



AIRBORNE SPREAD OF VIRUS
WHO reviews report urging new guidance
SEE PAGE 12

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BANGLADESH UPDATE	3,027 New cases in 24hrs	1,68,645 Total cases	2,151 Deaths	78,102 Recoveries	GLOBAL UPDATE	542,798 Deaths	11,816,982 Total cases
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CORONAVIRUS TESTING KITS

In stores, but not in testing centres

Red tape holds back delivery of imported kits to govt hospitals from suppliers

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

More than five lakh Covid-19 testing kits have been lying in the warehouses of several companies in the capital for the last couple of months.

But the picture is just the opposite in some testing centres in the capital, Gazipur and Narayanganj. They are facing an acute shortage of kits which forced them to reduce the number of daily tests and even suspend testing.

A number of the suppliers have alleged that the Central Medical Store Depot (CMSD) is delaying the process of approval and delivery of the kits. They also claimed that the CMSD on a few occasions made whimsical decisions without giving any explanations.

As per the procedures, on receipt of a work order for testing kits, a supplier has to get validated samples of the kits by a government-recognised medical institution.

It usually takes a day to test a sample of a kit and get the results, said officials involved in the process.

In April, the CMSD, which is responsible

for public purchase and distribution of medical equipment across the country, issued work orders to nine companies for supplying it with around 11 lakh testing kits, including Chinese, European and Turkish ones.

Of the firms, Toma Construction and Company Ltd got a work order for 100,000 Italian kits. It brought the kits from Italy through Genetic Trading at the end of May.

The company on May 31 wrote to the CMSD, requesting it to receive the kits. In response, the CMSD said samples of the kits have to be validated by either the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) or Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU).

"We sent samples of the kits to the IEDCR. We recently learnt that the IEDCR gave its report to the CMSD. We don't know the contents of the report. We haven't received any update on it The kits have been stored for more than a month," said AKM Kamruzzaman, managing director of Genetic Trading, which imported the kits for Toma Construction.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



Traders sorting out hilsa at the wholesale market on Port Road in Barishal city yesterday. Local fisheries officials say fishermen getting good catches now due to strict enforcement of a ban on catching hilsa fry. They also attribute the good catches to the nationwide shutdown when many fishermen stayed ashore.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

Outbreak may prolong

Expert warns; suggests stringent measures; 55 die, 3,027 more reported infected

MOUDDUD AHMED SUJAN

The Covid-19 outbreak may prolong for the next several years as the country is not taking scientific measures to control it, said a public health expert.

Prof Mozaherul Huq, former regional advisor of WHO South East Asia region and founder of the Public Health Foundation of Bangladesh, made the observation yesterday following DGHS's daily coronavirus situation update.

Yesterday, 55 patients died of Covid-19 and 3,027 people were reported infected.

During the last three weeks, the percentage of total positive cases among those tested have remained almost static, slightly over 19 percent.

Reflecting on those numbers, Prof Mozaherul said countries that have brought down the transmission to zero have done so through proper scientific measures.

He gave the example of France, the country Bangladesh crossed yesterday in terms of confirmed positive cases, becoming the 17th worst-affected nation.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

FOOD AID BEFORE EID

Free rice for 1 crore poor

Govt allocates one lakh tonnes for VGF card holders in 492 upazilas and 328 municipalities

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The government is set to distribute 10-kilogramme rice for free to each of over one crore "ultra-poor and destitute families" ahead of Eid-ul-Azha.

The food aid will be given to 1,00,06,869 vulnerable group feeding (VGF) card holders across the country to mitigate the consequences of disasters like flood and coronavirus outbreak.

The disaster management and relief ministry yesterday sent a letter to all the offices concerned and asked the deputy commissioners of all districts to inform the respective lawmakers about the allocation.

The letter also asked the officials to collect the allocated rice by July 28. "We have made the allocation so that people can have some food stocks during the festival," Disaster Management and Relief Secretary Md Mohsin told The Daily Star yesterday.

These ultra-poor and destitute people, especially those belonging to women-headed households, are at risk of starvation and malnutrition amid this pandemic, said government officials.

Most of the poor are facing financial hardship and struggling to maintain their families as coronavirus has battered the economy.

Many have lost their jobs or are experiencing pay cuts as most businesses and offices remained closed during the 66-day countrywide shutdown beginning at the end of March.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

DGHS orders shutdown of pvt hospital

Action comes after mobile court finds Regent Hospital issuing fake Covid certificates

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) yesterday directed the authorities of Regent Hospital to shut their Uttara and Mirpur branches immediately over their alleged involvement in issuing fake Covid-19 certificates and taking money from coronavirus patients for treatment.

Earlier in the day, a mobile court sealed off the head office and Uttara branch of the private hospital.

"We have issued the directives following allegations that surfaced after the mobile court drives," Aminul Hasan, director (hospital) of the DGHS, told The Daily Star last night.

"Patients of those hospitals would be shifted to a hospital in the capital's Bashundhara area. If necessary, patients would be shifted to Kuwait-Bangladesh Maitree Hospital," he said.

The mobile court, led by Executive Magistrate Sarwoer Alam, carried out the

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

20pc roads in sorry state

RHD wants Tk 14,622cr to fix them; gets Tk 2,850cr allocation

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Around 20 percent roads under the Roads and Highways Department are in "poor, bad or very bad" condition and Tk 14,622 crore would be required to fix those in the current fiscal year, according an RHD survey.

But the government has allocated Tk 2,850 crore -- almost one fifth of the required amount -- in the budget and that too for repair and maintenance of all roads and bridges across the country.

It means the condition of the dilapidated roads, especially those in the districts, is likely worsen as they might not get priority for the repair work due to the fund crunch, said experts, including RHD engineers.

Such roads and also those with light traffic presence are often left unrepaired for long due to lack of funds, they said.

Experts said poor road condition is one of the major causes behind road accidents, which claim thousands of lives in the country every year. Prominent transport expert Prof Shamsul Hoque said due to a lack of proper maintenance, potholes appear on roads, and accidents take place when vehicles drive into these potholes at speed.

Waterlogging caused by poor drainage system and overloaded vehicles are the two main causes why roads in Bangladesh are damaged, he said, adding that inadequate allocation for the maintenance work only

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

SURVEYED ROADS 19,282 KM	
GOOD	12,756km (66.16%)
FAIR	2,935km (15.22%)
POOR	1,716km (8.90%)
BAD	930km (4.82%)
VERY BAD	943km (4.89%)

BUSINESS

PRIVATE JUTE MILLERS TO FORGE AHEAD

Private millers are looking to utilise much of their capacity to increase production of jute goods to cash in on the void created in the domestic and international markets for the closure of all the 22 state-run jute mills.

PANDEMIC EATS INTO WAGES

Wage growth slowed to a five-year low in the just-concluded fiscal year as the coronavirus-induced shutdown wiped out livelihoods of a major portion of the population. General wage grew 6.35 per cent in fiscal 2019-20, which was 6.4 per cent a year earlier.

STORY ON B1



A pick-up carries furniture of a family to Shariatpur from Dhaka. People leaving the capital has become a very common sight nowadays as many cannot afford their living expenses any more. Their income has been hit hard by the pandemic. The photo was taken on Dhaka-Mawa highway in Keraniganj yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Six shot dead in Bandarban

Victims were PCJSS Larma faction leaders, activists

SANJOY KUMAR BARUA

Six members, including Bandarban district unit president and two central leaders, of the MN Larma faction of Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti (PCJSS) were shot dead by a group of assailants in Baghmara area of Bandarban Sadar upazila yesterday morning.

The dead are: Raton Tanchyangya, 60, Bandarban district unit president of the faction, Bimol Kanti Chakma, 65, vice-president of the faction's central committee, Debit Marma, 50, a leader of the central committee, Joy Tripura, 40, Dipen Tripura, 42, and Milon Chakma, 60.

Joy, Dipen and Milon were members of the group, said Uba Mong Marma, secretary of MN Larma Bandarban unit.

Two other members of the faction -- Biddut Tripura, 37 and Niron Chakma, 50 -- and a local woman Hlawaing Sing Marma, 25, were critically injured in the incident.

They were referred to Chattogram Medical College and Hospital, said Dr Ajoy Kishore Barua of Bandarban Sadar Hospital.

Uba Mong, who was also on the spot during the incident and narrowly escaped death, blamed PCJSS for the attack. He said five armed men came to the area around 6:45am and three of them entered Raton's house and opened fire on the victims.

All the dead and injured, except Raton, were from Khagrachhari and they had been staying at the party office of the newly formed unit since May 31, the secretary said.

The office is close to Ratan's house and the leaders and members often used to have meals in the house, he said.

The Bandarban unit of the faction was formed at a press conference in Chattogram on March 13.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1