to the health directives.

The government decided to reopen shopping malls, all types of shops and other businesses from May 10 on a limited scale ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr. Those would remain open from 10am to 4pm every day, according to a gazette from the cabinet division.

However, most shopping malls, including Bashundhara City Shopping Complex, Jamuna Future Park, New Market, Mouchak, Anarkoli markets, decided not to reopen at present as the number of Covid-19 cases has been spiralling.

Top leaders of Dokan Malik Samity, a platform of shop owners, earlier said the decision was also taken since an untoward situation could arise when shop employees, as instructed by the authorities, including law enforcers, would force shoppers to follow health guidelines.

They said super markets in Shahbagh, Palwal Market

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US lauds Hasina's leadership

UNB, Dhaka

The United States has appreciated Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's leadership and described Bangladesh as a "dynamic entrepreneurial society" whose social indicators have been a real success story.

The US mentioned the prime minister's leadership in lifting women up in particular saying it has been so noteworthy.

"The last three years has also seen significant growth in the US-Bangladesh relationship," said Alice G Wells, US acting assistant secretary, Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, in a special briefing via telephone on Wednesday.

Wells said Bangladesh has rightly been commended for the generous response of its government and people to the Rohingya crisis and their cooperation with international humanitarian partners.

She said the United States is the single largest contributor of assistance to the Rohingya crisis, but Bangladesh is much more than just a host nation for Rohingyas; it is a country that has achieved impressive economic growth over the last

decade, accompanied by strides in human development.

"It plays an important role in the Indian Ocean region, and our security cooperation has grown closer," Wells said encouraging Bangladesh to renew its commitments to democratic institutions and governing structures, which the US thinks will help further growth in bilateral relationship that is based on shared values.

She said the US will be a "reliable partner" in helping countries of the region on the path to economic recovery.

They have provided over \$96 million in Covid-19 related assistance to the region, but this is really on top of what has been \$6 billion in public health investments over the last two decades, said the senior US official.

Wells said they see the "devastating impact" of the disease with the cutting off of supply lines.

She mentioned that it is unfortunate but temporary; and noted loss of markets as a result of disruptions in the RMG sector.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



SSC result on May 31

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Results of Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and equivalent exams will be published on May 31.

Education ministry's public relations officer Mohammad Abul Khair in a statement said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will announce the report through video conference.

For the first time, results of SSC and equivalent exams will reach examinees or their guardians via SMS.

Education boards have started pre-registration of candidates, which will continue till 24 hours before publication of the result. Students can type SSC(space) first three letters of board (space) roll number (space) exam year and send to 16222.

Dhaka Education Board Chairman Prof Ziaul Haque, also head of the inter-board coordination committee, said students will not be able to collect results from educational institutions.

The government had earlier planned to publish the results on May 7 or 8, but could not, due to school closure. For the first time in the last eight years, the government has not been able to publish results within 60 days of completing a public exam.

This year, SSC exams began on February 3, with the theoretical and practical tests ending on February 27 and on March 6 respectively.

Some 20,47,779 students took part in the SSC and equivalent examinations held at 3,512 centres.

Results will be also available on the education board website: <http://www.educationboardresults.gov.bd/>

EU allocates 334m Euros for Bangladesh

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

On top of the ongoing cooperation programme in Bangladesh, the European Union has allocated 334 million Euros and promised mobilising more funds in near future to mitigate the economic and social impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The EU announcement, made in a videoconference attended by Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen and European ambassadors on Wednesday, came when Bangladesh faces multiple challenges that are undermining the country's growth and poverty level might grow up.

"Covid-19 knows no borders and hits the most vulnerable hardest. Team Europe's support of some EUR 334 million will assist Bangladesh government in providing support to those who are most affected by Covid-19, in terms of health and livelihoods," said EU Ambassador to Bangladesh, Rensje Teerink, in a statement.

Of the new allocated amount, a 93 million Euro grant by EU and 20 million

Euro grant will help Bangladesh provide cash assistance to workers in export-oriented industries, and contribute to boost the resilience of the national social protection system.

In addition, the French Development Agency will support Bangladesh with EUR 150 million to improve the country's social protection measures. 64.8 million Euro (16.5 million Euro from the EU plus 48.3 million from Germany) will be used to scale up interventions through the UN and NGO partners for vulnerable Bangladeshi host communities and Rohingya in Cox's Bazar.

Some 5.5 million Euro are earmarked for strengthening Bangladesh's research and health systems.

Furthermore, an EU grant of 246,000 Euro will assist the Directorate General of Health Services with operational and technical support. In addition, Sweden is supporting the health sector through

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

SCB, Brac to help 25,000 people in lockdown

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Standard Chartered Bangladesh (SCB) has teamed up with Brac to deliver support packages to 25,000 people from 5,000 low-income families residing in locked down areas.

The packages, containing staples and non-perishable food items, are being delivered to doorsteps of the impacted households, said a press release issued yesterday.

Besides, SCB has launched several other initiatives to support the people to overcome this crisis, it said.

SCB Chief Executive Officer Naser Ezaz Bjoy

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Back in his mother's arms

Abducted from capital, four-year-old rescued by police from Manikganj after 8hr drive

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Sifat missed going out. There was a small open place in front of his house in Hatirjheel, where the four-year-old loved to play under his mother's watchful eyes.

For the last couple of months, he had been staying home and unable to step out as a precautionary measure against novel coronavirus.

Needless to say, the child was getting restless. Soon restlessness turned to sadness as he found out his father, Feroz Howlader, a construction worker who was out of work due to the ongoing shutdown, will not be able to buy any new dress for him this Eid.

Around 10am on Wednesday, a heartbroken Sifat went out of his home unnoticed. After realising that he went missing, the family searched for him everywhere but to no avail.

What transpired next was beyond their imagination.

Around 1:15pm, Feroz received a call on his cellphone; someone demanded Tk 50,000 from him, saying his youngest son has been abducted.

The family was devastated. Feroz did not know what to do. He had no source of income. Whatever money he had was borrowed from relatives and neighbours to support his four-member family.

Desperate, Feroz called Hatirjheel Police Station and informed Officer-in-Charge Abdur Rashid of the matter.

Later, he switched off his phone, fearing that the kidnapper may harm Sifat if they found out that he had sought police support.

Hearing about the incident, Deputy Commissioner of Tejgaon Division Police Biplob Bijooy Talukder located Sifat's home around 3:25pm and then took details of the child from the worried parents.

"This was the beginning of an eight-hour-long police drive to rescue Sifat," Hafiz Al Faruk, additional deputy commissioner of Tejgaon division, who coordinated the operation, told The Daily Star yesterday.

"We tried to trace kidnappers using technology and asked Feroz to continue

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



This cremation site at Chattogram city's Uttar Kattali was designated for those who have died from Covid-19. Unfortunately, as the site is close to the sea, it gets submerged in water daily due to high tides. Volunteers sometimes have to wade through knee-deep water to put the deceased to rest. This photo was taken yesterday.



With Dhaka University now closed, these dogs wait in front of the gate every morning until volunteers show up with food for them. The dogs of DU have long been a loyal companion to students, and some students have been kind enough to regularly feed the dogs even amid the shutdown.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

COVID-19 PATIENTS

Two isolation centres opened in Cox's Bazar

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Two isolation and treatment centers for Covid-19 patients were inaugurated in Cox's Bazar - one at Kutupalong Rohingya camp and the other at Ukhiya upazila.

Cox's Bazar Deputy Commissioner Kamal Hossain and Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) Mahub Alam Takluder, as well as partners from Relief International, Food for the Hungry, Brac and WHO inaugurated the first two such centres, said a UNHCR statement yesterday.

The Severe Acute Respiratory Infection Isolation and Treatment Centres (SARI ITCs) for refugees and Bangladeshi host communities will serve the needs of almost 200 Covid-19 positive patients suffering from moderate to severe symptoms.

"It is a historical moment for us. We have inaugurated this first centre virtually. Right from the beginning of our humanitarian activities, UNHCR has been a pioneer," said Mahub Alam Takluder during the virtual inaugural.

"From the government's side, we are very grateful to UNHCR. In this urgent situation, UNHCR has made this facility which will help many coronavirus positive patients, both inside and outside of the camps," said DC Kamal Hossain.

While there are cases at both camps and among host communities, people now have a place to come for isolation and proper treatment, said Hinako Toki, senior operations manager of UNHCR in Cox's Bazar.

"This will keep the community safe. This has been a truly collective effort and achievement," Toki said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Dentists demand special appointment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dental surgeons who passed 39th special Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) examination expressed frustration over the recent recruitment of 2,000 doctors, as none of them were included in the list.

DGHS recommended the health secretary to appoint 300 dental surgeons on ad-hoc basis, but the ministry said more discussion is needed regarding recruitment.

A press release issued on behalf of the 39th BCS-passed dentists said dental services have been disrupted in hospitals, and dental surgeons are contracting Covid-19. "So far, at least 22 dentists got infected in public and private hospitals," it said.

"Each upazila hospital has one dental surgeon post. If the doctor in the post gets infected, the whole department must be closed," added the release.

"It is in the nation's interest to recruit 300 dental surgeons from those who have passed 39th and previous BCS exams, on merit basis," said Prof Abul Kalam Bepari, director (dental) of DGHS, in a letter to the health ministry on Monday.

Habibur Rahman Khan, additional secretary (admin) of the health ministry, told this newspaper that recruitment of dental surgeons was proposed, but authorities have not made any decision.

Sheikh Moulana Qutubuddin no more

CITY DESK

Sheikh Moulana Mohammad Qutubuddin, chairperson of shari'ah supervisory committee of Islami Bank Bangladesh Limited and Baitush Sharaf Anjuman-e-Ittehad Bangladesh, passed away at a hospital in the capital on Wednesday. He was 82.

IBBL Chairperson Prof Md Nazmul Hassan, and Managing Director and CEO Md Mahub ul Alam, along with other IBBL officials and employees prayed for his departed soul, said a press release.

Sheikh Qutubuddin left behind his son and six daughters, and a host of relatives and admirers.

Prof Maliha Khatun's 18th death anniversary

CITY DESK

Today is the 18th death anniversary of Prof Maliha Khatun -- a teacher, writer, social worker and philanthropist.



She was a recipient of Begum Rokeya Padak and many other awards for campaigning for women's rights and social work.

She was also a writer who authored over 40 books.

Relatives, friends and well-wishers are requested to pray for her departed soul.

Two isolation

FROM PAGE 3

This is part of a broader humanitarian effort by all partners in Cox's Bazar to provide support to Bangladesh government in combating Covid-19, and to build capacity to respond to clinical needs of those with the most severe symptoms.

A total of 12 SARI ITCs will be constructed overall, with a capacity of approximately 1,900 beds for refugees and host community. Additional resources and support including personal protective equipment (PPE) have already been provided to existing national health care facilities in Cox's Bazar and to primary health centres within the Rohingya refugee camps.

UNHCR will also soon complete the preparation of an 18-bed Intensive Care Unit (ICU) at Sadar Hospital in Cox's Bazar, with 10 ICU beds and 8 high dependency beds, as well as providing staffing, for those with the most severe needs.

SCB, Brac

FROM PAGE 3

said, "Covid-19 is a generational challenge that will require every section of the society to come together in support of each other."

Brac Executive Director Asif Saleh said, "We are glad to join forces with Standard Chartered and stand beside vulnerable families under lockdown with essential food support."

Standard Chartered has initiated a USD 1 billion global financing programme for companies that provide goods and services to help fight against Covid-19, said the release.

It has also launched a USD 50 million fund to aid communities affected by the pandemic across its global footprint, including Bangladesh, it added.

Meanwhile, Brac has mobilised its entire organisation -- including over 100,000 frontline staffers, community healthcare workers and volunteers -- to stand beside communities from the very onset of the Covid-19 crisis, it further said.

EU allocates

FROM PAGE 3

UN and NGOs with the programmes on urban health [1,385,000 Euro]; 'WASH, Handwashing Facilities and Information in Urban Slums' (462,000 Euro) and the 'Midwifery Programme with PPE, Training and Triage' (462,000 Euro).

Another 714,383 Euro will address urgent needs of ultra-poor and vulnerable people in Dhaka and rural areas.

Momen thanked the ambassadors from the EU, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland for the assistance.

The ambassadors highlighted the issue of press freedom in Bangladesh. In response, Abdul Momen said Bangladesh too believes in it, and claimed that "There is complete freedom of speech and media."

However, he said, freedom without responsibility may result in social chaos and indiscipline.

On concerns over spread of Covid-19 in the Rohingya camps, Momen said the government is taking all necessary steps to ensure that the pandemic is contained, and there is minimal spread of the virus in the camps.

On ambassadors' concerns that there was no mobile internet in Rohingya camps, the minister said the functionaries would be able to access the internet and 4G services from their offices and accommodations, but for security reasons, the government has downgraded 4G services in the Rohingya camps.

"For security reasons; to stop drug trafficking, to stop trafficking of women and children, provoking people to create lawlessness and to stop blue films, the government had to downgrade 4G services in the camp area," Momen told the ambassadors.

Worth the

FROM PAGE 3

in old Paltan, markets in Gulistan and Mirpur areas will remain closed until Eid.

Police on May 12 shut down the Bangabazar market in Gulistan and two fashion outlets in Dhanmondi for flouting health safety directives. However, markets including old Dhaka's Islampur Market, Chawkbazar, Keraniganj, Ayesha Market at Jatrabari, Dhaka New Super Market and shops in Elephant road reopened after the government's approval.

Small markets and shops on footpaths in Mirpur-10, 13, 2 and Mirpur 1, Golden Super Market at Lalbagh Fort, Dhanmondi Hawkers Market, Noor Mansion Shopping Centre, New Super Market, shops at Elephant road and Karwan Bazar continued to be swarmed by people.

Many were seen wearing masks but the required distancing for preventing coronavirus from spreading was still a far cry. Mohammad Alam, a hawker at Mirpur-10, said, "It's tough to maintain distancing at our small shops."

Asked why he opened his shop despite the risk, he said, "We finally got a chance to make some money after around one and half months. I took a Tk 35,000 loan during the lockdown to run my family." He said most hawkers set up their shops maintaining necessary distance.

Sohel Mamun, a hawker at Mirpur-10, said, "Many markets and shops in Mirpur are closed for which we are getting a good number of customers. But no one is following physical distancing."

A trader at Dhanmondi Hawkers Market said many customers are just too reluctant. "We request them to stand at a certain distance but they don't listen. We also make them use hand sanitiser before entering shops," he added.

Bangladesh Shop Owners Association president Helal Uddin Aziz said there are 3 lakh shops in the city of which around 15 percent are now open. "It's quite tough to maintain 100 percent health guidelines. Some shoppers act as if there is no virus threat. Traders are trying their best to maintain health guidelines while running their business."

Karwan Bazar (No-2) Super Market Traders Association president Shamsul Alam Bulbul said 50 percent shops at their market are open. As many of the shops there sell wholesale, they did not get that many customers, he said, adding that others are expecting a rush of customers during the last few days before eid.

US lauds

FROM PAGE 3

"Now, already we're seeking to address that. We're trying to match-make between Bangladeshi manufacturers and consumers in America for critical medical supplies, as the Bangladeshi factories are retooling and seeking new markets," she said.

Wells said they will continue to look for all opportunities to be able to increase the trade and investment relationship between the two countries.

She mentioned that America remains or has been the largest export market for Bangladesh. "We're very important to Bangladesh's economic health."

Wells said they are all living in challenging times as a result of novel coronavirus, but her three years in this position leaves her confident about the strength of US partnerships in the region and their ability to confront diplomatic, economic, and security challenges together.

PM ALLOCATES TK 25CR FOR MUNICIPAL STAFF
Meanwhile, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has allocated Tk 25 crore for 328 municipalities to pay salaries and allowances of officials and employees amid coronavirus crisis.

"The money has been allocated from the Prime Minister's Relief and Welfare Fund," said PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim yesterday.

Some 12,519 officials and employees of the 328 municipalities as well as 20,000 cleaning workers recruited through outsourcing will be benefited from the allocation.

340 cops test positive in 24 hours

FROM PAGE 12

Mamun from Lakshampur left behind his wife and two daughters.

Another victim Mokhlesur, 57, a constable of Chattogram district police, was in quarantine after he showed coronavirus symptoms around 10 days ago, said police.

As his condition worsened at the police-arranged quarantine centre in the port city's Agrabad around 5:00am on Wednesday, he was taken to Chattogram General Hospital where doctors declared him dead, said Mohiuddin Sohel, additional deputy commissioner (Special Branch) of Chattogram district police.

His samples were collected after his death, and he tested Covid-19 positive, the police official said, adding that Mokhlesur had other health complications too.

Mokhlesur of Chandpur left behind his wife, three daughters, and a son.

With Mamun and Mokhlesur, 11 police personnel have died so far after being contracted coronavirus while discharging their duties across the country.

The police personnel sacrificed their lives after being infected with

Covid-19 while performing their duties to keep people safe, said Sohel Rana, assistant inspector general (media) of Police Headquarters.

The DMP and Chattogram district police expressed condolences over the deaths.

Earlier, constables Naimul Haque, Jalal Uddin Khoka, Asheq Mahmud, and Jasim Uddin; Assistant Sub-inspector Raghunath Roy; ASI Abdul Khaleq; Sub-inspector Sultanul Arefin; SI Mujibur Rahman Talukder; and SI Nazir Uddin breathed their last.

Some 340 police personnel were infected across the country in the last 24 hours till yesterday noon. The figure was the highest in a day, taking the number to 3,235, according to Police Headquarters.

Earlier, the highest number in a day was 241 on May 16.

Of the infected, 1,277 are from Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

Some 569 police personnel recovered until yesterday.

Police officials said they took all steps for treating their infected colleagues.

The police authorities recently made arrangements for treating their members

at a private hospital as the Central Police Hospital was struggling to deal with the huge number of patients.

Police officials said the number of infected among police is on the rise as it was quite difficult for the police personnel to carry out their duties without coming in contact with people due to their nature of work.

In another development, 20 members of Diplomatic Security Division of DMP, who recently recovered from Covid-19, joined work yesterday.

Ashrafur Islam, deputy commissioner of the division, welcomed them with flowers.

The victims were treated from April 21 to May 2 at the Central Police Hospital and they maintained a 14-day isolation after their recovery and release from hospital.

'Drug dealer'

FROM PAGE 12

where doctors declared him dead.

Rab claimed to have recovered a firearm, some bullets and 30,000 pieces of yaba from the spot.

Two Rab men were injured during the "shootout", Rab claimed.

Only 4pc hospitals can do them

FROM PAGE 12

health complexes over phone and found only one of those with the capacity to do all the five basic tests.

Take for example Kalukhali Upazila Health Complex in Rajbari.

Khandaker Abu Jalal, upazila health and family planning officer, said the health complex was opened in 2018, but indoor facilities have still not yet been introduced. "We only do blood glucose test right now, nothing else."

Kamal Hossain, upazila health and family planning officer of Morrelganj Upazila Health Complex in Bagerhat, said they had no lab technicians for the past two and a half months. "So, we are not performing any tests right now."

Arafat Rahman, medical officer at Godagari Upazila Health Complex in Rajshahi, said, "We have the capacity to conduct all the basic tests. As there is a shortage of reagents, we cannot do some tests. Currently, we are not conducting pregnancy tests due to lack of kits."

Of the facilities The Daily Star contacted, only Badarganj Upazila Health Complex in Rangpur said it can perform all the five tests currently.

Ahmed Al-Sabir, an ICF consultant who worked for the survey, said, "We have observed the services, but did not identify the reasons. But I think

one of the main reasons is that not all the facilities get the same supply of equipment and reagent materials."

Golam Kibria, medical officer at Babuganj Upazila Health Complex in Barishal, said they can currently perform all the basic tests except for the haemoglobin test.

Conducted by the National Institute of Population Research and Training, the survey covered 1,524 health facilities and 5,400 service providers from eight divisions.

Forty teams, led by physicians, collected data between July and October 2017.

The survey assessed public and private facilities with at least 20 beds, and non-governmental healthcare facilities in the formal sector that maintain widely accepted licensing, training, and policy standards.

"The capacity of health facilities to conduct basic diagnostic tests is still very limited. The most widely available test is blood glucose, provided by only 20 percent facilities. Only four percent facilities offer all the five basic diagnostic tests (haemoglobin, blood glucose, urine protein, urine glucose, and urine pregnancy tests)," the report said.

Fourteen percent of district and upazila facilities and negligible proportions of union-level facilities and

community clinics provide all five basic tests. More than half of private hospitals and 40 percent of non-governmental facilities offer the tests," it continued.

The report also stated that advanced laboratory diagnostic tests and equipment for diagnostic imaging were available only at district hospitals, upazila health complexes, NGO facilities, and private hospitals.

A majority of district hospitals (79 percent) have functional X-ray machines -- a slight improvement in the past three years.

Only 18 percent of upazila health complexes have functional X-ray machines -- this figure has decreased since 2014.

When it comes to regular availability of eight essential medicines mentioned below, the latest report showed a downturn.

It found 62 percent (38 percent when community clinics are excluded) of health facilities have at least six of the medicines in the drug and dietary supply (DDS) kit, compared to 77 percent (70 percent if community clinics are excluded) in 2014.

The DDS kit includes Amoxicillin tablets/capsules, Amoxicillin syrup, Paracetamol tablets, Paracetamol syrup, Tetracycline/chloramphenicol eye ointment, Cotrimoxazole, Iron tablets, and Vitamin A capsules.

OBITUARY

With profound grief, we wish to inform you that, Mr. Junaid Masroor, DMD & CAMLCO of Trust Bank Ltd has breathed his last on 17 May 2020 (Inna lillaha wa inna ilaihe razeoun). We, the AACOB family, on behalf of all bank employees of Bangladesh & well-wishers, express our heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family members. May Allah grant eternal peace & Jannah to the pious soul (Ameen).



ASSOCIATION OF ANTI MONEY LAUNDERING COMPLIANCE OFFICERS OF BANKS IN BANGLADESH

Japan newborn gets world

FROM PAGE 12

Following the treatment, "the patient did not see an increase in blood ammonia concentration and was able to successfully complete the next treatment", namely a liver transplant, the institute said in a press release.

The baby, whose sex has not been disclosed, received a liver transplant from its father and was discharged from the hospital six months after birth.

"The success of this trial demonstrates safety in the world's first clinical trial using human ES cells for patients with liver disease," the institute said.

New transport plan

FROM PAGE 12

prime minister today at Bangabhaban to seek his blessings.

SCREENING BOARD DEMANDED

Zillur Rahman, general secretary of the Awami League, execrates the bureaucratic attitude of some government officials. "They still hold the ideology of Pakistan and they are trying to tarnish the image of the government," he adds.

In a statement issued today, he demands immediate formation of a screening board to scrutinise activities of these government employees.

INDO-BANGLADESH JOINT PROGRAMME ON RIVER DEVELOPMENT

Bangladesh and India have formulated a joint programme on flood and cyclone warning system and power, irrigation and river development. This programme will be implemented soon after the formation of the Joint River Commission and Joint Power Development Board.

DHAKA TRANSPORT PLAN

The government is formulating a detailed transport plan to resolve the transport crisis in the capital. Under this plan, there will be a bus every five minutes in the long routes of greater Dhaka region including Narayanganj, Demra and Tongi. There will also be arrangements for special buses at rush hours. Around 500 buses will be required to implement this transport plan.

MINIMUM WAGE OF TK 200 DEMANDED

The two-day National Convention of Sramik League ends today. The leaders of the organisation appeal to the workers to devote themselves to the task of reconstruction of the war-ravaged economy by increasing production in industrial units. The Convention demands Tk 200 as minimum wage for workers. They also urge the government to take immediate action to resume operation of the closed mills and factories.

SOURCE: May 23, 1972 issue of Dainik Bangla.

Back in

FROM PAGE 3

negotiations. We traced their location in Demra first but within hours they started moving towards Savar," he said.

Accompanied by Feroz, a three-member police team started following them.

The kidnappers' final location was traced at Paturia Ferry Terminal in Manikganj and the police team reached there around 10:05pm, said ADC Hafiz.

The terminal was filled to the brim with people and vehicles as the ferry service remains suspended for the cyclone and to prevent people from going to their village homes, he said.

The police team, with Sifat's photograph in hand, started looking for him in the crowd.

Police asked Feroz to stay inside the vehicle so that kidnappers did not know about his presence, said Hafiz. "Around 11:40pm, the team finally found Sifat sleeping on a bench in front of a makeshift shop at the terminal."

Talking with Sifat, police came to know that a person named Milon took him away with a promise of giving him candy. "Milon used to work with Feroz as an assistant before the lockdown. Sifat also knew him. Milon fled sensing police presence," said ADC Hafiz.

"We have already collected details of Milon and are looking for him. A case was filed with Hatirheel Police Station," he added.

The family was beyond grateful and couldn't thank the law enforcers enough. But most importantly, Sifat was back to his mother's arms.

Global virus

FROM PAGE 12

finger-pointing at China, who he blamed for "this mass Worldwide killing".

Beijing tells a different story, with President Xi Jinping determined to project a narrative of strength and success in reigning in the outbreak that first emerged in his country late last year before wreaking havoc around the globe.

Though China has faced criticism of its initial handling of the virus, the country has since brought domestic cases down to a trickle and kept deaths at a far lower toll than in the worst-hit countries, according to its official figures.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Department of Public Health Engineering
Office of Executive Engineer, P & C Division
DPHE Bhaban, 14, Shahid Captain Monsur Ali Sarani, Kakrail, Dhaka-1000

Memo No: 46.03.2600.064.29.001.18 - 390 Date: 20/05/2020

e-Tender Notice

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the following package:

Tender ID No.	Package No	Description	Online Publication Date and Time	Online Closing Date and Time
462858	SWSTP-RBF-13	Supply and Installation of Different type best quality office furniture at The Project for Safe Water Supply by Treatment of Surface Water at Rangamati, Bagerhat and Faridpur District, 4 th floor, DPHE Main Bhaban, Kakrail, Dhaka.	20 May-2020 22:00	7-June-2020 13:00

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 system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for last selling/downloading the e-Tender Documents from the National e-GP system portal have to be deposited online through any registered banks branches up to date & time. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP system portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)

20.05.2020
 (Farhana Hossain)
 Executive Engineer
 P & C Division, Dhaka.

GD-888

CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC
KEY UPDATES

DEATH TOLL NEARS 330,000

The novel coronavirus has killed at least 328,220 people since the outbreak first emerged in China last December, according to a tally from official sources compiled by AFP at 1100 GMT yesterday. At least 5,012,630 cases of coronavirus have been registered in 196 countries and territories. The United States remains the country with the highest number of deaths with 93,439 fatalities. Britain has recorded 35,704, Italy has 32,330 deaths, France saw 28,132 deaths, and Spain recorded 27,888.

MONKEYS GROW IMMUNITY AFTER INFECTION, VACCINE

Two studies on monkeys published on Wednesday offer hope that humans can develop protective immunity to the novel coronavirus. The studies, published in the journal Science, looked at a prototype vaccine and whether infection with SARS-CoV-2 provides immunity against re-exposure. In one study carried out by Barouch and other researchers, nine adult rhesus macaque monkeys were infected with the virus. The monkeys developed COVID-19 symptoms but created protective antibodies and recovered after a few days. To test their immunity, they were exposed to SARS-CoV-2 again 35 days later for what is called a "re-challenge", and they showed few to no symptoms.

VIRUS RISK FOR MILLIONS IN CYCLONE SHELTERS

At least 84 people died as the fiercest cyclone to hit parts of Bangladesh and eastern India this century sent trees flying and flattened houses, with millions crammed into shelters despite the risk of coronavirus. Millions more were left without power after Cyclone Amphan, packing winds of around 150 kilometres per hour (95 mph), carried away electricity pylons, walls and roofs, officials said as they began to assess the damage.

INDIA DOMESTIC AIR TRAVEL TO RESUME MAY 25

Domestic air travel will resume in India on May 25 after a two-month shutdown imposed to stop the spread of coronavirus, the aviation minister said, in a further easing of national lockdown restrictions. The government halted all domestic flights -- which ferried 144 million passengers as well as cargo across the vast country last year -- on March 25.

TRUMP FOR IN-PERSON G7 MEET

US President Donald Trump said Wednesday he is considering hosting world leaders for the annual G7 summit at his Camp David retreat despite the ongoing coronavirus crisis, as the global death toll soared past 325,000. Trump said in a tweet that he may hold the G7 in June in person, instead of remotely by videoconference as proposed previously. "I am considering rescheduling the G-7, on the same or similar date, in Washington, D.C., at the legendary Camp David," he said.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS



An aircraft is parked at the flooded Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport after the landfall of cyclone Amphan in Kolkata, yesterday. India and Bangladesh began a massive clean-up Thursday after the fiercest cyclone since 1999 killed at least 84 people, leaving a trail of destruction in its wake.

PHOTO: AFP

India has to resist China 'aggression'

Says US amid border clashes

AFP, Washington

The United States on Wednesday accused China of employing border clashes with India to try to shift the status quo, and encouraged New Delhi to resist.

Alice Wells, the top US diplomat for South Asia, drew parallels between the growing skirmishes in the Himalayas and Beijing's years of increasing assertiveness in the dispute-rife South China Sea.

"For anyone who was under any illusions that Chinese aggression was only rhetorical, I think they need to speak to India," Wells told the Atlantic Council think tank.

"If you look to the South China Sea, there's a method here to Chinese operations, and it is that constant aggression, the constant attempt to shift the norms, to shift what is the status quo."

"It has to be resisted," said Wells, speaking as she retires from the State Department.

Indian and Chinese troops have engaged in a growing number of brawls and other low-level clashes on their sprawling border, including a recent standoff at the Nathu La Pass which connects the Indian state of Sikkim and Chinese-ruled Tibet.

The world's two most populous nations have longstanding border tensions and fought a brief 1962 war. China still claims about 90,000 square kilometers of territory under New Delhi's control.

Wells reiterated that the US backs India's claims and encouraged a diplomatic solution. US has for two decades been building close ties with India and has an increasingly acrimonious relationship with China on multiple fronts.

WHO reports most virus cases in a day

AFP, Geneva

The World Health Organization has expressed concern about the rising number of new coronavirus cases in poor countries, even as many rich nations have begun emerging from lockdown.

The global health body said 106,000 new cases of infections of the novel coronavirus had been recorded in the past 24 hours starting from Tuesday, the most in a single day since the outbreak began.

"We still have a long way to go in this pandemic," WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told a news conference Wednesday. "We are very concerned about rising cases in low and middle income countries."

The WHO has come under fire from US President Donald Trump, who accuses it of having mishandled the outbreak and of favouring China, where the virus is believed to have emerged late last year. This week Trump threatened to withdraw from the WHO and permanently withhold funding.

Tedros acknowledged receiving a letter from Trump, but declined to comment further.

Tedros said he was committed to accountability and would carry out a review into the response to the pandemic. Such a review was demanded by member states in a resolution this week that was passed by consensus, although the United States expressed reservations about some elements of it.

"I said it time and time again that WHO calls for accountability more than anyone. It has to be done and when it's done it has to be a comprehensive one," Tedros said of the review, while declining to say when it would start.



Officials wearing face masks observe a minute of silence for victims of the coronavirus disease at the opening session of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, yesterday.

China plans nat'l security laws for Hong Kong after unrest

REUTERS, Hong Kong

China will propose national security laws for Hong Kong in response to last year's often violent pro-democracy protests that plunged the city into its deepest turmoil since it returned to Chinese rule in 1997, three people with direct knowledge of the matter said yesterday.

The South China Morning Post newspaper, citing unnamed sources, said the laws would ban secession, foreign interference, terrorism and all seditious activities aimed at toppling the central government and any external interference in the former British colony.

The legislation, which could be introduced as a motion to China's parliament, could be a turning point for its freest and most international city, potentially triggering a revision of its special status in Washington and likely to spark more unrest.

Online posts have already emerged urging people to gather to protest yesterday night and dozens were seen shouting pro-democracy slogans in a shopping mall as riot police stood nearby.

Hong Kong people took to the streets last year, sometimes in their millions, to protest a now-withdrawn bill that would have allowed extraditions of criminal suspects to mainland China. The movement broadened to include demands for broader democracy amid perceptions that Beijing was tightening its grip over the city.

The technical details of the proposals remain unclear but an announcement will be made in Beijing later on Thursday,

one senior Hong Kong government source said.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on May 6 he was delaying the report assessing whether Hong Kong was sufficiently autonomous to warrant Washington's special economic treatment that has helped it remain a world financial centre.

The delay was to account for any actions at the National People's Congress, he said.



A previous attempt by Hong Kong to introduce national security legislation, known as Article 23, in 2003 was met with mass peaceful protests and shelved.

Hong Kong has a constitutional obligation to enact Article 23 "on its own", but similar laws can be introduced by Beijing separately into an annex of the Basic Law, the city's mini-constitution.

That legal mechanism could bypass the city's legislature as the laws could be imposed by promulgation by Hong Kong's pro-Beijing government.

NEWS IN brief

US approves sale of 18 torpedoes to Taiwan

AFP, Washington

The United States approved the sale of 18 heavyweight torpedoes to Taiwan for \$180 million, the State Department said Wednesday, in a move that could further strain Washington's already tense relationship with Beijing. The MK-48 torpedoes -- which can be launched from a submarine -- are being provided from existing US Navy stock, the State Department said.

Evacuations as two dams fail in US

AFP, Sanford

More than 10,000 residents were evacuating their homes in Michigan Wednesday after two dams failed following heavy rain and triggered what officials warned will be historic flooding. Governor Gretchen Whitmer declared a state of emergency in Midland County, site of the breached dams, in the towns of Edenville and Sanford. The National Weather Service warned of life-threatening flash flooding and urged people in the area to seek higher ground immediately.

Cohen leaves prison early due to virus

REUTERS, Washington

Michael Cohen, Donald Trump's former personal attorney, was released from a federal prison in New York state yesterday due to concerns he could be exposed to the novel coronavirus there. Cohen, 53, had completed a bit more than a year of a three-year sentence for his role in paying hush money to two women who said they had sexual relationships with Trump, as well as financial crimes and lying to Congress. He is expected to serve the rest of his sentence in home confinement.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
Medical Education and Family Welfare Division
Directorate General of Family Planning
Logistics & Supply Unit (5th Floor)
6, Kawran Bazar, Dhaka-1215

Invitation for Tenders (Non-Consulting Services)

DGFPI/LS2&4-PSSM/PSN3-PvtTrans/19-20/72/93 Date: 20/5/2020

GENERAL INFORMATION				
1 Ministry/Division	Medical Education and Family Welfare Division, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.			
2 Agency	Directorate General of Family Planning (DGFP).			
3 Procuring entity name	Director (Logistic and Supply) and Line Director (Procurement, Storage and Supply Management- Family Planning).			
4 Procuring entity code	Not used at present.			
5 Procuring entity district	Dhaka.			
6 Invitation for	Procurement of Transport Service in Selected Warehouses & Upazila Stores.			
7 Invitation Ref. No.	DGFPI/LS2&4-PSSM/PSN3-PvtTrans/19-20/72/93			
8 Date	20/5/2020.			
KEY INFORMATION				
9 Procurement method	OTM (National).			
FUNDING INFORMATION				
10 Budget and source of funds	GoB (Dev.)			
11 Development partners (if applicable)	Not applicable.			
PARTICULAR INFORMATION				
12 Project/program code (if applicable)	224108300			
13 Project name (if applicable)	4th Health, Population & Nutrition Sector Program (4HPNSP).			
14 Tender package No.	PSSM/PSN-3			
15 Tender package name	Procurement of Transport Service in Selected Warehouses & Upazila Stores.			
	Date			
16 Tender publication date	22/5/2020			
17 Tender last selling date	10/6/2020			
	Up to 12:00 Noon			
	Date			
18 Tender closing date and time	11/6/2020			
19 Tender opening date and time	11/6/2020			
	11:30am			
	11:45am			
20 Name & address of the office(s)	Address			
- Selling tender document (principal)	Office of the Director (Logistic and Supply) and Line Director (Procurement, Storage and Supply Management- Family Planning), Logistics & Supply Unit (5th Floor), Directorate General of Family Planning, 6, Kawran Bazar, Dhaka-1215, Bangladesh. Contact: Md. Shahadat Hossain, Cell Ph # 01741-404-804			
-Selling tender document (others)	Not applicable.			
21 No conditions apply for sale, purchase or distribution of tender documents.				
- Receiving tender document	Office of the Director (Logistic and Supply) and Line Director (Procurement, Storage and Supply Management- Family Planning), Logistics & Supply Unit (5th Floor), Directorate General of Family Planning, 6, Kawran Bazar, Dhaka 1215, Bangladesh.			
- Opening tender document	Office of the Director (Logistic and Supply) and Line Director (Procurement, Storage and Supply Management- Family Planning), Logistics & Supply Unit (5th Floor), Directorate General of Family Planning, 6, Kawran Bazar, Dhaka 1215, Bangladesh.			
INFORMATION FOR TENDERER				
22 Eligibility of tenderer	As per tender document.			
23 Brief description of services	The Selection of a Firm for Procurement of Transport Service in Selected Warehouses & Upazila Stores.			
24 Price of tender document (Tk)	Taka 2,000/- (Taka two thousand only), non- refundable. Method of payment should be Treasury Challan from Bangladesh Bank or Sonali Bank Ltd following Code No. 1-7481-0000-2366 in favour of Director General, Directorate General of Family Planning, 6, Kawran Bazar, Dhaka-1215, Bangladesh. Original copy of Treasury Challan must be online certified (CTR) by the concerned Accounts' Officer.			
25 Package No.	Identification of package	Location	Tender security amount (Tk)	Completion time in weeks/months
26 PSSM/ PSN-3	Procurement of Transport Service in Selected Warehouses & Upazila Stores	Central Warehouse (CWH) to 10 Regional Warehouses (RWH) and RWHs to 256 Upazila Family Planning Stores situated in different upazilas in the country (details info of location/routes attached Service Specification).	Tk 4,00,000/- (Taka four lakh only)	24 (twenty-four) months from date of contract signing
PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS				
27 Name of official inviting tender	Sukesh Kumar Sarker.			
28 Designation of official inviting tender	Director (Logistic and Supply) and Line Director (Procurement, Storage and Supply Management- Family Planning).			
29 Address of official inviting tender	Logistics & Supply Unit (5th Floor), Directorate General of Family Planning (5th Floor), 6, Kawran Bazar, Dhaka 1215, Bangladesh.			
30 Contact details of official inviting tender	Tel. No. 88-02-55012349	Fax No. 88-02-5512349	e-mail: dirsdgfp@gmail.com	
31 The procuring entity reserves the right to reject all the tenders or annul the tender proceedings.				
If the opening date falls on any office holiday or any valid ground, the first working day will be the last selling date of tender document and the next working day will be the opening date.				
Sukesh Kumar Sarker Director (Logistic and Supply) and Line Director (PSSM- FP)				
GD-886				

STOCKS		COMMODITIES		ASIAN MARKETS				CURRENCIES			
DSEX	CSCX	Gold	Oil	MUMBAI	TOKYO	SINGAPORE	SHANGHAI	USD	EUR	GBP	CNY
Closed	Closed	\$1,746.80 (per ounce)	\$36.33 (per barrel)	30,932.90	20,552.31	2,555.34	2,867.92	BUY TK 83.95	90.82	102.06	11.66
								SELL TK 84.95	94.62	105.86	12.26



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TAMING CORONAVIRUS RAMPAGE

Shutdown gobbles up NBR collections last month

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and MD FAZLUR RAHMAN

Revenue collection crashed more than 55 per cent in April, revealing the massive hit the Bangladesh economy has taken from the coronavirus outbreak in the country.

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) collected Tk 8,789 crore last month, the lowest monthly earnings in recent times. April's receipts were down 57.32 per cent from even the previous month, showed the preliminary data from the NBR.

This is the clearest indication yet of the outside impact the rogue virus has had on the economy since the first confirmed cases of COVID-19 were reported on March 8.

The breakneck speed at which it was spreading through the country has prompted the government to declare countrywide shutdown since March 26 to put the brakes on its contagion.

Seeing that the country saw its highest

single-day surge in terms of both fatalities and infections suggest that the government measure is not succeeding but it is impairing the economy by leaps and bounds.

The stay-at-home order has resulted in simultaneous supply and demand shocks, with production, consumption, trade and investment all at a standstill.

In April, earnings from import duty plunged 56.64 per cent year-on-year to Tk 2,652 crore.

VAT receipts crashed 51.78 per cent to Tk 3,872 crore and income tax receipts 58.34 per cent to Tk 2,265 crore.

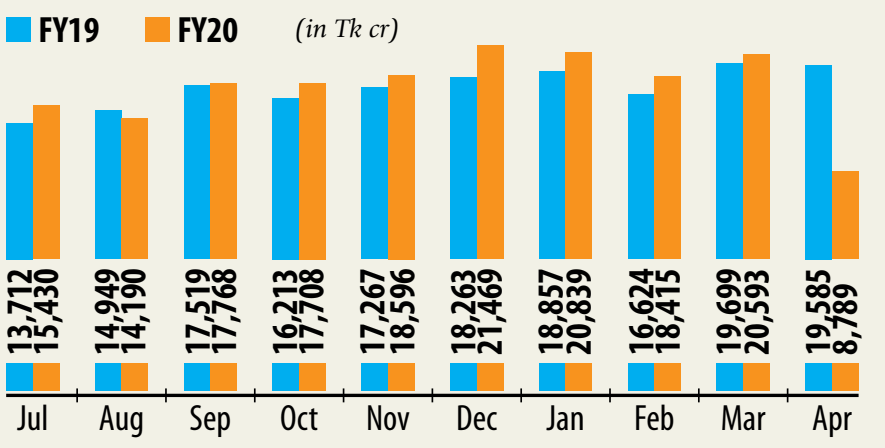
Revenue generation had grown 8.25 per cent in the July-March period of the fiscal year paced by the increased collection of advance corporate tax and higher receipts of indirect tax value-added tax (VAT).

But the growth nosedived to 0.64 per cent in the July-April period thanks to the deadly pathogen.

April's collections take the NBR's earnings in the first 10 months of the fiscal year to Tk 173,796 crore, missing the target by a staggering Tk 61,999 crore, or 26.29 per cent.

Earnings from import duty dropped 4.54 per cent to Tk 50,637 crore and missed the 10-month target by 28.58 per cent.

REVENUE COLLECTION



Income tax collection rose 6.44 per cent to Tk 55,175 crore, which is Tk 23,927 crore shy of the target during the period.

Receipts from VAT, the biggest source of revenue for the state coffers, rose 0.26 per cent to Tk 67,983 crore, but still missing the target by 20.76 per cent, NBR data showed.

Subsequently, the government has revised downwards the revenue generation target for the NBR by about 20.5 per cent to Tk 300,500 crore.

The revenue collection target from import

duties has been set at Tk 85,221 crore. It is Tk 108,600 crore from VAT sources and Tk 106,679 crore from income tax.

Normally, revenue generation picks up in Bangladesh at the fiscal year nears its end. In the past several fiscal years, the NBR posted an average revenue generation growth of 13.16 per cent.

But such growth is impracticable this time.

The pandemic may inflict a minimum revenue loss of 2 per cent of GDP, said the Asian Development Bank recently.



'It is incumbent on international community to ensure Bangladesh does not slip back'

AIIB says as it approves \$250m in budget support

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

In an uncharacteristic gesture of goodwill, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) yesterday approved \$250 million in loans as budget support to Bangladesh to cope with the economic impact of the global coronavirus pandemic.

Unlike the other multilateral lenders, the Beijing-based AIIB typically lends to nations in the Indo-Pacific region on building infrastructure regardless of the state of development.

Bangladesh has in recent years performed exceedingly well with annual growth averaging 7.4 per cent over the last five years, said DJ Pandian, vice-president for investment operations at the AIIB.

"It is incumbent on the international community to come together to ensure that the country does not fall behind but continues to make strides in its development efforts," he added.

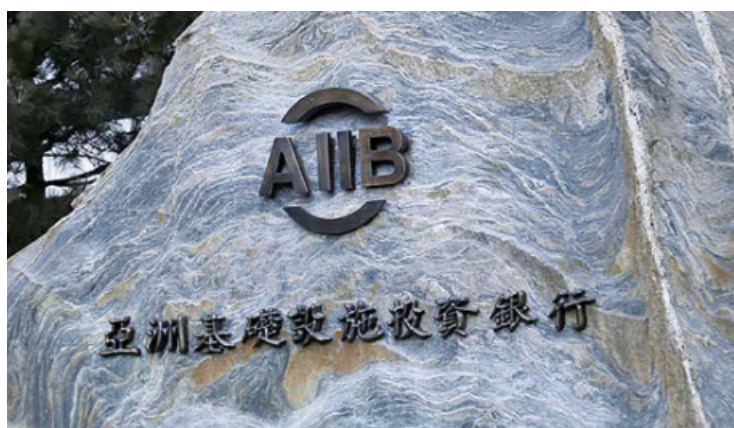
The coronavirus pandemic will drive an additional 13 million

people into poverty, cut 3.7 million jobs, take budget deficit to as high as 7.5 per cent and inflict a minimum revenue loss of 2 per cent of GDP in Bangladesh, warned the Asian Development Bank recently.

Bangladesh is extremely vulnerable to the highly contagious virus given that it has one of the highest population densities in the world, the AIIB said in a statement yesterday.

Nearly 15 per cent of the households continue to live in poverty, with a high share of households living in informal settlements, and more than 80 per cent of the workforce employed in the informal sector, all of which make it difficult and expensive to maintain social-distancing measures to contain the spread of the virus.

The loan, which is being co-financed with the Asian Development Bank (ADB), is aimed at mitigating the adverse effects of the pandemic on



the country's poor and most vulnerable, particularly those affected by job losses in small and medium enterprises and the informal sector, as well as strengthen social safety nets.

By March 2021, 15 million poor and vulnerable people, of whom at least 40 per cent are women, will benefit from at least one economic assistance programme, such that national poverty

incidence will be maintained at the 2019 level of 20.5 per cent by June 2022.

At least Tk 17,000 crore, or \$2 billion, in loans with subsidised interest will be provided to the affected industries and sectors and micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises by December 2021.

The programme also has specific targets to support at least 1.5 million workers, of whom at

least half are women, in export-oriented industries by way of providing extended salary support.

While the AIIB does not have a regular instrument for policy-based financing, it is extending such financings on an exceptional basis under the COVID-19 Crisis Recovery Facility to support its members on projects co-financed with the World Bank or the ADB.

AIIB's Covid-19 Crisis Recovery Facility, created as part of the coordinated international response to counter the crisis, has an initial size of \$5 billion to \$10 billion to support the members' urgent economic, financial and public health pressures and quick recovery from the crisis.

The \$250 million assistance from the AIIB is part of the Bangladesh Covid-19 Active Response and Expenditure Support Programme.

The Beijing-headquartered multilateral lender is currently reviewing projects from a number of members, the statement said.

This has been the most depressing Eid for clothing brands

MAHMUDUL HASAN

With butterflies in their stomachs, a host of clothing brands took up their shutters after one-and-a-half months after the government allowed them to reopen ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr, their biggest sales season that rakes in one-third their total annual sales.

But their sales since May 10 amid shortened opening hours of 10 am to 4 pm have been lacklustre at best.

"We had two options: to resume our operation or to just sit idle. We decided on the former," said Mohammad Ashraf Alam, chief executive officer of Aarong, a leading lifestyle brand.

The brand has 21 stores in total and 12 of them are open.

"Given this crisis, sales are good. But it's not our priority. The priority is to ensure the safety of our customers and workers."

To ensure social distancing, the brand is now allowing a limited number of customers to enter its stores based on capacity.

The six hours of opening time is divided into six time slots and customers are required to book a date and time on its website before calling in.

Asked about the criticism on social media for reopening at a time when the coronavirus caseload and fatalities are escalating, Alam cited two predominant reasons.

There are about 65,000 craftsmen or artisans, who would be left with no new commission if Aarong cannot sell.

"Those artisans eventually would be jobless."

And finding no work, the workers could switch professions and that would lead to the extinction of many traditional handicraft products considered to be part of Bengali heritage.

Although Aarong's online sales have soared tenfold amid the pandemic, it is still the brick-and-mortar stores that brings most of its revenue, and especially ahead of the country's biggest sales season.

The contribution of e-commerce is only 1 per cent of Aarong's total sales, Alam said, adding that the brand's daily average daily Eid sales this year are just 10 per cent of last year's.

Monnujan Nargis, CEO of Le Reve, is somewhat satisfied with the sales this year as the customer conversion rate is 100 per cent.

The brand has opened 11 of its 17 stores in Dhaka, Narayanganj, Sylhet and Khulna, and almost all the customers who are braving it to the stores are buying something.

"The presence of customers is not that much like during other Eid, when the shopping itself became a festival. But considering this grave situation, our sales are good," she said, adding that the brand's average invoice value now is Tk 3,500.

And it is enjoying good sales online too. Before the pandemic, only 5 per cent of the brand's total sales came from e-commerce. But now it is about 50 per cent.

To address the pandemic which contributed to decreasing people income significantly, Twelve Clothing introduced equal monthly instalment (EMI) facility for the first time in Bangladesh.

The credit cardholders of City Bank American Express, Dhaka Bank, EBL and Prime Bank now can buy products worth Tk 5,000 or above by availing the three-month EMI facility.

"We have to sell our products anyhow. If the items remain unsold, that means we will be out of cash soon," said Samia Ahmed, head of brand and marketing of Twelve.

For the first few days, the sales were not good

at 10 of its 16 stores that are now open.

Then it came up with offers such as buy-one-get-one-free, special gift voucher for outlet purchase and even a 30 per cent discount on new arrivals.

"These offers are now ticking up our sales," Ahmed said, adding that its e-commerce sales have gained up to 80 per cent growth in this pandemic situation.



FIROZ AHMED

\$250m from World Bank on the way

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Bangladesh is on course to availing \$250 million in loans from the World Bank this fiscal year to bring in reforms to address jobs challenges by modernising trade and investment environment, strengthening systems that protect workers and improving policies that enhance access to jobs for vulnerable populations.

The finance ministry has completed the final negotiations with the Washington-based multilateral lender on May 18, said an official requesting anonymity.

The proposal might be placed at the board of the bank on June 19 for approval, according to a document of the WB.

The proposed financing under the WB's Bangladesh Second Programmatic Jobs Development Policy Credit reflects Bangladesh's priorities as articulated in the 7th Five-Year Plan. However, the programme has also been adapted to support the country's capacity to respond to and recover from the COVID-19 crisis.

Despite Bangladesh's remarkable development progress, availability of good jobs remains a persistent challenge, said the Washington-based multilateral lender.

Job quality is poor, with high levels of vulnerability, including unpaid, agricultural workers, day labourers, and overseas migrants; moreover, workers are at risk from lack of application of basic occupational health, safety, and environmental standards.

Gender disparities are acute, with just 36 per cent of females in the labour force versus more than 80 per cent of males, and one in three working women are engaged in unpaid work versus 5 per cent of working men.

While GDP growth exceeded 7 per cent over the past three years, the pace of job creation slowed sharply, putting further pressure on labour markets, particularly for women and youth.

Bangladesh's structural challenges to creating good jobs are now aggravated by the increasing impact of the pandemic.

Jobs and income losses in both the informal and formal sectors have put livelihoods of several million at risk in both rural areas and urban spaces.

The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted the risk of relying on a single sector, with garment manufacturers caught first by the supply shock from China and then later the demand shock from European and American buyers.

As of early April, more than \$3 billion in existing garment export orders had been cancelled and most large global buyers have suspended future orders.

"This has forced the closure of hundreds of large factories, putting a million or more jobs at risk in the garment sector alone. Diversifying will require a significant increase in both FDI [foreign direct investment] and domestic investment," the WB said.

In the context of the Covid-19 crisis, there is an urgent need to protect the earnings of both formal and informal workers, particularly those who are not already covered by social safety nets, it said.

"Mobility restrictions and the collapse in domestic demand from the continued lockdown since late March is having even more widespread impacts."

To secure the loans, the government has had to implement several conditions and remove many complexities to a better investment climate in the country.

When the WB approved its previous budgetary support, it set a condition for the government to draw up a law one-stop service. Under the new financing, Bangladesh would have to implement the law.

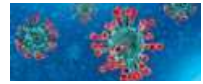
Bangladesh has issued a gazette notification on 54 rules and regulations, eliminating barriers standing in the way of investment.

The government has also taken steps to make a bonded warehouse facility available for non-garment firms. So far, the facility was limited to only garment sector companies.

The cabinet has approved the Customs Law and now it would be passed in parliament.

It has also approved in principle the law on daycare centre to help working mothers continue to jobs while their kids are taken care of. The bill would now be passed into law at parliament.

Bangladesh is set to amend the Company Act to allow a single individual to set up a company.



TAMING CORONAVIRUS RAMPAGE

The economics of social distancing



ZAHID HUSSAIN

Social distancing has proven to be an effective weapon for dampening the spread of coronavirus.

According to some studies, at least 70 per cent of the population need to stick to social distancing to make a serious difference to flattening the virus spread curve.

Yet, widespread non-compliance with social distancing norms looks like a norm in many places. Why?

Social distancing is a public good. The benefits from actions taken for social distancing spills over beyond the person taking the action (non-rivalrous).

These spillovers cannot be withheld from people who do not take part in its provision (non-excludability).

Not needing to take part in social distancing actions to benefit from it inevitably induces many to be lax in their own social distancing actions (the free-rider problem).

The virus spread reduction result produced by my actions on social distancing depends on the social distancing actions taken by others on whom I have no control. And vice-versa.

Masks worn by others will not necessarily protect them if I don't do the same.

To get a deeper understanding of the implications of these externalities, it helps to simplify the problem.

Imagine a world of just two individuals -- A and B -- who are suddenly hit by a virus that immediately reduces their welfare.

Both realise that social distancing is an effective behaviour change needed to contain the virus contagion.

They are also aware of the interdependence of the costs and benefits of their social distancing actions.

Each has to decide whether to do or not do social distancing under these circumstances.

To simplify further, suppose it is a binary choice between isolating and not isolating. The payoffs from these actions, measured in units of individual welfare (Utils), are described in the table.

When the virus hits, the two individuals suffer a welfare loss of 0.25 due to the risk of contracting the virus (Cell-4).

Isolation leads to an income loss of -0.5 to each individual and reduces the risk of contracting the virus by 0.25.

The latter happens only if they both isolate at the same time.

If A isolates but B does not, the loss due to the virus risk remains at 0.25 for both. Consequently, A's total loss is 0.75. B avoids the income loss and therefore his total loss remains at 0.25 (Cell 2).

If B isolates and A does not, the payoffs are the opposite (Cell 3) because both A and B are assumed to face identical distribution of risk and income losses.

If both isolate at the same time, they lose income (0.5) and reduce the virus risk (.25), leaving each of them with a net welfare loss of 0.25 (Cell-1).

What is the optimal choice for A and B in the aftermath of the virus, given the uncertainty about what the other person will do?

Consider the problem from A's point of view. If she stays put, her loss is 0.25. If she isolates and B does not, the loss rises to 0.75. If B also isolates the loss is 0.25, same as in the initial situation.

Assume both individuals are loss averse. Losses loom larger than gains. As argued by Kahneman & Tversky (1979), the pain of losing is psychologically about twice as powerful as the pleasure of gaining.

Both A and B are more willing to take risks to avoid a loss than to make a gain. This leads to a bias in favour of the status quo.

Since there is no gain but only a possibility of loss if B does not isolate, no matter what B does, the best choice for A is to not isolate. The problem is symmetric for B. So, the best choice for him is also to not isolate.

The numerical illustration assumes both the individual and the sum of their welfare in the initial situation are the same as when both are isolating. Further, the sum of welfare loss when one is isolating while the other is not is

greater than when both are isolating (Cell-1) or when both are not isolating (Cell-4).

It is because of the income losses which the one who isolates incurs, but this has no impact on virus risk reduction because the other person is not isolating.

This is an important assumption whose empirical validity is now under experimentation all over the world.

However, allowing some virus risk reduction due to unilateral social distancing action by an individual will not change the key conclusion that social distancing actions are underprovided when left to individuals' own volition.

Synergy -- the combined virus reduction effect when most are cooperating is greater than the sum of their separate effects -- does not enter the individual payoff calculations.

Individual A	Individual B	
	ISOLATE	DON'T ISOLATE
Isolate	Cell-1 -0.25, -0.25	Cell-2 -0.75, -0.25
Don't Isolate	Cell-3 -0.25, -0.75	Cell-4 -0.25, -0.25

Note: The first number in a cell represents the payoff to A given the choice by B. The second number in the same cell represents the payoff to B given the choice by A.

Such externalities accrue relatively trivially to the individuals taking the action and largely to third parties who face less transmission risk.

However, since the benefit to the third parties is not appropriable to the ones engaging in social distancing, it does not appear in individual decision-making calculus.

Social distancing is underprovided because the externalities are not internalised.

The payoff matrix above will change dramatically if the 0.25 gain to the other person enters into each individual's calculation. This will happen under unconditional altruism.

The virus risk reduction gain to each individual will double in the cooperative equilibrium (Cell-1) because each care equally about the other person's gain.

Anything that promotes internalisation of externalities can produce a shift from the initial trap to greater collective welfare.

Costs of social distancing actions and altruism matter. When the costs are low, people do comply.

Wearing mask, gloves and keeping a 6-foot distance when out and about, including when meeting other people, are such low-cost actions that are gradually gaining universal acceptance (except for some such as the US President Donald Trump). They are also getting entrenched in social expectations.

If everybody is complying with behavioural

social distancing, the defector is likely to suffer some stigma.

There is anecdotal evidence of violent protests by people in stores and aeroplanes against those not wearing masks.

Altruism explains why many in all parts of the world chose not to physically visit mothers on Mothers' Day.

Public communication promoting enlightened self-interested behaviour -- acting to further the interests of others to ultimately serve one's own self-interest -- works well in these cases.

Voluntary home confinement day after day is a whole different ball game. At the individual level, this is a trade-off between the risk of contracting the virus versus losing livelihood for a vast majority in rich and poor countries alike.

efforts of the less risk-tolerant.

Belief in herd immunity increases risk tolerance, with Brazil and Sweden being the most obvious cases.

The emergence of new social norms penalising non-compliance can induce voluntary compliance by aligning individual and collective interests.

Indeed, such norms appear to be emerging organically or through public action.

In South Korea, it's called "everyday life quarantine". People ordered into self-quarantine download an app that alerts officials if a patient ventures out of isolation. Fines for violations can reach \$2,500.

South Koreans, remembering the mistakes made in the handling of MERS and SARS, have accepted invasive personal information exposure that is inconceivable in Europe or North America.

Structural conditions play an equally important role in enabling compliance with different social distancing rules.

Some communities cannot wash hands because of limited access to water.

Vulnerable groups find staying a metre away from others within or outside their households nearly impossible.

Richer people have an easier time engaging in self-isolation because they can work from home in nicer and roomier space.

They have internet access that mitigates the cost of reduced face-to-face interaction. The poor have no such luxuries.

They cannot afford to internalise the social cost of risk-taking.

It is not realistic to expect individuals to be forward-looking when they have to spend sleepless nights worrying about surviving the present.

Research shows the problem of non-compliance is exacerbated when people live in more unequal communities.

Psychology is powerfully influenced by the social environment we inhabit.

This environment structures daily life and relationships in workplaces and neighbourhoods.

The less socially entrenched people are, the less collective action is in their self-interest.

Social pressure, norms and moral suasions do not resonate when you feel you are a dispensable thread in the social fabric.

Solidarity is hard to forge in social environments that either does not have a proper norm, such as under what conditions markets can reopen, or the norms are fluid, as the chaos in the garments industry demonstrated.

Maintaining communitywide social distancing for long gets tougher when solidarity and trust are low.

Public health is determined by the least common denominator.

If the poorest and most marginalised within a society are not protected, then no one is.

The author is an economist

Public health is determined by the least common denominator. If the poorest and most marginalised within a society are not protected, then no one is.

Firms to get until June to file VAT returns

SOHEL PARVEZ

Businesses that have failed to file value-added tax (VAT) returns of March and April owing to the countrywide shutdown are set to get a new deadline in June to complete the tasks, said a senior official of the National Board of Revenue yesterday.

"We will soon allow them to submit returns without any fine or interest," said the official asking not to be named as he is not authorised to speak with the media.

An order will be issued soon with the new deadline based on approval from Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal. As the shutdown is set to expire on May 30, the deadline for submission of returns is likely to be in the first week of June, the official added.

The revelation comes a day after the government issued an ordinance that the NBR, with the approval from the government, would be able to increase the deadline for submission of VAT returns without penalty and interest on account of natural disaster, pandemic or war.

The ordinance became effective retrospectively from April 1, six days after the government-enforced countrywide shutdown, to slow the spread of the rogue virus that shattered the economic and social

lives of people around the globe.

Save for essential commodity processors and marketers, drug makers, superstores, groceries and perishable foods and banks, most of the businesses have remained shut.

While the NBR kept its field offices



of VAT open in April and May to receive VAT returns, the majority of the businesses could not file returns on time because of the adverse environment.

As a result, they became defaulters, which means that they would have to pay a fine of Tk 10,000 for the delay.

The rules make it mandatory for businesses to submit details of their transactions of the previous month and deposit VAT within the 15th of the following month.

Firms have to pay Tk 10,000 as a penalty for failure to submit VAT returns within the deadline.

They can also seek time for delayed furnishing of returns but they have to pay 2 per cent simple interest on the payable VAT amount for delayed submission.

Revenue officials said they could not extend the deadline for filing VAT returns to reduce the hassles of companies as there was no scope in the currently effective VAT and Supplementary Act 2012.

With the ordinance empowering the NBR to extend deadline without penalty and interest, they would be able to offer respite to businesses that are also suffering from cash crunch for keeping shutters off for nearly two months.

Similarly, the NBR's income tax department will also issue an order extending the deadlines of time-bound issues such as submission of income tax returns, statement of income tax filing by employees and disposal of tax-related appeal cases.

To give relief to taxpayers, the government also issued another ordinance on May 20, giving power to the NBR to condone the period of the pandemic in computing the time limits, and extend time limits.

"We hope that the complexities that have arisen would be resolved once we issue an order after opening our office," said an income tax official at the NBR.

Customs offices to stay open during Eid holidays

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Customs offices will remain open during Eid holidays to ensure uninterrupted shipment of exportable goods abroad, said a notification of the National Board

of Revenue (NBR).

The measure comes following the demands from the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association.

The NBR asked its custom offices to stay open on a limited

scale to facilitate the import of goods related to export and shipment of export items, said a notice signed by NBR Second Secretary Customs Policy Mohammed Mahraj-ul-Alam Samrat.

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.

Post Corona work culture

The recent pandemic has hit the world hard and it is slowly changing the way we see things. Subconsciously, we are more driven to adopt a solution-oriented approach in our education, businesses and healthcare. The changes in how businesses are done and the shift in work culture are expected to be more flexible, more futuristic. The strategies a company can follow to remain in the game even after dealing with a pandemic might just be a new era where technology and business become complementary to each other.

STANDARD OPERATING PRACTICE WILL BE ELEVATED TO A NEW LEVEL

Many of the changes companies will make in the short term are obvious; dramatically reduced travel, more work-from-home opportunities for white-collar workers, and changes in business operations to reduce human contact. Improving the workplace will surely be a priority for businesses as well. In the past, companies have used the lessons learned during periods of disruption to improve their standard operating practices. For example, the great recession forced employers to revisit their staffing models. The result was a perma-



nent shift in the ratio of part-time workers to full-time workers across the economy. COVID-19 may yield similar changes.

ORGANIZATIONS WILL DEVELOP TRUST-BASED CULTURES WITH EMPLOYEES

The coronavirus challenge demands an organization-wide, honest conversation that enables truth to speak to power about the corporate response to the challenge. This could be a new strategic initiative facing huge execution challenges. These require senior management to get the best information they can

about barriers to execution, and it requires trust and commitment.

"The coronavirus challenge, like any crisis, provides senior management a huge opportunity to develop a trust-based culture rapidly or, conversely, if not handled with an organization-wide honest conversation, to undermine their ability to develop a trust-based culture for years to come." Says Michael Beer, co-founder and director of True-Point Partners and a Professor in Harvard Business School.

NOMROTA SARKER

Massive work needs to be done in Amphan-affected areas

Immediately repair the coastal embankment where needed

THE whole nation heaved a sigh of relief as cyclone Amphan did not hit the country as badly as we feared it would. Had Amphan—the first “super cyclone” created over the Bay of Bengal in this century—made its landfall in Bangladesh, it would have completely ravaged our coastal regions. The places of West Bengal where it had hit Wednesday afternoon are in a bad shape now, despite the fact that the cyclone had weakened and turned into an “extremely severe cyclonic storm” when it landed there. While we have been spared the worst, the devastation done by Amphan in our coastal regions is still enormous, and massive work needs to be done to bring life back to normal in the affected areas.

As of yesterday, at least 10 people were reported to have been killed by the cyclone. Hundreds of villages, particularly in Satkhira, Jessore, Khulna, Patuakhali and Borguna, were submerged by the high tidal surge. While parts of the coastal embankment were washed away in some places, cracks or breaches developed in many other points through which sea water is still entering inside the embankment, inundating dwellings of hundreds of people. Drinking water crisis would be a major issue in these areas in the coming days. In Rajshahi, Naogaon and Pabna mango and litchi orchards were ravaged, while paddy fields in many districts went under water as the cyclone passed through the country Wednesday night. It will definitely need some time to assess the losses and damage done by the cyclone, but whatever news we have got from the affected areas is enough to make us concerned.

We are fortunate enough to have Sundarbans stretching along our coastal districts. The 6,017 sq km mangrove forest has always been our greatest saviour in times of natural disasters like cyclones. Had the forest not absorbed the fury of Amphan, its impacts on our coastal areas would have been more severe. Since the Sundarbans has been acting like a shock absorber, economic and commercial interventions that threaten the forest's ecological balance should be stopped immediately to save this unique forest.

Now, the biggest challenge for the government would be to minimise the sufferings of the cyclone-affected people. It should immediately start rehabilitation and relief operations in the affected areas, for which inter-ministerial coordination is needed. Safe drinking water should be made available for people. In addition, the coastal embankment should be repaired, where needed, on an urgent basis to stop sea water from entering inside. The government also needs to make a better plan to maintain the embankment throughout the year, as breaches in the embankment often cause sufferings to those living in the coastal areas.

Last but not the least, as the government did a commendable job of evacuating people to the cyclone shelters at the right time, we hope that it will also take the necessary precautions for containing the Covid-19 spread in the affected areas, as lakhs of people are now leaving the shelters for their homes.

Returning migrant workers will need huge assistance

Govt should start planning for their recovery and reintegration

THE outbreak of the coronavirus has put thousands of Bangladeshi migrant workers at risk of losing their jobs as the global economy struggles and is likely to enter into a recession. At the same time, declining oil prices could also spell doom for many migrant workers, as Middle Eastern countries account for 70 percent of the remittance that comes into Bangladesh, and Middle Eastern economies that are highly dependent on oil prices may suffer even more.

Many migrants who have already lost their jobs now find themselves stranded in foreign countries in extremely tough conditions. Once countries relax restrictions and air travel resumes, it is expected that a few hundred thousand migrant workers will return to Bangladesh. The UN's International Organisation for Migration (IOM) has issued a statement warning that the most vulnerable of the returning Bangladeshi migrants will require immediate support to meet their basic needs.

According to the IOM, this support will have to come in three stages. The first stage is to provide humanitarian and medical assistance before they return to Bangladesh. The second stage is to provide immediate assistance upon their arrival, as many of them may not even have the money to return home. And the final stage will include social reintegration and social recovery assistance.

As our economy will also suffer because of the outbreak, it will be a difficult challenge for the government to create enough employment to make up for the jobs that are lost abroad. Therefore, the government needs to start formulating plans to achieve just that from now on. Besides creating new jobs for returning migrants, the government could consider granting them loans to set up their own businesses, as well as provide skills training programmes to help them regain employment quicker. All of this will require a lot of funds and we hope the IOM and other international agencies will provide their full support to the Bangladesh government during these difficult times.

MUSHTAQ CHOWDHURY and ROBERT YATES

THE coronavirus rage is showing early signs of slowdown in most parts of Europe and South East Asia. Strict regimes of social distancing are being eased with reopening of schools and selected businesses, not without controversy though. But it is still advancing in the rest of the world and until an effective vaccine is universally available, it remains a threat to us all.

In Bangladesh, the number of identified cases continues to rise every day. The government is taking steps to push social distancing as a new norm but, for understandable reasons, finding it difficult to fully enforce it. The effect of these measures on vulnerable people is devastating and potentially has a greater impact on their lives and wellbeing than the virus itself.

As in many other countries, Covid-19 has revealed the weaknesses in Bangladesh's health systems. These include: inadequate surveillance systems and capacity to track the spread of the virus, shortages of health human resources of all categories, lack of essential facilities and equipment (e.g. functioning primary care centres, hospitals and ICUs), insufficient specialised equipment (ventilators, testing kits and PPEs), and lack of necessary drugs. Bangladesh has successfully faced many natural disasters in the past but in this particular case, we, like others, were overwhelmed. The head of the government firmly took over the helm but others seemed ill-prepared, leading to poor or little coordination among the different arms of the state. Efforts to get citizens on board were tragically missing. It also showed how poverty and vulnerability deterred enforcement of tough actions in protecting citizens' health. Added to this is the inherent crisis of valid, relevant and timely data.

Despite Bangladesh's acclaimed progress towards the MDGs, in terms of improved socio-economic status for its people, the Covid-19 shock will definitely threaten its performance in the SDGs. It is clear that the principle of “leave no one behind” will have to be enormously reinforced if Bangladesh has to move into a “developed country” status in 2041.

The Covid-19 crisis has set the ground for a “new” health system. Bangladesh has about 30-40 million people who are poor by any standard. With rising poverty and unemployment due to the crisis, this number is likely to rise to

about 50 million in the next two to three years. They, in addition to the remaining population, will need publicly-financed healthcare. With such a deadly disease ever-present and able to flare up quickly, it is in all our interests that there is truly universal access to a full range of health services needed to tackle the disease and other conditions. Covid-19 is, therefore, perhaps the ultimate example of why we need universal health coverage (UHC)—if anyone is left out, it threatens the health security of everyone.

The government led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has committed itself to achieving UHC for Bangladesh in several

Organization, Bangladesh spends only 0.4 percent of its GDP through public health spending, the lowest in the world. Our South Asian neighbour Sri Lanka, for example, spends four times as us; 74 percent of our nation's health expenditures are by people from their own pocket, leading 3-4 million people sliding into poverty every year. This will inevitably increase as a result of the Covid-19 fallout. The generous allocation of new resources to meet the pandemic-related challenges gives the conviction that the government, if committed, can make more money available for health. A phased increase of public health spending

level have made tremendous progress towards UHC including Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Vietnam and Morocco. Thailand achieved UHC in 2002 when its GDP per capita was almost exactly the same as Bangladesh's today. UHC is, therefore, perfectly affordable in Bangladesh if there is the political will to implement it.

Because UHC reforms always require significant increases in public financing, they tend to be led by heads of state who have the power to reallocate public budgets. Progressive leaders often take this initiative because UHC reforms are extremely popular. Across the world, politicians that have delivered UHC to their people have become national heroes. This was the case in Germany, UK, France, Australia, Japan, Canada, Korea, Thailand, Brazil, Mexico, and Indonesia. It is also interesting to note how many of these great UHC reforms emerged out of national crises—including the UK, France and Japan after WWII, Thailand in 2001 after the Asian financial crisis, and Rwanda after the genocide in 1994. And yet again, in 2020, we are seeing early signs of some leaders recognising the opportunity that the Covid-19 crisis might give them to launch popular UHC reforms—notably in Ireland and South Africa. Might this crisis even precipitate a change of government in the United States where it is highly likely that the Democrats are going to campaign on a pro-UHC platform?

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has the political capital to go for a big push on UHC. Given global trends, it is inevitable that Bangladesh will make the transition to publicly financed UHC at some point in the next 20 years. As there are sufficient resources in the country to achieve this now, there is no reason why the prime minister shouldn't become Bangladesh's national UHC hero and write her name into the history books in the next five years. What a wonderful gift this would be during the Mujib Borsho and on the golden jubilee year of Bangladesh's independence! This new transformative initiative in healthcare could proudly be called “Bangabandhu-Sheba” or “Suborna-Sheba”. It will be an essential step in living with the ongoing threat of Covid-19 and achieving the long-term sustainable development goal target of universal health coverage.

Mushtaq Chowdhury is Professor of Population and Family Health at Columbia University and founding Dean of BRAC School of Public Health. Robert Yates is Executive Director of Centre for Universal Health at Chatham House, UK.



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Covid-19 is perhaps the ultimate example of why we need universal health coverage (UHC)—if anyone is left out, it threatens the health security of everyone.

international forums, including signing a United Nations General Assembly resolution on UHC in December 2012 and a political resolution on UHC at the High Level Meeting for UHC in New York last September. Unfortunately, this is one of the few commitments made by the highest office which has, until now, remained unimplemented. But perhaps Covid-19 and its aftermath might give the government the impetus it needs to change this and bring universal healthcare to everyone in Bangladesh. In particular, the government can use the opportunity of this major health disaster to garner support for more investment in the health sector.

According to the World Health

to 2.5 percent of GDP over the next 2-3 years would give Bangladesh enough resources to accelerate progress towards UHC based on the principles of primary health care, and give the population better protection from future outbreaks of infectious diseases.

The key to achieving UHC is through reforming the health financing system. In particular, it requires switching from a system of private voluntary financing (mostly people paying fees for services) to a compulsory public system. This has happened in every developed country in the world, with the exception of the US, which has famously failed to reach UHC. Many countries at Bangladesh's income

If history is any indication, humans can defeat Covid-19 too

ATIQUR RAHMAN

A virus in distant Wuhan, China did not cause much of a stir initially; but five months on, with five million people infected and more than 3 lakhs dead globally, the coronavirus is a major concern for humanity all over the world. Caught in a stranglehold of death and distress, humans are feeling acutely nervous.

If alive today, Thomas R. Malthus, the proponent of Malthusian Theory in 1798, would have said: I told you. If you overburden Mother Earth with demands beyond its carrying capacity, you will be sized down. With the world's population nearing eight billion, are we too many for Mother Earth? Is Covid-19 sizing down humans as predicted by the doomsday prophet Malthus?

Covid-19 is not an extraordinary blip in man's long history. Something sinister was destined to happen sooner or later. Bill Gates predicted the inevitability of such an outcome while addressing the TED conference in 2015. He said that the world needs to be ready for the next health crisis... while Ebola seems to have been brought under control, next time “we may not be so lucky”. Stephen Hawking said in 2006, “Life on Earth is at the ever-increasing risk of being wiped out by a disaster, such as sudden global warming, nuclear war, a genetically engineered virus or other dangers.” Hawking was not only looking at supernatural events but also man-induced disasters. He advised humans to look for an alternative celestial body to live on.

What is happening around us now have put humans on their back foot. Covered and cornered, humans are seeking refuge in their houses with protective masks, disinfectants, and hand wash. Where possible, they are retreating from the congested cities like Dhaka, Delhi, and Bombay to the relative safety and uncongested shelters of rural areas.

But why should humans be so covered? True, the virus is highly contagious, but so had been many other viruses that had visited mankind in the past. And it is not that they have not seen such pandemics before. In the last 2,500 years, the total human lives lost due to major pandemics are estimated to be about 400 million—the major ones like the Black Death in the mid-14th century killed as many as 200 million; the plague of Justinian around the time Islam was emerging as a major religion killed some 40 million people; the great plagues of 17th and 18th centuries killed nearly 36

million; and about a 100 years ago, some 50 million people died from the Spanish flu. These are significant numbers, and some of the pandemics killed more than half of the global population during those periods. More recently, the HIV-AIDS killed some 30 million people. Beyond the pandemics, famines and diseases killed another 200 million. In their ferocity and killing power, most of those pandemics dwarfed Covid-19. How could man, the most “civilised” creature in the world, proud conqueror of the earth and the seas, and explorer of the deep space, be covered by this rather “minor” threat posed by Covid-19?

Since prehistoric days, humans have survived many pandemics, and have learnt their lessons on how to conquer them. With a little bit of patience and self-isolation only, Covid-19 could have been controlled by reaching “herd immunity”. But modesty, focus and action are not

past pandemics. Humans did survive many cataclysmic natural events like floods, earthquakes, and tsunamis. Such incidents over the past centuries killed (in addition to pandemic deaths) more than 204 million people. But humans seemed to have conquered these incidents also. Cut down and fallen, they renewed their journey again, and forged ahead. Their courage and strength have been demonstrated again and again.

With this long experience of survival, man today should not be afraid of Covid-19. After all, has not man made great advances in science and technology? Are they not digging deep down the earth, exploring the deep seas and going under the polar caps to explore resources, and blasting off to the outer space searching for habitable places for colonisation? With the vast knowledge they possess, can't they blast their way to victory against this minute, invisible virus?! What a pity!



PHOTO: REUTERS

always the qualities that our leaders demonstrate. Otherwise, how could they engage in meaningless blame game or cut the funding of one of the prestigious agencies whose action is valuable now in leading man's victory over Covid-19?

Humans were not covered by past pandemics, nor had they stopped doing whatever they were doing. They even continued to fight wars, lobbying the dead bodies of soldiers succumbing to Black Death “as cannon balls” over castle walls to make the enemy run away from the awful stench of decaying bodies (*The Silk Roads: A New History of the World*, by Peter Frankopan).

The heroics of humans have not just been their ability to survive the

These conquests of humans underline their self-confidence, their relentless pursuit to complement their progress with more achievements. Covid-19 could hardly be a match for them, only if they could reach herd immunity. It hasn't been achieved yet but it seems not too far away from their reach either. Some frontrunners like Remdesivir, Hydroxychloroquine, and Avigan are having some teething problems; no less than 30 other drugs are under the watch list of the European Medicines Agency, and some may go for clinical tests soon. These show good promise for sound public healthcare needed for reaching herd immunity.

But we should not forget something:

Since prehistoric days, humans have survived many pandemics, and have learnt their lessons on how to conquer them. With a little bit of patience and self-isolation only, Covid-19 could have been controlled by reaching “herd immunity”.

the real fight is not man versus nature, or man versus virus. It is man against man. The history of man's fight against themselves is full of dreaded stories. The death and destruction caused by man's greed and anger against one another, manifested in the form of colonisation, invasion, and wars of epic proportions, is a testament to man's cruelty, unsurpassed by nothing else.

A sense of invincibility has given man the arrogance to believe in themselves too much. Malthus believed that too, as he said: “The vices of mankind are active and able ministers of depopulation. They are the precursors in the great army of destruction, and often finish the dreadful work themselves.”

In the last few centuries, more than 655 million humans perished through wars, ethnic cleansing, political purges, political unrest, abuse of labour, slave trade, and forced labour. The count of death includes only the major wars and crimes; many more have died in conditions created by such hostilities. These figures represented much larger percentages of the global population in those days than the current Covid-19 figures do, which as of now stands only at about 0.4 percent of global population.

Man need not be afraid of Covid-19. They need to get their act together, not by spending trillions on killing machines, but by taking care of nature and the children of Mother Nature.

Atiqur Rahman is an economist, ex-Adjunct Professor at the John Cabot University, Rome, Italy, and ex-Lead Strategist of IFAD, Rome.

In memory of Prof Anisuzzaman, a scholar of Bengals past and present

AHONA PANDA

I arrived in Dhaka, some years ago, as an outsider twice removed. First, I had grown up in Kolkata; second, I was a graduate student in Chicago. My knowledge of Bangladesh was from books, the fine print of which chafed against my eyes in the sparse light of American winters. When I first read Anisuzzaman's magnum opus, *Muslim Manas O Bangla Sahitya*, the past came alive with startling clarity, not just as something to be described, but as a set of questions to be confronted. These questions were fundamental: who are we, and how has the Bengali language made us who we are today? How can literature—this activity of utter futility and beauty—shape human beings as they evolve through time and through politics?

I still remember my first meeting with Professor Anisuzzaman. I had taken to Dhaka as if it were my own city, feeling at home in the endless traffic jams and periodic *azaans*. A friend had passed on Anis *sir's* number to me, and I had asked him how I could possibly introduce myself to this impossibly famous and elderly scholar. You need not worry, he assured me, Anis *sir* is kind to everyone, and he loves young people. He was right, and I had an appointment.

I arrived to see him in his apartment, simple but warm and beautiful. He had round-the-clock security. By this time, I had reread many of his crucial books, works that are integral to Bengali literary and political history. I was carrying a fountain pen as a mark of tribute and gratitude. He smiled when I thrust it awkwardly in his hands and I stuttered some more. In person, he seemed both towering and yet curiously fragile. He asked me why I wanted to study what I did. I told him that I had a peculiar relationship with the Bengali language. I loved it deeply as the medium of my self-expression, as the language in which my favourite writers wrote. But until graduate school,

growing up in Kolkata meant that I was not entirely cognizant of Bengali Muslim history. I wanted to rectify that. I also told him that, when I wanted to understand how Hindus and Muslims felt towards each other, historically as well as in our own politically turbulent modernity, I had turned to his writing in desperation. One of the first people in Bengal to write a book on *manas* (mind? heart? sensibility? consciousness? mentality?), Anis *sir's* contribution to our divided inheritance of the Bengali language was exceptional in every sense. His scholarship on Bengals past and present connected past identity with present reality like nothing else did, and made a Bengali from the other side of the border understand the lived experience of the Bangladeshi subjectivity.

In the many tributes to this exceptional man that have appeared since his passing, we understand that Professor Anisuzzaman, "national professor" who single-handedly oversaw the cultural life of a nation, was himself an embodied history. Kolkata's beloved Anis *da*, known as Anis *chacha* to the cultural intelligentsia of Dhaka, and Anis *sir* to students, readers and followers, famously came to political consciousness at Dhaka University in the aftermath of the 1952 Language Movement. Intimately engaged as one of the key intellectuals and freedom fighters in the 1971 Liberation War, he was instrumental in both conceptualising and implementing the linguistic nationalism on which Bangladesh has been premised for nearly half a century. In our conversations, I tried—again, as an outsider—to make sense of the fundamental question animating my own generation ("millennials" in American parlance): what kind of national identity emerges out of a deep, intimate connection to language and literature?

For the generation prior to his—made up of the intellectuals who conceptualised a Bengali Pakistani

identity—the very idea of East Pakistan was a renaissance of sorts. While historical records demonstrate that Partition was an electoral process ultimately engineered by the Hindu *bhadralok*, a majority of Bengali Muslims welcomed separatism because of Hindu cultural hegemony. In 1943, for example, the octogenarian poet Kaikobad bitterly remembered the way in which Hindu writers had once expressed amazement that a Muslim poet could write Bengali, even if they

accomplish in the 1950s and 1960s—Anisuzzaman, studying with greats such as Muhammad Shahidullah, Munier Chowdhury, and Muhammad Abdul Hye, came into being as a unique political phenomenon. He was a political humanist and, in independent Bangladesh, he persisted in this work of interrogation, reconstruction, and radical reimagining of the politics of language.

When we think of earlier humanist scholars in Bangla on both sides

of intellectuals and the destruction of documents—new edifices had to be built, and whatever remained had to be preserved. It was in this context that Anisuzzaman emerged as foremost among a generation of scholars including Ahmed Sharif, Ahmed Sofa, and Serajul Islam Choudhury, figures who saw literature as a constant dialogue between past and present, between Hindus and Muslims, even between Muslim and Muslim. He struck a balance between his own scholarship and myriad other activities, working as a dedicated archivist, anthologist, and editor, preserving historical documents such as periodicals and editing the writing of others. And above all, he engaged himself as a witness of history, even as he turned his attention to his own *manas* in the series of autobiographical writings—*Amar Ekattor*, *Kal Nirabadhi*, and *Bipula Prithibi*. It is apt that the titles of his testimonies refer to Tagore's address to Bangiya Sahitya Parishad—"Not self-interest, not fame; the true end of literature is time endless, and the world, immeasurable"—a vision he carried out in his own life.

It is difficult to think of the Bengali twenty-first century without him, the pillar who outlived many of his generation in order to guide us through the darkest hours of our history. The true end of literature is love and empathy, tolerance and dialogue. It gave all Bengalis a nationalism that transcended borders and ruptures. He ends *Suarupar Sandhane* with a Shamsur Rahman poem from which I quote a line—"Freedom, you are/ the sparkling leaves of an aged banyan tree." The aged banyan tree falls, but the sparkling leaves of his books remain for posterity. As long as we have that, we will continue to have the freedom he valiantly fought for and taught us to value—the freedom of Bangladesh, but also of language, life, and thought.

Ahona Panda is a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Chicago.



Prof Anisuzzaman gives a lecture on "Muslims in Bengal (up to the 18th century): Plurality of Identity" at Bangladesh National Museum on October 29, 2017.

PHOTO: STAR

praised him. Trailblazing Nazrul was perhaps the only exception who gained absolute acceptance from the Hindu literary cosmos. After 1947, Pakistan brought its own set of problems, language policy being foremost among them. Abul Mansur Ahmad's dream of cultural autonomy gradually became impossible to implement. And, at the moment when language became the site of resistance, reclamation, and innovation—a radical reimagining of what politics could

of the border—Haraprasad Shastri, Abdul Karim Sahityabisharad, Dinesh Chandra Sen, Jasimuddin, Suniti Chatterji, Muhammad Shahidullah, and others—we realise that they dug into the past in order to make sense of the present. Literature represented the search for personal and collective identity. That enterprise became a more critical activity in the East Pakistan years and, arguably, an even greater challenge in Bangladesh. After 1971—after the mass killings

Strengthening digital economy is the way to go



A CLOSER LOOK
CHINA and South Korea were the early frontlines in our pitched battle against Covid-19. Both countries had taken the hardest hit during the initial

behaviour—more online shopping, increased digital payments—China's already flourishing ecommerce platforms were better able to align their supply chain logistics to serve the needs and demands of the consumers holed up in their homes.

According to a WEF report, "since the outbreak of Covid-19, the new infrastructure has played a critical role in China's overall economy.

helped the wheels of the economy turn by facilitating commerce, but also assisted in enforcing social distancing: non-contact services and AI robots for delivery.

In late January, one of China's largest providers of delivery services for food, consumer products and retail services—Meituan—launched a non-contact delivery service where parcels could be delivered to customers while strictly

All these have been enabled by the political will of the Chinese policymakers and private-sector leaders in strengthening their digital economy through investing in advanced and resilient digital infrastructure.

The country, however, did suffer from economic shocks, with its GDP contracting by 6.8 percent year-on-year during the first quarter of the year. But with faster suppression of the Covid-19 outbreak with the aid of its cutting-edge digital innovations, it is now able to accelerate its economic activities again.

For countries such as Bangladesh, who have already invested in digital technologies and have the basic digital infrastructure in place—4G internet, ICT substructure, a flourishing ecommerce industry, multiple digital payments platforms, etc.—they can now consider working on these foundations to gear up their economic activities in the medium to long run to achieve their economic ambitions.

Consumer behaviour is undergoing a shift in Bangladesh in response to the pandemic. According to E-Commerce Association of Bangladesh (E-CAB), nearly 100 ecommerce operations dealing mostly in healthcare supplies, groceries, and essential commodities have witnessed a rise in demand, as more consumers, who had previously not considered online purchase, had to opt for it during the shutdown.

But with increased ecommerce and digital payments demands, the regulators, industry leaders and business owners have to work together to ensure an environment in which the trust that consumers place in ecommerce businesses, digital payments platforms and

smart suppliers is not shaken. All the stakeholders in this ecosystem need to work together to make sure that the system becomes sustainable in the long run. For this to happen, the retail supply chains have to be made smart, digital logistics need to be further strengthened, and the political will of all concerned needs to be demonstrated through meaningful action.

With Covid-19 continuing to wreak havoc worldwide, economies will suffer tremendously—there is no way out of it. And countries such as Bangladesh whose economy is heavily dependent on exports earnings will have additional obstacles to overcome in the next few months, due to the declining global demands for apparel. Moreover, with the global oil prices plummeting, the fate of the Bangladeshi migrant workers—whose remittance keeps its forex reserve strong—looks pretty uncertain right now. This will be an added burden on Bangladesh going forward.

But with strategic investments in strengthening digital economy, the country can bolster domestic demands and keep the wheels of the economy turning faster. But exactly how fast the country's economy can and will recover is up to the policymakers, regulators and industry leaders. What is needed is an open-minded approach to embrace digital innovation and transformation. This is one challenging goal, but it is achievable. We can look to countries that are on the road to economic revival and take the cue from them.

Tasneem Tayeb is a columnist for *The Daily Star*. Her Twitter handle is: @TayebTasneem

phase of the outbreak, but both were quick to rebound from the initial shock of it and soon cornered the mortal enemy with the swift stroke of their digital weapons.

With a strong technological backbone, they have been able to contain the Covid-19 outbreak efficiently. And the same resilient digital infrastructure has aided these two countries in their attempts to cushion their economies from the aftershocks of the pandemic.

For one, the faster they contained the outbreak, the sooner they were able to get their economies back on track towards recovery. While most countries are still under lockdown, China and South Korea are opening up their economic activities and would likely lead the rest of the world in their attempts to revive their economies once they have overcome the initial shock of Covid-19.

China, a nation whose path to ecommerce had been paved in 2003 by the SARS outbreak, as suggested by World Economic Forum, was well-equipped to fight the economic challenges posed by the Covid-19 lockdown. While the SARS outbreak triggered a shift in consumer



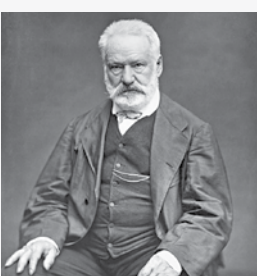
Countries like China and South Korea are using their resilient digital infrastructure to cushion their economies from the aftershocks of Covid-19.

Retail platforms based on a solid supply chain ensure that the supply of products accurately matches people's needs. Dependable and fast delivery helps guarantee the stability of tens of millions of families."

And China was quick to embrace further innovations that not only

maintaining social distancing rules. Soon, in many parts of China, AI robots were used for package delivery services, security services, disinfection services and so on, putting fewer lives at risk, while at the same time going about addressing the most pressing needs of the people and the time.

QUOTABLE Quote



VICTOR HUGO
(1802-1885)
French poet, novelist and dramatist

Certain thoughts are prayers. There are moments when, whatever be the attitude of the body, the soul is on its knees.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Humor, casually
- 6 Fashionably dated
- 11 In the know
- 12 Ordered display
- 13 Advancing
- 15 Chart model
- 16 Hoppy brew
- 17 Flying mammal
- 18 Low, flat cloud
- 20 Ram's mate
- 21 Guest's bed
- 22 Surgery memento
- 23 Pollster Elmo
- 26 Does in
- 27 Burden
- 28 Spike of film
- 29 Einstein's birthplace
- 30 Time of delivery,

DOWN

- 1 Household lights
- 2 Look forward to
- 3 Imposter
- 4 Work wk.'s end
- 5 Capitol worker
- 6 Is furious
- 7 Pitching stat
- 8 Manhattan area
- 9 Fled
- 10 Raw bar selection
- 14 Over-supply
- 19 High cards
- 22 Winter glider
- 23 Dock worker
- 24 Taking a sabbatical
- 25 Halloween decoration
- 26 Bean container
- 28 Breathing organ
- 30 Inferno describer
- 31 Bird-related
- 32 Hint of color
- 33 Alleviates
- 38 Rink makeup
- 39 High -- kite

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

YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

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

BEETLE BAILEY BY MORT WALKER

I PUT MY REPORT ON CAMP SECURITY ON A FLASH DRIVE. HE CAN'T JUST PUT THAT IN HIS SHREDDER!

BABY BLUES BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

BROOKLYN IS SPENDING THE NIGHT TOMORROW. I HEARD. COULD YOU NOT TELL ANY "DAD JOKES" WHILE SHE'S HERE? IF THAT'S WHAT YOU WANT. I'LL JUST STICK WITH MY AWESOME MAGIC TRICKS. AAAUGH!!

GRAPEVINE

SHUVOO'S EID SPECIAL



Popular actor Arifin Shuvoo has something special for his audience this Eid. He will be releasing a music video on his official YouTube channel for the occasion, where the actor himself sings the song, *Monta Bojhena*. The song is written by K Zia and composed by him alongside Fuad Al Muqtadir. Shuvoo said, "This is a surprise for my fans and followers. I have previously sung a few lines for the movie *Agnee*. I am

not a professional singer, but I have tried my best to complete this work. This Eid, I was supposed to offer audiences my new movie, *Mission Extreme*. Unfortunately, due to the current crisis, it is not possible. But, as a small gift to my followers, I am releasing this music video." He added, "The shooting for the music video was done at home. I had a camera at home, and my wife, Arpita, helped me with the shooting."

Mim's Eid Home Production



During this quarantine, popular actor Bidya Sinha Mim produced a fifteen-minute long short film, *Connection*, where Tahsan Khan will be starring opposite her. Directed by Raihan Rafi, all the work for the film was done remotely. Mim said, "The project was done in a minimum budget. I stepped foot into the world of production through this. I never expected everyone to be so supportive regarding this. I am grateful for all the support I have received for this short project." *Connection* will be released during Eid on Bidya Sinha Mim's official YouTube channel.

Shabnur stands for the industry

During this unprecedented crisis, ordinary artists are the ones who are struggling the most in the entertainment industry. Actor Shabnur, who currently lives in Australia, has decided to extend a hand of help for them. On behalf of her, Shabnur's makeup artist, Selim, is carrying out all the tasks of helping the artists in Bangladesh. The actor said, "We are helping out the vul-

nerable groups in our industry by giving out monetary support and ration packages." The list for the beneficiaries has been made by director MA Awal Pintu. Shabnur has been away from the silver screen for a while now. She is an Australian immigrant, and lives with her only daughter. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the actor has remained indoors for three months now.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

CENTRE STAGE

Mithila

Versatile artist Rafiath Rashid Mithila has been maintaining social distance and staying indoors. She has been spending time with her daughter and doing creative works. In this interview with Star Showbiz, the actor talked about her short film made at home and what she misses the most during this time.



How have you been spending your time indoors?

I have primarily been working full-time from home. I'm spending time with my daughter a lot as well, like drawing and singing. I also help her study. I'm also doing household chores.

Can you say something about the short film that you made at home?

In the communication world, we have this concept of terribly tiny stories. I call my short film a terribly tiny film because its duration is only one minute twenty-five seconds. I haven't really been able to immerse myself in all the creative activities I generally do, so I thought this would be a fun project. My brother-in-law, Iresh Zaker, came up with this idea and shared it with me. My brother, my daughter and I filmed this on a phone. My brother, Maimun Khan, is a musician, and he did the editing and music production. It turned out well, so I shared it on social media and my YouTube channel. People seemed to like it.

Did you learn anything new during this time?

I don't think so. I think executing that tiny film could be considered a new skill. I am drawing, dancing and singing because I have some free time now, but they aren't newly acquired skills since I had learnt those when I was young. I wasn't able to practise those before as I was busy all the time. Other than that, there isn't anything new that I've learnt.

What do you miss most right now?

I'm definitely missing my husband. It may sound strange because people generally dislike going to work, but I miss BRAC Centre. I used to spend a large part of the day, say ten hours, at my office, so I'm missing that. Still, I'm not very upset about having to stay at home.

What is the first thing you will do after the lockdown is lifted?

I'm not really looking forward to go out, but the first thing that I want to do is see my husband. Maybe I'll go to Kolkata.

Any message for the readers?

I know everyone is going through a stressful time and panicking, so it's very important to take care of ourselves. We have to take care of our mental health as well. We should do whatever makes us happy at home. We must stay at home since it is now the only way of keeping ourselves and others safe. We should maintain social distancing and hygiene properly and tell others to do the same. I believe we can get through this difficult time together.

Amina Hossain



POPCORN HIGHLIGHTS

Here are some binge worthy movie and series you can spend your time watching while you stay at home social distancing, keeping yourself, as well as others, safe.



THE EDDY



The Eddy is a musical-drama miniseries, following the chaotic day-to-day life of the owner of a live music venue in Paris. It was written by Jack Thorne, directed by Damien Chazelle (first two episodes), composed by Glen Ballard and Randy Kerber, and stars André Holland, Joanna Kulig and Leila Bekhti, among others. It was released on May 8, 2020, on Netflix.



Ala Vaikunthapurramuloo

Ala Vaikunthapurramuloo is an Indian Telugu-language action-drama film. It has been directed by Trivikram Srinivas, produced by Allu Aravind and S. Radha Krishna, under the banners of Geetha Arts and Haarika & Hassine Creations, with Allu Arjun and Pooja Hegde in the lead. The movie revolves around the journey of a man who is constantly criticised by his father, but soon discovers the truth about his original parents. It was originally released on January 10, 2020.

Amina Hossain & Shreya Shomoyeeta

The Great

The Great is a comedy miniseries, created by Tony McNamara, produced by Dean O'Toole and Nick O'Hagan (pilot), distributed by Paramount Television Studios, and stars Elle Fanning, Phoebe Fox and Nicholas Hoult, among others. The story, which is loosely based on Catherine the Great's rise, follows the life of a Russian Emperor's wife and the troubles she has to face. The series was first aired on May 15, 2020 on Hulu.

HOLLYWOOD



Hollywood is a drama miniseries, aired on May 1, 2020. It was created by Ryan Murphy and Ian Brennan, produced under the banners of Ryan Murphy Television and Prospect Films, distributed by Netflix, and stars David

Corenswet, Darren Criss and Laura Harrier, among others. The series is set in post-WWII Hollywood, and follows the lives of aspiring actors and filmmakers on the quest to make a name for themselves.

GUESS THE CELEBRITY

Guess who the celebrity is?
HINT: HER BOSS IS CHARLIE





'Disparity persists between Tigers and Tigresses'

Undoubtedly, cricket is the most loved and followed sport in Bangladesh. People across the country get excited and pumped up to see the likes of Tamim Iqbal and Mushfiqur Rahim in action and to know their stories as it is the men's team that garners most attention. However, in the midst of the nationwide lockdown due to the coronavirus pandemic, The Daily Star has tried to contact women cricketers and bring to light stories of their struggles, hardships or their motivation behind choosing the profession. In today's instalment, we unveil the story of all-rounder Rumana Ahmed, who played 38 ODIs and 65 T20Is since making her debut against Ireland in November 2011.

RUMANA TALUKDER

Rumana Ahmed started her cricketering journey playing in the courtyard at home. Before that she fell in love with the game while watching matches on TV.

"I loved to watch cricket matches on TV and I have actually grown up as a cricketer by watching all those matches. I would watch religiously whenever there was a cricket match on," Rumana reminisced.

She then asserted that passion was not good enough to become a professional; she instead had to overcome many hurdles because there were very few who looked kindly on girls playing cricket or any other sport in our society.

"Initially it was a very difficult journey. I think everyone loves cricket in our country but when it comes to women's cricket, not many are there to speak in favour of it. I don't think the scenario has

changed much, though women's cricket has been gradually taking shape in the country.

"I entered cricket in 2008 and I didn't get support from home as my mother didn't like it. But my brother and sisters told me that there was nothing wrong in a girl playing cricket and slowly my mother also changed her mind. Then I got a lot of encouragement from my sir [mentor Imtiaz Hossain], Salma apu [Salma Khatun] and others.

"But I faced a lot of problems from outside that circle. When I went out in jerseys people looked at me as if I was a strange being. Many even chanted slogans against me. People came to our home to convince my mother to stop me from playing. Many teased me on my way to the stadium from my house and that was the reason I started venturing out in casual dresses," Rumana recalled.

Rumana however said that



Khulna's rich cricket culture and her beloved 'Pilu' sir helped her immensely in realising her dreams.

The all-rounder said that the struggle has not ended yet for women's cricket in the country.

"I think things have changed a little after the women's team clinched the Asia Cup [in 2018].

Many people now know about women's cricket but there is a big disparity between men's and women's cricket in the country in terms of financial security and facilities. There are hardly any training facilities for women cricketers," she added.

Rumana was desperately looking for cricket to resume. "It's so frustrating as we have a lot of matches this year but due to the current situation, everything is uncertain."

She was however happy that the ICC had postponed the Women's World Cup Qualifier 2021, which Sri Lanka were scheduled to host from July 3 to July 19.

"At this moment we are not in cricket, so it would not be good for us to play without any preparation. Now, we will get time to prepare ourselves before going into the competition," Rumana concluded.

Booters, BFF discuss concerns in meeting

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Football Federation's (BFF's) national teams committee is considering arranging a training camp for national players while ensuring proper isolation of the booters in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic.

The committee discussed the issue during an online conversation, which was attended by 26 footballers, the national team's committee chairman Kazi Nabil Ahmed, deputy chairman Tabith M Awal, manager Satyajit Das Rupu, head coach Jamie Day and assistant coach Stuart Watkiss.

During the hour-long meeting, officials talked about possible plans and coaches expressed satisfaction over the mental and physical health of the players, but the players again expressed concerns over the cancellation of the season and their future.

"We haven't seen each other for many days, although we all have been connected via WhatsApp. We discussed whether we can hold an isolation training camp for the players as soon as the situation improves," Nabil told The Daily Star.

"The response of the players to our first online initiative was really good. They were concerned about the new season and their contracts. We will definitely convey their concerns to the BFF president," he added.

Right-back Raihan Hasan added: "I said that footballers have been going through a financial crisis and a good decision regarding the players' contracts from the

federation can save both players and clubs."

Day and Watkiss have been following up on the home fitness regimens of the players via WhatsApp and striker Nabib Newaj Jibon said that they have been trying to follow the drills to maintain fitness.

"It is very important for every player to be fit. I know everyone has been in regular fitness training. Personally, I am looking forward to your positive attitude and I hope we can organise this training camp because we have to be an example for others," said captain Jamal Bhuiyan.

"The boys are good. It [the meeting] was to check the players' mental and physical welfare and possible plan of the national team going forward," said Jamie.



Liverpool and Egypt superstar Mohamed Salah gives the thumbs up after returning to training as the Reds were back at their West Derby complex on Wednesday for staggered sessions in small groups while social distancing was maintained.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Sadder than dancing with your sister, says Enrique

REUTERS

Spain coach Luis Enrique is no fan of playing matches sans spectators as leagues begin to return after being disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Playing matches without supporters is sadder than dancing with your sister," Luis Enrique said. Last weekend the Bundesliga became the first major European league to resume action.

"It's very ugly. I watched the German football and it's lamentable. You can hear the insults and you lose the intimacy of the great moments," added the former Barcelona midfielder and coach.

We would never endanger players, says Klopp

AFP, London

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp said he will not put his players at risk or force them back into action against their will as the Premier League leaders returned to training in small groups on Wednesday.

Klopp's side were two wins away from ending a 30-year wait to win the title when the top-flight was shut down more than two months ago. Six positive cases of COVID-19 were detected in the PL's first round of 748 tests of players and staff ahead of a return to socially distanced training.

Klopp reiterated his priority is health, but believes it is now safe for players to phase one of training.

"We would never put anybody in danger to do what we want to do. Yes, we love football, yes, it's our job, but it's not more important than our lives or the lives of other people," Klopp told Sky Sports. "In this case if you don't feel safe, you don't have to be here."

Germany's Bundesliga resumed its season behind closed doors last weekend, becoming the first major league to do so, but the Premier League's target of restarting on June 12 has been called into question by players' concerns. However, Klopp would welcome a start date.

"None of us know when we will start. The earlier they can tell us, the better it is, of course," he added. "We can't start today and then start playing tomorrow. That doesn't work. We need time to get match fit and that's what we are doing at the moment."

However, some players remain unconvinced. Newcastle and England defender Danny Rose argued players are being treated like "guinea pigs or lab rats."

Watford captain Troy Deeney has said he will not return to training this week over fears he could pass the virus onto his five-month-old son, with three of the six positive cases in the Premier League registered at the club.

Deeney's teammate Adrian Mariappa confirmed he had tested positive, the bemused defender saying: "It was a big surprise because I haven't really left the house, apart from some exercise and the odd walk with the kids."

Nevertheless, the British government's Culture, Media and Sport Secretary Oliver Dowden was optimistic players could move to the next stage of training.

India to tour South Africa in August

AGENCIES



There is a strong chance that India and South Africa may indulge in a three-match T20I series in August, subject to government clearance from both countries.

A report in ESPNcricinfo claims the series, not officially part of the FTP, was discussed by BCCI president Sourav Ganguly and CSA director of cricket Graeme Smith in February and was finalised Wednesday.

The news was confirmed by CSA acting chief executive Jacques Faul, who revealed

the development Thursday. However, final approval will only be given near August, since it cannot go ahead if the government of both countries do not give approval.

India last toured South Africa in early 2018. After losing the Test series 1-2, India roared back, registering a resounding 5-1 win in ODIs and a 2-1 win in T20Is.

The return leg took place last year when South Africa toured India for three T20Is in October, a series they lost 1-2. The three ODIs were to be held in February but after the first match was washed out, the series was called off due to the Covid-19 pandemic.



Club president Florentino Perez visited the football and basketball teams at Real Madrid City, where he spoke to coaches and players, including a smiling Marcelo, prior to the teams' training sessions at Valdebebas.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
প্রধান প্রকৌশলী (পূর্ব) এর কার্যালয়
বাংলাদেশ রেলওয়ে
সিআরবি, চট্টগ্রাম-৪০০০

ই-জিপি টেন্ডার নোটিশ

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প্রধান প্রকৌশলী (পূর্ব), বাংলাদেশ রেলওয়ে, সিআরবি, চট্টগ্রাম কর্তৃক National Electronic Government Procurement Portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) এ নিম্নে বর্ণিত তরফিক নং-১, ৩, ৪ ও ৬ দরপত্র এবং তরফিক নং-১ ও ৫ পুনঃ দরপত্র আহ্বান করা হয়েছে।

ক্রমিক নং	টেন্ডার রেফারেন্স নং	টেন্ডার আইডি নং	ক্রয়ের ধরন ও কাজ/সেবাসহ ক্রয়ের নাম	দরপত্র পদ্ধতি	দরপত্র দাখিলের তারিখ ও শেষ সময়
১	RE-CE/E/Rev/TS/46/E-Tender/2019-20 (Re-Tender)	458444	Goods: Supply of 1,00,000 Nos. MG 75 lbs 'A' dog Spike as per approved Drawing	OTM, NCT	11-Jun-2020 12:00 Hrs
২	CE/E/Rev/TS/43/E-Tender/2019-20	446506	Works: At SSAE/Way/ICGD Section: Complete Track Renewal of down receiving Loco line No. 5 (0.62km) at CGPY Yard by 75 A S/H rail and PSC sleeper with other related works	OTM, NCT	11-Jun-2020 12:00 Hrs
৩	CE/E/Deposit/TS/04/E-Tender/2019-20	452815	Works: At Jamuna siding under SSAE/Way/SYT Jurisdiction: Complete Track (500 ft) renewal by 75 'A' rail (S/H) and PC sleeper (new) of wooden sleepers MG Track having 60 lbs rail with other ancillary works	OTM, NCT	11-Jun-2020 12:00 Hrs
৪	CE/E/Rev/TS/50/E-Tender/2019-20	452820	Works: Making anchoring system of elastic rail clip with insert of existing concrete sleeper in AKA-SYT Section under DEN-2/DA Jurisdiction with other related works.	OTM, NCT	11-Jun-2020 12:00 Hrs
৫	RE-CE/E/Rev/TS/45/E-Tender/19-20 (Re-Tender)	459445	Works: At SSAE/Way/SSJ Section: Maintenance of MG track including shallow screening, mechanical tamping, casual renewal of rail, PSC sleeper, special wooden sleeper, providing sub base in place of pumping area, recoupment of short ballast, fittings and fastenings including other related works from km 214/0 to 264/4 in between MCR-SSJ station.	OTM, NCT	15-Jun-2020 12:00 Hrs
৬	CE/E/Rev/TS/40/E-Tender/2019-20	452491	Works: At Pahartoli Loco shed under SSAE/Way/CTG'S Jurisdiction: Complete track (Length 6.5 Km) renewal by 75A Rail and PC sleeper of wooden sleepers MG Track at PHT Loco Shed, GER shop, CCS Office Line and Store Depo Main line with other ancillary works	OTM, NCT	23-Jun-2020 12:00 Hrs

বিঃ দ্রঃ
১. শুধুমাত্র ই-জিপি সিস্টেমে নিবন্ধিত eligibility শর্তাবলী পূরণকারী দরদাতাদের সরাসরি অংশগ্রহণ করতে পারবেন।
২. দরপত্রের অংশগ্রহণের জন্য দরপত্র দাখিল করা ও দরপত্র জামানত বাবদ প্রাপ্য অর্থ নির্ধারিত ব্যাংকে জমা প্রদান করতে হবে।

মোঃ রফিকুল ইসলাম
ট্র্যাক সাপ্লাই অফিসার (পূর্ব)
বাংলাদেশ রেলওয়ে, চট্টগ্রাম

জিডি-৮৮৭



PADMA BRIDGE RAIL LINK PROJECT IS BEING BUILT WITH BSRM
COUNTRY'S NO. 1 STEEL EXPERT **BSRM** building a safer nation

GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS RECOGNIZES
World's Largest VRM
SHAH CEMENT

5 BASIC MEDICAL TESTS Only 4pc hospitals can do them

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Haemoglobin, blood glucose, urine protein, urine glucose, and urine pregnancy tests -- these are the five basic diagnostic tests that one can expect to be done at healthcare facilities across the country.

Yet a government survey, which was conducted in 2017 and whose final report was released in February this year, found that only four percent of healthcare facilities across the country offer all five tests at the same time. In the 2014 survey, this figure was three percent.

When the community clinics were excluded from the healthcare facilities, the percent stood at 12.

Of district- and upazila-level healthcare facilities, 14 percent provide all five basic tests. The figure has decreased from 16 percent in the 2014 survey.

The final report of the Bangladesh Health Facility Survey-2017 paints a dismal picture of the country's healthcare system.

The government of Bangladesh and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funded the survey, while ICF in the US provided technical assistance.

Aminul Hasan, director (hospitals and clinics) of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), declined to accept the survey results.

"These are basic primary tests and most of the upazila health complexes have these facilities. So, I cannot accept the figure," he told The Daily Star.

This correspondent randomly contacted 10 upazila

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



Hungry and helpless, a woman and her grandson sit on a traffic police island in the capital's Arambagh area around 2:00pm yesterday. The woman's daughter and mother of the boy had gone to a nearby residential area in search of food. The ongoing shutdown since March 26, imposed to curb the spread of novel coronavirus, has left millions like them in dire straits.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Still no pay, work or full bonuses

RMG workers continue demo countrywide

STAR REPORT

Amid the coronavirus outbreak, around 25,000 workers of nearly 40 readymade garment factories demonstrated in Ashulia, Savar, Gazipur, Narayanganj and Chattogram yesterday, demanding 100 percent Eid bonus, reopening of the RMG units and partial salaries for the month of May.

Many of the workers had been demonstrating over the past few days for the full payment of the festival bonus, said a senior official of Industrial Police Headquarters in Dhaka, seeking anonymity.

As of yesterday, some 93.7 percent, or 1,797 members of factories of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, have paid salaries for April. The rest were trying to do so, said BGMEA sources.

During a meeting on May 16, the government asked factory owners to pay 100 percent bonus to the workers. It directed the owners to pay half the bonus before Eid and the other half after the festival.

The agitating workers, however, rejected the directive and took to the streets demanding full payment of the bonus.

Many of them want payment for 15 days of this

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

340 cops test positive in 24 hours

2 more die of Covid-19

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two police personnel died from Covid-19 in Dhaka and Chattogram in the last two days, said police.

Al Mamunur Rashid, a nayek of Dhaka Metropolitan Police's transport division, breathed his last at Central Police Hospital in the capital yesterday, and constable Mokhlesur Rahman at Chattogram General Hospital on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, 340 more police personnel were infected in the past 24 hours till yesterday noon, a record figure in a day.

Forty-three-year-old Mamun was in home quarantine after some of his colleagues tested coronavirus positive, said police.

His samples were collected earlier, and test results confirmed that he was Covid-19 positive on Wednesday night, added police.

As his condition deteriorated, he was rushed to Central Police Hospital around 11:30am yesterday where he was declared dead, said Zobayedur Rahman, deputy commissioner (transport division) of DMP.

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FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

New transport plan for the capital



Bangabandhu pays a surprise visit to the Secretariat on 22 May, 1972.

May 22, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

BANGABANDHU'S MEETING WITH STUDENT LEAGUE MEMBERS

In a meeting with members of the Student League, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman expresses his strong belief in the four principles of nationalism, socialism, democracy and secularism. "It doesn't matter if it is called Mujibism or not. These four were the guiding principles of the Independence movement and the country will be run by these principles," he adds.

Nur e Alam Siddiqi and Abdul Kuddus Makhon, along with some elected Student League members in the Ducus elections, call on the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

'Drug dealer' killed in a 'shootout'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A suspected drug peddler was killed in a "shootout" with Rab in the capital's Agargaon area yesterday morning.

The dead, Kabir, 45, was from Gazipur's Shreepur upazila, said Mohammed Mohiduddin Faruqe, a company commander of Rab-2.

He was accused in at least 13 cases, including drugs cases, filed with different police stations, the Rab official said.

Rab members signalled Kabir to stop his motorcycle at a check-point set up in Agargaon Link Road area around 5:30am.

Kabir opened fire on them from the moving bike, forcing the law enforcers to retaliate, Faruqe said.

Kabir caught multiple gunshots during the incident and was rushed to Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital

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Japan newborn gets world first liver stem cells



AFP, Tokyo

Doctors in Japan have successfully transplanted liver cells derived from embryonic stem cells into a newborn baby, in a world first that could provide new treatment options for infants.

The newborn was suffering from urea cycle disorder, where the liver is not capable of breaking down toxic ammonia.

But the six-day-old was too small to undergo a liver transplant, generally not considered safe until a child weighs around six kilograms (13 pounds) at around three to five months old.

Doctors at the National Center for Child Health and Development decided to try a "bridge treatment" until the baby was big enough, injecting 190 million liver cells derived from embryonic stem cells (ES cells) into the blood vessels of the baby's liver.

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PRAYER TIMING MAY 22
Fazr Juma Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 3-43 12-15 5-00 6-41 8-00
JAMAAT 3-53 1-15 5-15 6-51 8-30
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING

RAMADAN MAY SEHRI IFTAR					
28	22	6:41			
29	23	3:43	6:42		
30	24	3:42	6:42		



A common myna walks on a surface, covered in Krishnachura, on the Dhaka University campus yesterday. The flowers fell off trees due to strong wind after Amphan made landfall.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Global virus cases top five million

Europe significantly turns the tide on new cases, deaths as Latin America in the grip of infection surge

AFP, Paris

Global infections from the novel coronavirus passed five million yesterday as the pandemic played out unevenly across the planet, with China eager to declare a victory, Europe tentatively emerging from its shell and deaths still rising in hotspots in Latin America.

The grim milestone comes after known cases of Covid-19 doubled in just one month, according to AFP data collected from official sources, with the death toll now topping 328,000 worldwide.

While many hard-hit European countries have significantly turned the tide on new infections and fatalities, Latin America is in the grip of an infection surge.

Brazil is leading the pack, logging the third-highest number of cases in the world after the US and Russia.

Peru, Mexico and Chile have also seen steady increases in infections, with nurses in Lima warning that the health system is on the brink of collapse after cases and deaths tripled over the past three weeks.

"It's like a horror film," Miguel Armas, a nurse at the Hipolito Unanue hospital in the capital Lima, told AFP.

"Inside it seems like a cemetery given all the bodies. Patients are dying in their chairs (or) in their wheelchairs."

In Brazil, far-right President Jair Bolsonaro continues to scorn experts' advice on curbing the contagion as he presses regional governors to end stay-at-home measures.

And like US President Donald Trump, he has promoted the use of anti-malaria drugs against the virus despite studies showing they have no benefit and could have dangerous side effects.

CHINA'S 'VICTORY'
Trump, for his part, insists the US is "Transitioning back to Greatness" as states reopen at different speeds.

His optimism cut a sharp contrast with the bleak health situation in the country, which leads the world in cases and deaths.

While daily death tolls are no longer on a steady incline, the losses are still punishing with more than 1,500 additional fatalities reported in 24 hours on Wednesday, bringing to the total number in the US to more than 93,400.

On the economic front, the latest figures out of the US showed the rate of unemployment slowing -- but the total number of jobs lost since mid-March stood at an eye-watering 38.6 million.

Trump, who is desperate to boost his political fortunes ahead of November elections, has also doubled down on his

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