

Zoning system

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implemented in some areas in the country," Prof Nasima Sultana said during the briefing.

She said a 13-member advisory committee under the leadership of DGHS is working behind the zoning programme.

Authorities yesterday confirmed 34 more deaths of Covid-19 patients and 3,504 new cases after testing 15,157 samples in the last 24 hours till 2:30pm yesterday.

With this, the death toll from the deadly virus rose to 1,695 and the number of total infections reached at 133,978.

"More 1,185 Covid-19 patients recovered and total number of recoveries now stands at 54,318," Prof Nasima said.

As of yesterday, the mortality rate was 1.27 percent while recovery rate was 40.54 in terms of all confirmed cases.

Based on yesterday's number of tests, the positive rate was 23.12

percent.

Bangladesh remains the 17th worst affected country in the world in terms of the number of cases. The position is one step ahead of that of South Africa and one step behind of France, according to worldometer.info.

Prof Nasima urged everybody to maintain physical distancing and health rules to stay safe from the novel coronavirus infection.

Among the yesterday's deceased, 32 were male and two were females while 13 were from Dhaka, 10 from Chattogram, four from Rajshahi, one from Khulna, four from Sylhet and two from Rangpur division.

One of them was aged between 21 and 30 years, one between 31 and 40, six between 41 and 50, six between 51 and 60, 13 between 61 and 70 and seven between 71 and 80 years old.

In those 24 hours, a total of 726 people were put under isolation across the country.

Parents struggle, but

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Uttar Chashara -- shared something similar. "Online classes began in late May, but they are demanding tuition fees for April, May and June," he said.

Replying to a query on the issue, Belal Hossain, director of the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE), said they had not received any complaints that schools are demanding tuition fees despite not taking online classes.

A guardian of a Class-II student at the capital's Monipur High School and College said the school authorities did not take any steps to arrange online classes exclusively for their students.

"Recorded classes are being broadcast on a private television channel. Despite this, they are asking us to pay the fees," he said.

Contacted, Mohammad Farhad Hossain, principal of the school, said they introduced classes, aired on TV, for all grades. "The classes are taking place rotation-wise. It might be the case that some guardians and students may have missed some of the classes."

He said they could not pay teachers' salaries due to a fund crisis and urged the guardians to clear the fees as quickly as possible.

Asked, he said the school does not have any reserve fund for paying the teachers and other employees.

Talking to this correspondent, teachers said there were only a handful of schools in the city which were still able to disburse the salaries from their savings, without having to be completely dependent on students' tuition fees.

Parents said the authorities of South Point School and College, Ideal School and College, Motijheel, Viqarunnisa Noon School and College, Shamsul Hoque Khan School and College, among other renowned schools in the capital, were collecting the fees.

Hamida Ali, principal of South Point School and College, and Prof Fougia, principal of Viqarunnisa Noon School and College, said they need the fees to pay their teachers and other employees. Both said tuition fees were the only source of income to meet the schools' expenditure.

English medium schools like East West International School and Delhi School are also collecting the fees.

Mastermind School has requested parents to clear outstanding dues, including tuition fees for the month of June. In a notice, it said taking the current coronavirus situation into consideration, parents are allowed to pay half of the tuition fees for April, May and June.

DPS STS School authorities in statement on June 8 said there would be no hike in tuition fees for 2020-2021. The yearly tuition fee payment can be made in 10 installments,

instead of the previous four, without paying any additional charges.

Meanwhile, Ziaul Kabir Dulu, president of Obhbabok Oikya Forum, a platform of guardians, said he sent a letter to Education Minister Dipu Moni recently, demanding that tuition fees be waived from March to August.

He said most schools and colleges were not taking classes since March 17, when the institutions were closed across the country to prevent the spread of coronavirus. Later, the government said those may not reopen till September if the situation did not improve.

"The pandemic has disrupted all economic activities. About 80 percent guardians have either lost their jobs or are on the verge of losing them. They are grappling with paying for the living expenses of their families and house rents. In such a situation, it is not possible for them to pay the tuition fees," he said.

At a webinar in the capital yesterday, Dipu Moni said both schools and the guardians have to act in a humanitarian way. She urged the school authorities to take the fees in installments and give discounts if possible. She also urged the guardians to pay the fees, if they are able to do that, so that teachers can get their salaries.

"The institutions whose financial condition is not good can look for loans. We can help them in this regard," she said.

Asked, DSHE Director Belal Hossain said they had not been given any specific directive on the matter yet.

'GIVE GRANTS TO SCHOOLS'
When his attention was drawn to the issue, Dhaka University Professor Emeritus Serajul Islam Choudhury said it was an unprecedented problem caused by the coronavirus.

"More than 90 to 95 percent of the secondary schools are non-government. The government should immediately provide assistance to the schools so that they can pay teachers immediately," he said.

There are 20,465 schools across the country with around one crore students, according to Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics.

In the long run, the government can think about nationalisation of education and on top of everything, budgetary allocation for the education sector should increase, he added.

Brac University Professor Emeritus Manzoor Ahmed also said the government should give grants to schools so that they can pay teachers their salaries on time.

Both the guardians and the school authorities should act reasonably, he added.

sales centres. It doesn't use the travel agents and Global Distribution System like others do," he added.

OTHERS TAKE TO THE SKY
Meanwhile, private airlines US-Bangla and Novoair have been flying their planes on four domestic routes.

US-Bangla Airlines has 13 planes, Novoair has seven, and Biman has 18.

As of June 17, US-Bangla and Novoair flew 16,334 passengers, said Group Captain AHM Touhidul Ahsan, director of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport, adding that the latest data would be available soon.

Biman became a limited company in 2007 aiming to make profits and run independently.

MA Momen, who was the managing director and CEO at the time, said Biman might as well leave the domestic routes to private airlines, because domestic flyers certainly have no confidence in it.

"The private airlines will act as feeder for Biman. They will carry passengers from different domestic airports to Dhaka and Biman will fly them abroad," he said.

After a long losing streak, the flag carrier made profit for several years in a row when Momen was leading it.

The Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh resumed passenger flight operations on a limited scale on Sylhet, Saidpur and Chattogram routes on June 1. Flights on the Jashore route resumed on June 11.

Sloppy Biman

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week when the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh fixed it at Tk 2,500.

Novoair Managing Director Mofizur Rahman said the goal of the industry for the time being was to bring back the habit of flying in people. Ticket prices are not the biggest concern at the moment.

"We hope the number of passengers will rise when the situation becomes more normal," said Mofizur, also the secretary general of the Aviation Operators Association of Bangladesh.

ALMOST NO SALES CAMPAIGN
Biman also did not launch the sales campaign needed to get back to business after being grounded for over two months due to the pandemic.

US-Bangla and Novoair officials said they were running campaigns targeting social media and internet users. They also sent text messages to people highlighting their promotional offers.

A Biman official said his company was not using that avenue at all.

The flag carrier also stopped selling tickets through travel agents, which must have dented its sales, said Monsur Ahmed Kalam, president of Association of Travel Agents of Bangladesh.

"The problem lies in its mismanaged and inefficient marketing strategies," aviation expert Kazi Wahidul Alam said.

"The efficiency required to resume a service after a long while was not there ... Besides, Biman sells tickets only on their website, mobile app, and at a few



Murjena Begum, 55, a cancer patient, sitting on the stairs of the Government Cancer Hospital in the capital yesterday after she was told that she needed to be tested for coronavirus before her treatment. She had travelled from Brahmanbaria's Nabinagar.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Together we'll find away out of this crisis

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"We have asked Bangladeshi executing agencies to take strict safety measures at the project sites to protect the workers of the projects," he said.

Jica is committed to ensure protection of the workers, he said, adding "The implementation will run in full swing post Covid-19."

According to him, the Jica projects generated more than 20,000 employments at the project sites, where around 200 Japanese experts are also working.

"It is unfortunate but, at the same time, I think this slowing down [of work] was necessary. We all have to adjust to a post-Covid-19 world and we need time to adjust."

"Our projects are no exception. Our executing agencies are stepping up and adjusting their projects," he said.

He added that quarantine facilities are being established, camps are being expanded to accommodate more social distancing, workers are being tested before site entry, protective equipment are being distributed to all workers, awareness campaigns are being conducted, etc.

How Japan became successful to fight against Covid-19 - Bangladesh can adopt

Japan's public health policy is built upon the principle of "Universal Health Coverage", which ensures everyone's access to health services at an affordable cost throughout life.

To deliver necessary health services all the way to peripheries, we need to prepare health facilities at all levels, from primary to tertiary, with well-trained health workers, medical equipment, drugs and so on.

Effective referrals to the tertiary level is, of course, important for the critically ill, but, in Japan's case in the fight against Covid-19, I would like to highlight the roles that have been played by local public health centres.

Local public health centres often serve as an entry point for people in accessing health services. This is especially true in rural areas of Japan.

As the coronavirus spread, local health centres made epidemiological analysis, responded to an increasing number of inquiries from residents over infections, facilitated behavioural changes for infection prevention, transported samples to testing organisations, tirelessly found hospitals that could still accept patients, while beds were being occupied every second.

In fact, under enormous pressure, they had to tackle new, multiple tasks through trial and error.

Yet, they managed to sort out the increasing health demands of the local population and remained trustworthy public health institutions.

In Bangladesh, under the strong leadership of the government, Jica and other development partners have been supporting the realisation of Universal Health Coverage through the sector programme.

This includes the strengthening of primary health care at the community level. Each country is on a path to developing its own model that fits the

local context. However, the need for health services that local populations can count on is universal.

Another effective measure taken in Japan is avoiding the "Three Cs".

They stand for: 1. Closed space with poor ventilation; 2. Crowded places with many people nearby; 3. Close-contact settings such as close-range conversations.

These "Three Cs" were repeatedly communicated by both the national and local governments, the media as well as private sector partners who saw the benefit of supporting the initiative.

As the message of "Three Cs" was so well crafted and therefore catchy, it spread quickly across Japan and helped people change their behaviour in adopting Covid-19 preventive measures.

Such catchy awareness activities to change people's behaviour would be effective in Bangladesh too.

Hitoshi appreciated the immediate health protective measures taken by the government to save it's people's lives.

He said that increasing the number of tests to detect patients will facilitate rapid treatment.

In this regard, Jica will join the efforts to ensure healthcare service and necessary support.

He thinks Bangladesh is quite capable of tackling the prevailing situation, especially with support from its friend countries and bi-lateral and multi-lateral development partners sincerity to provide support to the government.

However, he said the government will have to take measures to uplift the resilience of the healthcare system, logistic, transport and social protection system to turn the crisis into opportunities.

According to him, it is an opportunity for Bangladesh to improve the healthcare system.

Japan's quality control team helping local textiles industry to combat Covid-19

With the spread of Covid-19, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and the Development Partners saw an urgent need to regulate the rampant use of poor-quality personal protective equipment.

This is why Jica and K2, a leading Japanese garment inspection company, together with WHO, USAID and BUJET, have been supporting the government in establishing a quality control system for local production of PPEs.

"We expect that locally produced gowns, technically supported by us, will be certified by the ministry's new quality-control system for the first time soon. We hope these quality-assured gowns will be effectively used to protect frontline health workers in Bangladesh and elsewhere."

"For potential exports, we will need to closely monitor global market needs while strengthening the capacity of local manufacturers to win the competition. I am hoping that Bangladesh's garment industry will export the locally made PPEs to global market including Japan," said Hitoshi.

He said a Japanese textile inspection company is providing technical

Two dedicated ICU facilities in deathbed

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Four monitors have become damaged and cannot display the different parameters of a patient's organs including the heartbeat. Besides, one of the sensors for measuring a patient's oxygen level is also not working properly, he said.

OXYGEN CRISIS
Both Sathkira Sadar Hospital and Khulna's coronavirus dedicated hospital do not have central oxygen supply systems.

A Covid-19 patient with severe breathing difficulty needs 50 litres or more oxygen per minute, which is about 3,000 litres of oxygen per hour, said Dr Farid Uddin.

But there is no facility in Khulna that can supply oxygen at such a high rate, he added.

KMCH currently has about 350 oxygen cylinders of 15-20-litre capacity and a couple more with 200-300-litre capacity in the operation theatre, said Dr Munshi Md RezaSakender, director of the hospital.

But it is not possible to treat coronavirus patients with these cylinders; at best these can provide oxygen to a Covid-19 patient for three hours, he said.

"We need to buy at least 10 oxygen cylinders of high capacity."

Dr Rasheda Sultana, director of Khulna divisional health office, told The Daily Star that a liquid oxygen plant will be installed at Khulna's coronavirus

dedicated hospital first and then ICU facilities for critical patients will be increased.

PATIENTS SUFFER
Covid-19 patient Md Mahamud Iqbal, 62 of Khulna Sadar, died on June 20 after his family tried to get ICU support for him, in vain.

"My brother tested coronavirus positive around mid-June. He was taking treatment from home. As his health deteriorated, we took him to at least four private hospitals including Gazi Medical College Hospital and Islamic Hospital but failed to admit him," said Mahamud's brother Sohel.

"A relative then forced us to get him admitted at the Khulna hospital dedicated for Covid. But all ten ICU beds there were occupied."

About no private facilities admitting Covid-19 patients, Gazi Mizanur Rahman, chairman of Bangladesh Private Clinic and Diagnostic Owners Association in Khulna, said, "Under the current circumstances, it is not possible for us to provide any medical treatment to coronavirus patients. We do not have adequate protective gears."

The situation is worse at the division's Jashore, Bagerhat, Narail, Jhenaidah, Kustia, Meherpur, Chuadanga and Magura districts, where no ICU facilities exist at any government-run hospitals.

Md Abdul Momen, civil Surgeon of Narail, told The Daily Star, "As of yesterday, six coronavirus patients died

support for industries in Bangladesh manufacturers to producing high quality PPE, including masks, gowns and goggles.

With Japan's quality-control team, the local textiles industry can strengthen efforts to combat Covid-19, he said.

"We have been a long-standing partner of Bangladesh and are a proud of being a member of the joint efforts in confronting the virus. Bangladesh's people will overcome this difficult time as they did in concerted efforts and tackled many challenges for a long time. We stand by them as we did," said Hitoshi.

Budgetary support to Bangladesh

Regarding budgetary support, he said Jica is working to provide budgetary support so that the Bangladesh government can provide stimulus packages to the private firms and enhance social safety net programmes in view to revive economic growth.

"Upon request of Bangladesh government, Tokyo is working hard to provide necessary help to improve the health service facilities and budgetary support to fight the pandemic," said Hitoshi.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in early April announced around Tk 96,000 crore stimulus package, which is nearly 3 percent of the GDP, to help the private sector and enliven the country's economy.

"The initiative of the government is really good and a time befitting decision, which will help rescue the country's economy and the lives of the people of Bangladesh," he said.

The Jica chief representative said Asian Development Bank and World Bank have already declared that they will provide financial aid to Bangladesh while Jica will also come forward to help as soon as possible.

So, they are hopeful about implementation of stimulus package and revive the country's economy, he said.

Prospectus for Bangladesh post Covid-19

Hitoshi thinks Bangladesh will be a gainer during the post Covid-19 period as there is a huge possibility to attract foreign direct investment.

The current supply chain system will be reformed and as a result as a preference over "local production for local consumption" will prevail.

To win in this new paradigm of competition, Bangladesh needs to grow into a market more attractive for investors than its neighbouring countries.

Particularly Japanese companies are likely to relocate their factories from China.

Bangladesh is a strong candidate get the investment of Japanese companies, including Jica, and the Japan External Trade Organisation is expected to give a helping hand to attract Japanese investment in this country.

Bangladesh should accommodate more Japanese companies that have already invested in this country as they will help in attracting new investors, diversifying the industry and create employment that will contribute directly to the economy.

in the district. Among them, three needed ICU support, but we could not provide them so."

Khulna divisional health director said that civil surgeons of the eight districts without public ICU facilities were asked to transfer critical patients to Khulna.

However, Dr Sheikh Baharul Alam, President of Bangladesh Medical Association, Khulna, pointed out that two doctors of Khulna were sent to Dhaka in critical condition as they could not be provided with ICU support due to the lack of necessary equipment.

He urged the government to take pragmatic steps to set up more ICU facilities in Khulna.

Since identification of the first Covid-19 patient in Chuadanga district on March 19, a total of 3,604 persons have been infected, 421 hospitalised, 52 died and 910 patients recovered in the division as of June 27.

Khulna district is the worst affected in the division with 1,551 people infected as of June 27.

Till date, 67 doctors, 70 nurses and at least 128 other medical and health administrative staff have tested positive in the division.

Three PCR labs -- Khulna Medical College, Jashore University of Science and Technology and PCR Lab of Kustia General Hospital -- are conducting coronavirus tests in the 10 districts of Khulna division.

US must free migrant children from detention: court

AFP, Los Angeles

A court in Los Angeles has ordered the release of more than 100 children held in United States family immigration detention because of the risk they could catch coronavirus in the facilities.

Two of the country's three family detention centers have confirmed cases of the infection, district judge Dolly Gee said in her Friday ruling.

The facilities risked spilling into a massive health crisis despite efforts by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency to lower the number of migrants in its custody, she added.

"The (Family Residential Centers) are 'on fire' and there is no more time for half measures," Gee wrote.

Her ruling noted 124 children were currently in ICE detention facilities and ordered them released by July 17, either with their parents or into the custody of "suitable sponsors" with parental consent.

President Donald Trump campaigned on cracking down on illegal migration, and has pressured Mexico into deploying troops along its southern border to stop the migrants.

A Trump administration "zero tolerance" policy launched in 2018 saw thousands of children separated from their parents at the border, a tactic apparently meant to frighten the families, before the government backed down.

Last week the US Supreme Court rejected the Trump administration's cancellation of a program protecting 700,000 "Dreamers" -- undocumented migrants brought to the United States as children.

More than 2,500 people in ICE custody have confirmed coronavirus infections, CNN reported on Friday.

2 field hospitals

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is collecting samples from workers for Covid-19 tests, he added.

Physical work for the country's first metro rail came to a halt after the government in late March shut down the economy to contain the spread of coronavirus. The project work progressed by only 0.55 percent in the last two months and it reached an overall 44.67 percent progress as of last month.

While the authorities are trying to accelerate the construction work, over 50 workers have already tested positive, officials said.

With growing concern over the slow work progress, the Fast Track Project Monitoring Taskforce held a meeting on Thursday with Prime Minister's Principal Secretary Ahmad Kaikas in the chair.

DMTCL MD MAN Siddique told Kaikas that Japan imposed an embargo on its nationals against leaving their country. "As most of the lead contractors and consultancy firms are from Japan, their absence is causing problems," a participant quoted MAN Siddique as saying.

MAN Siddique told this paper that JICA and consultants are willing to join the works, but they could not do that due the embargo.

Asked about the health safety measures, he said apart from the under-construction field hospitals, they have deals with several private hospitals to treat their staffers.

He said around 40 percent, out of 9,000 to 10,000 workers have reached the project site and around 50 percent of the workers have been tested.

Admission test

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approached the authorities for comment.

Contacted, Hamida Ali, principal of South Point School and College, said the tests were taken "on the request of guardians".

"The branch authorities said they have taken the tests by maintaining health guidelines and social distance", she said.

She also admitted that arranging such tests could expose students, parents and their staffers to serious health risks.

"I don't know why the branch authorities have taken the admission tests. I have asked them not to hold such exams in the future amid this crisis."

Asked, Belal Hossain, director (secondary) to the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education, said he was not aware of the matter. He promised to look into it.

All educational institutions in the country have remained shut since March 17. The closure had been extended till August 6 previously to prevent further spread of coronavirus.

On April 27, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said all educational institutions could stay closed until September if the situation caused by Covid-19 did not improve.