



ICU INEQUITY
TIME LOST,
LIVES TOO
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16 PAGES PLUS LIFESTYLE PRICE : Tk12.00



CONTAINMENT ZONES Incoordination behind fiasco

General holiday announced for 'red zones' in 15 districts

WASIM BIN HABIB and MOUDUD AHMED SUJAN

Over three weeks ago, the government had planned to enforce containment zones in the capital and three other major cities amid a spike in Covid-19 infections and deaths that came after the nationwide shutdown was lifted.

At a high-profile meeting on June 1, it also had decided to divide all the areas hit by the Covid-19 pandemic into three zones -- red, yellow, and green -- based on the severity of infections and death rates, and enforce lockdown in areas to be classified as "red zones". The move was to contain the spread of the deadly virus, which is taking a toll on the country.

Twenty-two days have elapsed since the meeting, but the authorities concerned have not been able to finalise a complete zone-based containment strategy. Therefore, the implementation of the zone-based lockdown in Dhaka -- the worst affected region with more than half of the confirmed coronavirus cases in the country -- remains uncertain.

Experts said indecisions and a lack of coordination among the government agencies dealing with the crisis are to blame for the situation, which has left people confused and panicked.

On top of it, the authorities, apparently in an uncoordinated manner, have issued a series of orders and instructions over the enforcement of

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A group of children playing with marbles in Hatirjheel area near Banglamotor in the capital yesterday afternoon. With their schools closed for months amid the coronavirus pandemic, children find it extremely hard to stay home, unable to spend time with their friends. Many are seen playing such games in different parts of the city.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Govt to hire
2,000 more
doctors if
needed

Says health minister

UNB, Dhaka

Health Minister Zahid Maleque yesterday said the government would take steps to appoint 2,000 more physicians to contain the situation if the number of Covid-19 patients continued to soar.

"The government will take steps seeing the situation. It will appoint additional 2,000 physicians if the coronavirus situation remains unchanged. Besides, the process to appoint medical technologists is underway," he said.

The minister was speaking at a press briefing at the VIP lounge of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport. He went there to

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BD
UPDATE



3,480
New cases in 24hrs



1,15,786
Total cases



1,502
Deaths



46,755
Recoveries

Transmission
not decreasing
anytime soon

Experts say; 3,480 more
infected, 38 die

MOUDUD AHMED SUJAN

As the number of Covid-19 deaths crossed the 1,500 mark yesterday, experts said transmission may not decrease anytime soon unless it is actively controlled.

Yesterday, the Directorate General of Health Services reported 38 new deaths.

With 3,480 fresh Covid-19 patients reported in the 24 hours till yesterday afternoon, the number of cases also hit 1,15,786.

The country now is the 17th worst affected in terms of the number of cases.

"We still have the chance to control transmission. However, we need rigorous detection of every case and isolate them," Prof Nazrul Islam, member of the National Technical Advisory Committee on Covid-19 told The Daily Star.

Other experts also said the detection

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BSMMU TRIAL OF GONOSHASTHYA KIT

Report justifies its usefulness

Recommends use as antibody test kit

ZYMA ISLAM

While Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman University Vice-Chancellor Prof Kanak Kanti Barua verbally spurned the Rapid Dot-Blot test developed by Gonoshasthya Kendra last Wednesday, calling it "ineffective in detecting Covid-19", the full report justifies and recommends its use as an antibody test.

That the kit is ineffective in detecting antibodies between Day 1 and Day 7 is stated clearly in the report and aligns with BSMMU's own statement.

BSMMU tried out the rapid dot blot kit on a hundred patients who had tested positive for Covid-19 by the RT-PCR method and has had symptoms for less than 7 days. They found that it could only accurately determine an infection in 11 percent of the tests.

But antibodies are created when the body is fighting back and are unlikely to be present in a patient in the early stage of the illness.

According to the results of the BSMMU report, antibodies are precisely what the Covid-19 Rapid Dot Blot Immunoassay Kit detects, albeit with lower "sensitivity" than other antibody tests that are currently being manufactured abroad.

The report shows that the higher the number of days since the onset of the infection, the higher the "sensitivity" of the kit.

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2 govt hospitals
given central
oxygen supply

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Two public hospitals in the capital, including one dedicated to dealing with Covid-19, started getting central oxygen supply yesterday, giving much relief to coronavirus patients, who usually require more oxygen.

The oxygen is being supplied to ICU patients at Kuwait-Bangladesh Maitree Government Hospital from noon, while it would take "some time" to reach the service to other patients as installation of

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Lack of leadership
'greatest threat'

Says WHO chief on fighting pandemic,
warns its effects will be felt for decades

REUTERS, Dubai

The lack of global leadership and unity to fight the coronavirus is a bigger threat than the outbreak itself, the head of the World Health Organisation said yesterday, adding that politicisation of the pandemic had made things worse.

He did not elaborate but the WHO has been criticised by some members states, especially the United States which says it was too weak, too slow and too "China-centric" in tackling the disease.

Other members have called for a review into the pandemic, with

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Cancer patient Lucky Akhtar, 45, faints at the capital's Sir Salimullah Medical College Hospital while waiting to get tested for Covid-19 yesterday morning. Her daughter is seen trying to comfort her. Lucky was diagnosed with cancer eight months ago. Recently, doctors at a Mohakhali hospital said they would not treat her unless she got the test report. Both were able to get tested later in the day.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

BUSINESS
75 firms
get stimulus
fund

Some 75 companies have so far got the go-ahead from the central bank to enjoy low-cost loans from the government-announced stimulus packages. About Tk 2,080 crore has already been disbursed from the stimulus package of Tk 30,000 crore for large borrowers in the industrial and service sectors. The companies will pay 9 per cent interest for the loans, according to a Bangladesh Bank notice.

STORY ON B1

Chinese team bemoans lack of awareness

Before leaving, the medical experts also point out
inadequate testing, treatment facilities

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

A Chinese medical expert team pointed out that the general public and to some extent the health officials here lack awareness about social distancing and hygiene practices necessary to combat the spread of coronavirus.

There is also not enough testing, isolating and treatment in Bangladesh, the team said after observing hospitals, quarantine and testing facilities and talking with health care professionals and officials for 14 days in Bangladesh.

At a virtual conference addressing the Diplomatic Correspondents Association of Bangladesh on Sunday, the Chinese

delegates said the outbreak didn't seem to have peaked.

"Why would so many patients, doctors and even police officials die? Also, the coronavirus infection has spread to different parts of the country beyond Dhaka," said Hualong Yan, deputy chief of mission at the Chinese Embassy in Dhaka.

As of yesterday, 1,15,786 people tested positive for coronavirus and 1,502 died with Covid-19 in Bangladesh.

"In China, we could keep the infection within Wuhan in Hubei through strong lockdown, testing, reporting, isolating and treatment," said Hualong.

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