



BIMAN OFFERS CHARTERED FLIGHTS
Makes first ever move in domestic market as passengers keep away
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Your Right to Know

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BANGLADESH UPDATE



2,423
New cases in 24hrs



57,563
Total cases



781
Deaths



11,590
Recoveries

GLOBAL UPDATE



389,099
Deaths



6,625,675
Total cases

Food budget to be 16pc bigger

Rise in outlay likely as govt plans to buy food grains to shield the poor against hunger amid pandemic

	REVISED BUDGET FY19-20	BUDGET FOR FY20-21
Allocation	Tk 15,739cr	Tk 18,197cr
Subsidy	Tk 5,253cr	Tk 6,044cr

REJAUUL KARIM BYRON and SOHEL PARVEZ

The next budget is likely to see an increase in allocation for food purchase amid coronavirus crisis as the government plans to earmark Tk 18,197 crore to buy 32.11 lakh tonnes of foodgrains for distribution among the poor and low-income groups.

The allocation could be 16 percent higher than the revised outlay of Tk 15,739 crore in the outgoing fiscal year ending this month, according to finance ministry officials.

The Food-Friendly Programme (FFP) is also likely to see a 19 percent year-on-year rise in allocation. A total of 10.60 lakh tonnes of rice will be distributed through the FFP in the next fiscal year.

Under this programme, rice is sold to 50 lakh poor families for Tk 10 a kg for five months a year. Each family is entitled to buy up to 30kg rice a month.

The government also plans to expand the Open Market Sales (OMS) of rice and flour at subsidised rates in the next fiscal year.

Besides, it may increase purchase of both rice and wheat from domestic and international market. Locally, it plans to buy 24.56 lakh tonnes of rice, 8 percent higher than that in the revised purchase plan in the outgoing fiscal year.

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This section of Faujdarhat-Bayazid Bostami Bypass Road has been built razing parts of a hill at Arefinnagar of Chattogram's Bayazid Thana area. *Inset*, establishments set up illegally by local influential people after cutting the hill in the same area. The photos were taken yesterday, on the eve of World Environment Day today.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN



PM calls for rapid invention of vaccines

Speaks at virtual Global Vaccine Summit

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday called for "rapid invention" of newer vaccines to protect mankind from the pandemics like novel coronavirus, saying that vaccination has proved to be one of the most important means to combat contagious diseases.

"The Covid-19 pandemic proved how really powerless we are in the face of any global calamity. It also reminded us of the old saying that prevention is always better than cure," she told the virtual Global Vaccine Summit 2020 being held in the UK.

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Undetected cases on the rise

2,423 new cases reported; 35 die

MOUDUD AHMED SUJAN

Officials reported 2,423 new cases of coronavirus yesterday, while experts said the actual number of people getting infected was much higher.

The Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) in its daily briefing said 35 Covid-19 patients died in the 24 hours preceding 2:30pm, taking the toll to 781.

The new cases were detected after testing 12,694 samples in 50 labs across the country. Around 19 percent of those samples tested positive, slightly lower than the previous day's 21.5 percent and Tuesday's 23 percent.

Over the past month, the percentage of people testing positive increased significantly.

A month ago on May 4, only 10.9 percent of the individuals tested were found infected: 688 positive cases after 6,260 tests.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), over 9 percent of the samples testing positive means that the transmission is not under control.

With yesterday's cases, the country has 57,563 confirmed cases.

"Although this rate is not representative of reality, it gives an indication that there are many more undetected cases," infectious disease specialist Prof Ridwan Rahman told The Daily Star yesterday.

However, noted virologist Prof Nazrul Islam cautioned against reading too much into the percentage of people testing positive.

"It does not mean too much. When samples tested are mostly from

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WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY TODAY

'Development' feasts on forest

10pc of forestland lost since independence, thanks to allocation for govt, non-govt projects, grabbing, leasing

PINAKI ROY

Though forests are meant to be conserved, they are being allocated for constructing highways, rail lines, government offices and even for drilling gas wells. For any development project, forestland seems to be readily available.

Over the years, the government has allocated 1.60 lakh acres of forestland to various government and non-government agencies for infrastructure construction, according to forest department records.

In addition, district administrations have leased out around 50,000 acres of forest, and vested quarters have grabbed 2.87 lakh acres of forestland across the country.

This means Bangladesh has lost around five lakh acres of forestland or 10 percent of forests since the independence.

The country's forestland is decreasing day by day though green campaigners have been demanding increased forest coverage and protection of natural forests.

Even now, demands for land from natural forests, including the Sundarbans, to implement development projects of various government agencies are pending at the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

Though the forest department raised objections about allocation of their land to other departments, the government overlooks it most of the time, said its officials.

When asked, Amir Hossain Chowdhury, the acting chief conservator of forest (CCF), said the shutdown has been in place since he got the responsibility of the office.

"So, I cannot exactly say how much land

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REDUCED CARBON EMISSIONS

Silver lining on Covid-19 cloud

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Bangladesh's carbon emissions have dropped by 24 percent to 183,000 tonnes per day during the recent countrywide shutdown.

It normally emitted around 240,000 tonnes per day (86 million tonnes per year), said a study published in the journal Nature Climate Change.

Due to the shutdown in Bangladesh, daily carbon emissions in the country dropped by about 24 percent, according to the study.

The environmental impact of the lockdowns in April, however, were felt not only in Bangladesh, but also across the world. The study revealed that global carbon emission per day decreased by 17 percent -- 17 million tonnes of carbon dioxide -- in April, lower than the average emissions of 2019.

According to the report, 17 percent decrease in daily CO2 emissions is "extreme and probably unseen before".

In order to quantify the drop in carbon emissions, the authors examined data from more than 69 countries, including the US, and 30 Chinese provinces.

The sampling represents 85 percent of the world population and 97 percent of global carbon emissions.

According to the report, emissions decreased by 26 percent on average in all the countries at the peak of their respective shutdown.

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BUSINESS

Economic recovery to begin from Oct: IMF

The International Monetary Fund yesterday projected that the Bangladesh economy would pick up from the second quarter of the next fiscal year.

But the growth this year would be 3.8 per cent, down by about 4.50 percentage points from fiscal 2018-19, in what would be the largest one-year decline in the last three decades.

The GDP growth next fiscal year would be 5.7 per cent. However, the Washington-based multilateral lender warned that a larger outbreak of COVID-19 might require longer containment measures by the authorities, which could increase social discontent and further weaken domestic demand.

STORY ON B1



A rickshaw puller giving water to two-year-old Yeasin outside the Covid-19 testing centre of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University in the capital's Shahbagh area yesterday morning. Yeasin came from Mirpur's Pirerbagh area along with his mother Hosne Ara, who was showing symptoms of coronavirus, in this rickshaw and was waiting while she was having the test inside.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

PROTEST OVER BLACK MAN'S DEATH

Trump trying to 'divide' America

Ex-Pentagon chief Mattis denounces president response to unrest; autopsy finds Floyd had coronavirus

AGENCIES

Former Pentagon chief Jim Mattis issued a stinging rebuke of his erstwhile boss Donald Trump on Wednesday, accusing the president of trying to "divide" America and failing to provide "mature leadership" as the country reels from days of protests.

"Donald Trump is the first president in my lifetime who does not try to unite the American people -- does not even pretend to try," Mattis wrote in a blistering statement posted online by The Atlantic.

"Instead, he tries to divide us," added the retired Marine general, who had previously argued it would be inappropriate for him to criticise a sitting president.

"We are witnessing the consequences of three years without mature leadership," he stated.

The fury was ignited by the May 25 killing of George Floyd, a black man who suffocated beneath the knee of a white police officer, and whose agonising death was filmed by bystanders.

Protesters welcomed new charges brought Wednesday against Minneapolis officers in the killing of Floyd -- but thousands still marched in cities across the country for a ninth straight night, chanting against racism and police brutality.

With a key demand met, demonstrators nevertheless staged large and mainly peaceful rallies calling for deeper change in cities from New York to Los Angeles, hours after the new indictments were announced.

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