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CORONAVIRUS FALLOUT

Govt to help affected SMEs

Move designed to protect the industries that employ 2.45cr people

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE and SOHEL PARVEZ

The government is set to bear a portion of the interest payments on working capital of small and medium enterprises that have been hit hard by the ongoing shutdown amid coronavirus scare.

It may cover 4-5 percent of the 9 percent interest burden of the SMEs and export-oriented industries to help them recoup losses, according to a top government official.

"We are planning to do this to ensure that no small and medium industry shuts down for a lack of working capital, and no jobs are lost due to coronavirus-related economic problems," Tapan Kanti Ghosh, chairman of Bangladesh Trade and Tariff Commission, told The Daily Star yesterday.

The SMEs are now facing a big crisis with economists and bankers urging the government to protect the businesses for the sake of the country's economic growth.

The country has 78.18 lakh SMEs that employ 2.45 crore people, according to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

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- » Govt may bear 4-5 percent of 9 percent in loan interest
- » Factories to continue operations after ensuring workers safety
- » Law enforcers to ensure seamless goods transport
- » Intelligence agencies to be vigilant against hoarding
- » Exporters want 2 yrs for paying back Tk 5,000crore package



Achia Begum, a resident of Gazipur, was seen waiting for transport for over two hours in the hot afternoon sun on a footpath on Mirpur Road near Shyamoli in the capital yesterday. She came to the National Institute of Kidney as she needs two dialysis a week.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

3,000 in jail could be out on bail

Home ministry mulling prisons' proposal

MUNTAKIM SAAD

The country is considering to release on bail some 3,000 prisoners, including those under trial and jailed for bailable offences, to lower the chances of coronavirus transmission in crowded jails.

The jail authorities have sent a proposal along with names of such inmates to the home ministry.

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan yesterday said they were discussing the matter with the authorities concerned. "It's still at a discussion level."

Talking to The Daily Star, Additional Inspector General (AIG) of Prisons Col Md Abrar Hossain said, "The proposal was sent as per the home ministry's order in light of the coronavirus situation. We are considering the minor bailable cases in which

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One more dies of coronavirus

3 new cases found; 5 die after showing Covid-19-like symptoms

STAR REPORT

The authorities yesterday said another person died of Covid-19 in the country and the total number of deaths caused by the virus now stands at six.

In 24 hours till 12:00pm yesterday, three people were diagnosed with the infection after 157 suspected patients were tested, Health Minister Zahid Maleque told a press briefing via video conference from his home in the capital.

Now, the number of Covid-19 cases is 54 in the country.

On March 8, the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) reported the first Covid-19 case in the country.

To contain the transmission of the deadly virus, the government went for a 10-day countrywide shutdown on March 26 and urged people to maintain physical distancing and stay indoors.

In the latest development, the government yesterday stretched the shutdown to April 11.

"People in many places are not maintaining the government directives. They are roaming around," Zahid said while addressing the briefing.

Urging people to stay at home, the minister said, "We cannot take the country towards danger. You [people] refrain from such activities."

About the test facilities, he said, "We have expanded the facilities. I don't want anyone to be out of test facilities. Those

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EDITORIAL BY SAMPADAK PARISHAD

We are with you, you be with us

News media appeal to readers

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused the worst public health crisis in living memory in the world, including Bangladesh. The sheer scale and speed of the outbreak has left the citizens aghast and grasping for answers. To them we want to say: we in the news media remain vigilant and active on your behalf. We are with you.

Despite the pandemic's manifold challenges, we remain steadfast in our commitment to bring to you reliable, important and up-to-date information. This is a sensitive time and our objective is to deliver the news with utmost caution and determination and in keeping with your needs.

The coronavirus is changing how we live. Our healthcare system, our trade and businesses, our education sector, our family life are all at a crossroads. Every day appears to be an exercise in confronting new challenges. The journalists, therefore, are working tirelessly to bring to you stories that illustrate how the coronavirus is affecting various aspects of your life. We are careful to report in a manner that gives you a comprehensive understanding of this ever-evolving situation and helps you make better decisions for yourself.

In these uncertain times, the need for objective reporting, proper verification and careful judgment has never been so vital. The most effective way to address this crisis is through clear communication, exchange of experiences, and fruitful research. We are performing our duty sincerely, and at considerable personal risk, to get the information you need delivered at your doorstep.

We are relentlessly publishing reports, analytical stories, and opinion pieces with a focus on the preventive measures. We are bringing you the latest news as it happens. All this is geared to your need for a healthy life for yourself as well as your family, to ensure the continuity of life for you while you remain housebound, to make it meaningful and relatively pleasant, and overall to ensure that you don't get disconnected from the rest of the country and the world.

In these frightening times, one silver lining has been the enormous vitality and solidarity on display in many parts of the world. We are sharing these hopeful stories with you—stories of how scientists in laboratories in various countries are working day and night to create an effective vaccine, how some nations have managed to contain the transmission of the virus, how people are coming forward to help each other. Our objective is not

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Shutdown now extended till April 11

Pahela Baishakh, Baisabi celebrations suspended

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a bid to contain the spread of coronavirus, the government yesterday extended the ongoing shutdown until April 11.

The Ministry of Public Administration issued a circular in this regard.

Earlier, the government announced the closure of all public and private offices from March 26 to April 4 after which all public transport services were suspended.

In line with the latest announcement, the apex court would also issue a notification to soon extend holidays at all the courts.

Talking to The Daily Star, Saifur Rahman, spokesperson for the Supreme Court, said holidays at all the courts, including the Appellate Division and the High Court Division, would be extended to contain the virus outbreak.

Meanwhile, the cabinet division issued

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ARMY TO GO TOUGH ON VIOLATORS -- PAGE 2

US virus death toll tops 4,000

Trump says 'hard days ahead' as White House predicts 2.4 lakh deaths

AGENCIES

Emergency field hospitals were readied in New York's Central Park and at the home of the US Open tennis tournament as the number of American deaths from the coronavirus pandemic surged past 4,000 -- higher than the toll in China.

The pandemic has killed more than 1,700 New Yorkers and President Donald Trump, a native of the city, warned in Washington of "a very, very painful two weeks" to come for the entire country.

"I want every American to be prepared for the hard days that lie ahead," Trump told reporters on Tuesday at a briefing.

Already the hardest-hit area, America's financial capital is in a race to ramp up hospital capacity before cases peak.

Around a dozen tents, equipped with 68 beds and 10 ventilators, have been put up in Manhattan's iconic park, with Covid-19 patients expected to start arriving.

"You see movies like 'Contagion' and you think it's so far from the truth, it will never happen. So to see it actually happening here is very surreal," 57-year-old passer-by Joanne Dunbar told AFP.

Declared coronavirus cases across the US surged to 1,89,510 early yesterday, according to a running tally by Johns Hopkins University, with a record 865 deaths in the 24 hours.

New York state has seen far more cases -- 76,000 -- and deaths than any other since announcing its first infection on March 1 and quickly

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A resident of the White House estate, a private condominium of 226 dwellings, collects food offered by neighbours from his balcony, using a rope made with blankets, in Marseille, southern France, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

বাংলাদেশ কলেজ অব ফিজিশিয়ানস্ এন্ড সার্জন্স

Bangladesh College of Physicians & Surgeons

CPS No. 776/2020
Date: 30 March 2020

Announcement

Respected Fellows and Members.
Assalamu Alaikum.

Today the entire world is confronted with an unprecedented crisis in human history by the COVID-19 where human lives are in danger losing nearest and dearest ones in every moment and making the whole world crippled and stunned. Experts and WHO forecast that the impact of this disease could be more dangerous in our country because of population density and ignorance.

To cope with such health crisis specialists have to come forward to take the lead and to stay in the field to fight against this unseen enemy with dedication, motivation, courage and with a fearless heart until we win.

We strongly urge all of you on behalf of the BCPS Council to stay safe and to take the challenges as usual like the past.

BCPS reminds you to use PPE while dealing with COVID-19 patient and even with high suspects for your personal protection. BCPS has already uploaded in its website (www.bcps.edu.bd) all Govt instructions and informations regarding health care in Coronavirus management.

Our Hon'ble Prime Minister and her Govt. through Ministry of Health & Family Welfare are providing adequate number of personal protective materials throughout the country for your protection and to treat the patients.

May Allah Keep us all safe.

Professor Quazi Deen Mohammad
President, BCPS.

Professor Abul Bashar Mohammed Khurshid Alam
Honorary Secretary, BCPS.

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