



COVID-19 IN PABNA
4-bed ICU lies inoperative
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BANGLADESH UPDATE



2,738

New cases in 24hrs



1,62,417

Total cases



2,052

Deaths



72,625

Recoveries

GLOBAL UPDATE



534,865

Deaths



11,453,203

Total cases

MIGRANT WORKERS

Fate of 1.5 lakh up in the air

RASHIDUL HASAN and JAMIL MAHMUD

Over 1.50 lakh Bangladeshis are eagerly waiting to return to their workplaces and studies abroad amid a shortage of tickets for the limited number of flights leaving Dhaka.

They might lose their jobs and have their visas cancelled if they fail to reach the countries on time.

Many of them came back ahead of the pandemic on vacation or for some other reasons, but were unable to fly back because of the coronavirus restrictions.

The rising demand has sent the ticket prices soaring since the international flights from Dhaka resumed on June 16 on a limited scale.

"Finding no ticket for economy class, I was forced to buy a Qatar Airways ticket for business class spending Tk 5.02 lakh. The ticket should be less than Tk 1.50 lakh at any other time," said Mohammad Hossain, who works at a private firm in the UK.

"I had no choice. I might lose my job if I fail to reach London in a week," he told this correspondent.

Migrant worker Anwar Hossain said he had to borrow from his relatives to buy an economy ticket to Italy from the Emirates, spending Tk 1.67 lakh, which is over three times the usual fare.

"My visa would have expired and I would be in trouble if I failed to reach Italy on time," he said.

Airlines officials and the Association of Travel Agents of Bangladesh (ATAB) said before the pandemic, an economy class ticket to any destination in Europe used to be around TK 40,000. But a ticket costs around Tk 2 lakh nowadays.

For the USA and Canada, a ticket now costs between Tk 3 lakh and 3.50 lakh, almost four times the previous rate.

ATAB President Monsur Ahmed said, "People keep calling us asking for tickets. We feel helpless."

Citing government officials M Shahadat Hossain Taslim, who runs

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RELATED STORY ON PAGE 3



People gather at Champoknagar cattle market in Brahmanbaria's Bijoynagar yesterday although the Eid is around a month away. Such markets are found in different parts of the district where physical distancing is ignored. Inset, some cattle on a dam in Bogura's Sariakandi as flood victims take shelter there with their belongings.

PHOTO: MASUK HRIDOV/MOSTAFA SHABUJ

CATTLE FOR EID Demand drops, prices follow suit

HELEMUL ALAM and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

With Eid-ul-Azha just a month away, cattle farmers are in fear of incurring huge losses during the festival, as they are sensing a sharp drop in the demand for sacrificial animals due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Many traders have already started selling their cattle to meat traders as they believe rearing the animals will make them bear bigger losses.

The price of beef has dropped around Tk 20-50 per kg since around a couple of weeks ago due to supplies surpassing demands, meat traders said.

Dr Abdul Zabbar Shikdar, director general of the Department of Livestock, said that this year, 1.19 crore cattle have been reared targeting Eid-ul-Azha, exceeding last year's demand by 10 lakh.

He said that last year 1.18 crore animals were reared but around 1.09 crore were slaughtered during the three-day festival, adding that they hope local cattle

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Govt to give aid to migrant workers

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The government has decided to provide food assistance to the migrant workers who returned home from different countries during coronavirus pandemic.

Under a safety net programme of the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, each of the returnees would be provided with 10kilogramme rice, five-kilogramme flour, one-kilogramme lentils, one-kilogramme salt and one litre of soybean oil.

Enamur Rahman, state minister for disaster management and relief, said this package would be for 15 days.

"We will continue to provide them with the assistance until they find an income-generating job for themselves," he added.

The returnee migrant workers would also be able to avail a loan of any amount between Tk 1 lakh and Tk 5 lakh at four percent interest rate during this time.

A letter was issued on Wednesday to the district and upazila administrations regarding this. They were asked to find out the needy migrant workers and provide them with the assistance.

Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Minister Imran Ahmad said some 21,000 Bangladeshis have returned home since April and more could return in the coming months. Many of them lost jobs due to the pandemic.

"Therefore, we raised the issue at a

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ANTIBODY, ANTIGEN TESTS Expert advice snubbed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

While a key recommendation of experts has been quickly rolling out rapid antigen and antibody tests, this has not yet translated into action despite RT-PCR labs remaining overburdened.

"We recommended on June 3 that antigen tests be introduced fast, but we have not seen any progress on that front," said Prof Nazrul Islam, virologist and former vice chancellor of BSMMU, who is also a member of the government's national technical advisory committee on Covid-19.

He and other experts talked about the gap between what is recommended and what is being implemented at a webinar yesterday, jointly organised by Health Alliance Bangladesh and Bangladesh Health Watch.

They reiterated the immediate need for rapid antigen tests.

"Antigen tests can be used in emergency departments of hospitals to see if a patient is infected or not, and then given due care," said Dr Be-Nazir Ahmed, former director of disease control at the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) and an infectious disease specialist.

"When implementing zoning, we need to test every single house. These tests can be used in addition to RT-PCR because they are quick," he added.

He described two types of tests that can be used. "A rapid diagnostic test for testing antigen, called the immunochromatographic test is a qualitative test that can only see if a person is infected or not, but cannot see how infected the person is. But this can provide support to RT-PCR in these circumstances."

Another is the ELISA test -- a quantitative test that can see how many antigens or antibodies are present in a sample, he stated.

"I feel that the government is taking a conservative approach to this. The scope for research should be opened up for whoever wants to do it," said Dr Be-Nazir.

Dr M Shawkat Hassan, director of the department of laboratory medicine at Birdem hospital, said, "We have RT-PCR, antigen tests, and

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RELATED STORY ON PAGE 12

Daily Covid-19 deaths spike

55 die; 2,738 infected

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The number of Covid-19 deaths reported in a single day saw an unexpected surge, when it jumped to 55 from the 40 that remained stagnant for five days prior.

The fresh deaths, the second highest in a day, has taken the total toll to 2,052.

On June 30, the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) reported the highest single-day deaths -- 64. On the following days, from July 1-4, the daily death tolls were 41, 38, 42 and 29.

Authorities reported the third highest deaths -- 53 -- on June 16.

During yesterday's briefing, Prof Nasima Sultana, additional director general (administration) of the DGHS, reported 2,738 new cases, taking the total number of confirmed patients to 162,417.

On April 5, Bangladesh reported 18 cases, representing a 26 percent increase from the previous day. Since then till yesterday, the day-to-day increases have exceeded 20 percent, representing a sharp rise in cases, according to the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) website.

Time-wise breakthrough figures of confirmed Covid-19 cases were recorded in the country as follows: total number of confirmed cases crossed 100 on April 6, 1,000 on April 14, 50,000 on June 1, one lakh on June 18, and 1.5 lakh cases on July 2.

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REMEMBRANCE FOR LATIFUR RAHMAN

A key patron of free media

His legacy as a visionary, great entrepreneur will live on, speakers tell a memorial service

STAR REPORT

Speakers at a memorial service of Latifur Rahman said his legacy as a visionary, great entrepreneur, a true family man, a patriot and a key patron of democracy and free media will live on.

Talking to a sober audience in a virtual memorial service due to coronavirus pandemic, Mahfuz Azam, Editor of The Daily Star, said his dream of an independent newspaper would not have come true had Latifur Rahman was not around.

"I dreamt of establishing an independent newspaper in Bangladesh. And then he was the man who made my dream come true. He was the greatest strength that I had, the greatest friend, brother, the supporter, the investor, said Mahfuz Anam, adding: "It is with deepest sorrow and most heartfelt grief that I participate in this discussion."

Latifur Rahman's grandson Zairaif Ayaat Hossain was hosting the event. Latifur Rahman's daughter Simeen Hossain, also managing director and chief executive officer of Eskayef Pharmaceuticals Ltd, spoke during the

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Dhaka Bank Limited has completed its 25 years of glorious journey on July 5, 2020

On 25th Anniversary of the Bank, celebration has been curtailed because of the ongoing pandemic. However, our warmth of heart and the nearness is not shortened. We, Dhaka Bank Family, express our gratitude to all of our customers, shareholders, regulators and well-wishers for being with us in this long journey.

When this is over, we shall celebrate together and head for the endless possibilities ahead.

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