

Official Covid-19

FROM PAGE 12
that Dhaka, Bangladesh's capital, may already have as many as 750,000 cases, even though the official national tally is less than 60,000.

Over the past week the three countries have largely lifted nationwide lockdowns intended to curb the spread of covid-19. The freeing of 1.7bn people—more than a fifth of humanity—from varied restrictions will bring relief to the region's battered economies. Alas, it promises no relief from the pandemic itself. In luckier countries, stay-at-home rules reduced the number of new infections. In South Asia they managed only to moderate the disease's acceleration, but not to halt it. The lifting of the lockdowns, in turn, is likely to hasten its spread again.

Doctors in Pakistan say the government's claim that there are adequate hospital beds is nonsense. "The situation is very, very unsatisfactory," says Qaisar Sajjad of the Pakistan Medical Association.

In normal times, the region's rich can largely insulate themselves from the implications of decades of puny public spending on health. "If they so much as sneeze they flee to Thailand, Singapore or India," says a doctor at a private hospital in Dhaka. Now, she says, it is "almost impossible" to gain admission to Bangladesh's elite hospitals, whether for covid-19 or other illnesses.

Finding places in morgues, cemeteries and crematoria is also becoming a challenge. At the municipal graveyard of Narayanganj, an area with lots of garment factories on the outskirts of Dhaka, a typical month sees fewer than 250 burials. Last month it jumped to 575, only 70 of which were officially recorded as victims of covid-19.

Inevitably, the failure of all three countries to control the pandemic has led to soul-searching and blame-casting. Imran Khan, Pakistan's prime minister, has loudly pointed out that he was never a fan of the lockdown, which he had warned would hit the poor unduly hard, and could only slow the disease. His detractors respond that a big reason for failure was precisely the half-hearted and inept way Pakistan's lockdown was enforced. In Bangladesh, inconsistent rulemaking, a collapse in average income in slum areas of an estimated 75% and the mass return to villages of hundreds of thousands of garment-workers undermined any gains from the lockdown.

Perhaps the most egregious errors were made by India's government. Despite imposing the most stringent and heavily policed restrictions in the region, the government failed to foresee that its measures might prompt a mass exodus from cities of tens of millions of migrant workers made suddenly destitute. The authorities first tried to block the movement, bottling migrants in urban slums with the highest infection rates, and then allowed perhaps 20m workers to leave, spreading the disease across the country.

Whatever the cause, the damage is now done. Farid Uddin, a gravedigger in the Bangladeshi port city of Chattogram (formerly Chittagong), comes close to tears as he explains that he and his team have scarcely slept in four days. "There are so many deaths," he gulps. "We are overwhelmed. Please pray for us so Allah forgives us and takes back this disease."

Some 900

FROM PAGE 1
It, however, did not mention the test results.

Of 497 collected samples, 407 were taken from the dead.

According to the report, 229 people died at home, 69 on the way to hospital, and 544 after being admitted to hospitals.

Of those who passed away at home, 2.18 percent died after one or more hospitals refused to provide them with any kind of treatment in fear of coronavirus transmission, the report added.

It said 21 people were found dead outside their homes. In some cases, the bodies were left untouched for a long time out of fear until police would recover them.

Of the total deceased, 578 were males, 210 females and gender of 112 others were not mentioned.

The report also said 65 of the deceased were aged up to 19 years, 152 between 20 and 39 years, and the rest were 40 or above.

It said 91 of the deceased were identified as farmers, labourers, garment workers, rickshaw-pullers and drivers, fishermen and boatmen.

Thirty-two were employees of different organisations, 30 were traders and shop owners, 29 students, 17 small traders and hawkers, 13 physicians, dentists and health workers, nine teachers of universities, colleges, schools and madrasas, 11 officials and bankers, 10 members of police, Ansar and navy, and seven journalists and cultural activists.

As many as 213 were children, elderly, retired and disabled persons, 123 housewives while the occupational identity of 294 people was not mentioned.

District-wise, the highest 98 people died in Dhaka followed by 43 in Narayanganj.

Upazila-wise, the highest 17 people died in Narayanganj Sadar followed by 11 in Keraniganj of Dhaka and 10 in Rupganj of Narayanganj, according to the report.



The villagers in Koyra Upazila of Khulna facing acute shortage of drinking water as around 1,100 tube wells have been damaged there due to flood caused by cyclone Amphan.

PHOTO: DIPANKAR ROY

Water crisis with water all around

FROM PAGE 12
cyclone victims in the upazila.

Each tablet can be used in a 5-litre container of water collected from partially-submerged tube wells or ponds, but it won't remove salinity, Proshanta said.

"We are also supplying 1,500 litre of drinking water using four mobile water treatment plants in the affected areas every day but we could not yet reach many remote places," he said.

"People in those places are facing water crisis. We told them to collect rainwater," Proshanta added.

However, people like Amena, possessing no large containers, cannot collect rainwater and are often drinking the saline water, risking their health.

Humayun Kabir, chairman of Koyra Sadar Union Parishad, said many villagers in his union are suffering from cold, fever, skin-infections and water-borne diseases such as diarrhea

but are not getting medical help.

All the four clinics of the union are closed and the health providers cannot reach the affected area because roads have been flooded, he said.

According to Humayun and Sardar Nurul Islam Company, chairman of Uttar Bedkashi union, at least 50,000 people from the two unions have been stranded for the last two weeks.

So far, only 400 people from these unions have received relief such as rice, lentil, dry food and some cash, they claimed.

Abu Huriaya, a former member of Koyra Sadar Union Parishad, and a resident of No 2 Koyra village, said many are having trouble cooking these relief items because of lack of stoves and firewood.

Some better-off families are buying gas cylinders, but many like Amena try to collect dead trees floating in the water and dry those out to use as firewood.

Abu Huriaya also noted how the absence of sanitation facilities and people living in close quarters with domestic animals in dry areas, flood control dams and cyclone shelters are adding to the health risk of the cyclone victims.

"Relief has not yet reached the char and remote areas. Many of these people had already lost their jobs in the pandemic. They are now in dire condition with no food at home," he added.

The tidal surge caused by the cyclone Amphan flooded hundreds of villages in Khulna district. At least 80 villages in the district including 60 in Koyra upazila are still under saline water.

Around one and a half lakh cyclone Amphan affected people in the upazila are facing scarcity of food, drinking water, accommodation, sanitation and health facilities, locals claimed.

Koyra Upazila Health and Family Planning Officer Sudip Bala, however,

said 12 medical teams are working in the waterlogged villages and there is no medical crisis anywhere.

He said a campaign asking people not to drink saline water is being carried out and they are also providing saline and necessary medicines in the waterlogged areas.

Upazila Nirbahi Officer Shimul Kumar Saha of Koyra told The Daily Star that they already distributed 50 tonnes of rice, Tk 75 lakh and dry food for cyclone-affected people.

Though relief distribution is continuing, reaching all the affected areas is taking time due to lack of manpower and volunteers, he said.

Local lawmaker Md Akhtaruzzaman Babu said the government has allocated money for dam construction, which will start from October.

When asked how the cyclone victims would cope till then, he said, they are taking the time to build a sturdy, long-lasting dam this time.

'Six-point demand was the roadmap to independence'

FROM PAGE 12
although Ayub Khan's regime took recourse to all sorts of brutal measures against the proponents, organisers and supporters of the six-point formula, they couldn't suppress it as the demands garnered massive public support. It was the beginning of the struggle for independence, he adds. Recalling the heroic sacrifices of the June 7 martyrs, he urges the people to take a fresh vow to rebuild the nation. Bangabandhu recalls with gratitude the assistance and cooperation extended to the struggling people of

Bangladesh for their liberation by the people and government of India and Russia. He expresses his confidence that the friendship and brotherly ties with these two friends will be everlasting and no power on earth can drive a wedge between them.

Sharply rebuking Pakistan President ZA Bhutto for indulging in purposeless talk, Bangabandhu turns down the offer to sit and talk for a settlement. Let Bhutto recognise Bangladesh first and then it will be decided what to do and what not to do, he adds. Bangabandhu advises

Bhutto not to waste his efforts to save war criminals. They will be tried for the brutality they committed in Bangladesh during the war, says the prime minister. He also asks Bhutto to allow four lakhs of Bangalees living in Pakistan to return to Bangladesh.

Bangabandhu further says that Bangladesh needs help from friendly countries but such assistance must be without any strings attached. The government cannot accept any aid belittling the country's independence, he adds.

Bangabandhu appeals to the

people to put extra effort to increase production in agricultural and industrial units. He adds that the government has started the task of reconstruction on debris and will not be able to deliver any substantial goods to the people for three years.

The prime minister warns hoarders, smugglers and conspirators of stern action if they don't desist from their evil-mongering immediately.

SOURCES: June 8, 1972 issue of Purbodesh.

Key global cities rally for justice

FROM PAGE 12
"Like so many people, I am appalled by the death of George Floyd. I understand why people are deeply upset," the UK health minister said on Friday.

"But we are still facing a health crisis and coronavirus remains a real threat."

Londoners held a rally outside parliament yesterday and will hold demonstration in front of the US embassy on the opposite bank of the Thames River today.

In the United States, prominent Democratic politicians urged police reform as demonstrations continued for 11th night.

Democratic leaders in Minneapolis voted to end the use of knee restraints and choke holds, although the ordinance must be approved by a judge.

California Governor Gavin Newsom, a Democrat, said he would bar a state police training agency from teaching a restraint technique, sometimes called a "sleeper hold," that involves restricting the carotid artery in the neck.

And in New York, Governor Andrew Cuomo said his state should lead the way in passing "Say Their Name" reforms, including making police disciplinary records publicly available and banning chokeholds.

"Mr Floyd's murder was the breaking point," Cuomo, also a Democrat, said in a statement. "People are saying enough is enough, we must change."

A federal judge in Denver ordered city police to stop deploying tear gas, plastic bullets and other "less-than-lethal" devices such as flash grenades. The temporary injunction was in response to a lawsuit filed by protesters.

DRESSED IN BLACK
Aboriginal protesters performed a traditional smoking ceremony at the start of a "Black Lives Matter" protest in Sydney, which was sanctioned at the last minute after initially being

banned on health grounds.

Tens of thousands of Australians defied government orders to stay home regardless, holding up signs and wearing face masks marked up "I can't breathe" -- the words Floyd kept repeating while handcuffed as a policeman knelt on his neck.

"The fact that they have tried to push us all back and stop the protest, it makes people want to do it even more," said Jumikah Donovan, one of thousands who turned up thinking the Sydney ban was still in place.

Thousands more dressed in black to mourn Floyd's death in Melbourne and other Australian cities.

After 3-hour

FROM PAGE 12
10 days, according to his elder brother Abdur Rouf Badsha.

"We requested the authorities to admit my brother, but the duty doctor refused to admit him without an X-ray report of his chest," he said.

It was not possible to manage an X-ray report in the morning as the X-ray room of the hospital was shut until 9:00 am, Badsha said.

"We had to wait in front the X-ray room until 9:00 am. Immediately after undergoing the X-ray test, my brother collapsed on the ground and became unconscious," he continued.

Later, the hospital authorities took him to the emergency unit and declared him dead, Badsha said.

"We had to wait around three hours before the test. If the emergency doctors gave him primary treatment immediately, my brother could have survived," Badsha lamented.

The deceased's brother also alleged that the hospital authorities did not collect his samples even though he died with coronavirus-like symptoms.

Contacted, Abdul Wadud, assistant director of SZMCH, said the patient's condition was very severe. He was suffering from diabetic and kidney problems with coronavirus symptoms.

"Our duty doctor asked the patient's attendances to provide his chest-X ray report. By this time, our staff were preparing necessary papers for his admission. In the meantime, the patient died on the floor of the emergency unit," he said.

Responding to a query that the patient was waiting for three hours since 6:00 am to get an X-ray report, the SZMCH assistant director said he was informed that the patient arrived at the hospital around 8:30 am.

He also said that they somehow missed the collection of samples from the deceased to ascertain whether he had coronavirus infection.

Nasim's

FROM PAGE 12
positive for coronavirus.

Director and CEO of BSH Imran Chowdhury said the AL leader suffered a stroke around 5:00am on Friday.

His surgery was performed by a team led by Rabiul Haque, chief of the Neurosurgery at Dhaka Medical College Hospital, Imran added.

Nasim is the convener of the AL-led 14-party alliance.

Historic Six-point

FROM PAGE 12
six-point political and economic programme in Lahore on February 5 in 1966, aiming at attaining greater autonomy for the East Pakistan, now Bangladesh, in the backdrop of exploitation and discrimination by the then Pakistani rulers.

The six-point demands were: creating provision in the constitution for a Federation of Pakistan in its true sense based on the Lahore resolution; the federal government will deal with only two subjects: defence and foreign affairs; introduction of two separate, but freely convertible currencies for East and West Pakistan; vesting the power of taxation and revenue collection with the federating units; maintaining two separate accounts for the foreign exchange earnings of the two wings; and creation of a separate militia or paramilitary force for East Pakistan.

Marking the day, Awami League has urged all to pray for the eternal peace of the departed souls of all martyrs, including the martyrs of June 7 in 1966 and Liberation War in 1971, maintaining the health guidelines issued to slow down the spread of Covid-19.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Birth Centenary Celebration National Implementation Committee will organise a virtual discussion and an online quiz competition for youths today. Kamal Abdul Naser Chowdhury, chief coordinator of the committee, said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina gave consent to preside over the discussion.

Fossil reveals

FROM PAGE 12
of any plant-eating dinosaur, revealing even the cellular structure of the leaves and intact spores.

"Direct evidence of diet in herbivorous dinosaurs is very rare," said palaeontologist Caleb Brown of the Royal Tyrrell Museum of Palaeontology in Alberta, lead author of the research published in the journal Royal Society Open Science. "Almost everything we think we know about the diet of these animals is based on indirect data such as tooth wear, jaw biomechanics, the available plants and the nutritional content and digestibility of those plants."

Borealopelta, 18 feet long (5.5 meters) and 1-1/2 tons, was a member of a group called nodosaurs. It had a wide body, small head and walked on four short legs. As protection from large meat-eating dinosaurs, its body was studded with osteoderms - bones embedded in the skin - and it boasted a large spike on each shoulder.

Its stomach contents were comprised mostly of leaves of a particular type of fern, with very few leaves of conifers and cycads - a type of evergreen. A sizable amount of charcoal was found in the stomach, indicating it was browsing in a recently burned area.