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BANGLADESH UPDATE 5 infected in 24 hours | 61 Total cases | 26 Total recovery | 6 Death | **GLOBAL UPDATE** 55,132 Total deaths | 221,262 Total recoveries | 1,041,126 Total cases

CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

A big blow to overseas jobs

Migrants see job cut, non-payment of wages; remittance 15-month low in March

PORIMOL PALMA

The coronavirus pandemic is set to deal a heavy blow to the country's overseas job market and the remittance flow as a large number of Bangladeshi migrants have already lost their jobs or were receiving low wages amid shutdowns enforced to stem the spread of the virus, say economists and researchers.

After different businesses were closed due to the shutdown, the documented workers are being provided with basic wages, but the undocumented ones are getting nothing at all. Working hours of many, including in cleaning jobs and those at grocery stores, have also been slashed.

On the other hand, thousands of Bangladeshi migrants who came home on leave and those who were waiting to fly after securing work visas are not being able to join work abroad as the destination countries have imposed travel bans in face of the coronavirus outbreak, which, according to the experts, is now threatening

to cause a global recession.

"Remittance is likely to see a significant reduction in a few months," Prof Syeda Rozana Rashid of Dhaka University's international relations told The Daily Star.

There is low pay or no pay for many who are suffering abroad. Besides, a large number of Bangladeshis are not able to join work abroad, she said, adding, "This is like a double-edged sword that the country is facing."

Remittance from expatriates is one of the main pillars of the Bangladesh economy. About one crore Bangladeshi migrants sent home \$18.35 billion in remittance last year alone.

Most of the amount comes from countries like Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, USA, UK, Italy and Malaysia.

USA, Italy and UK are the countries hit hardest by the pandemic. The Gulf and Southeast Asian countries, though less affected than Western countries, are

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Maintaining a safe distance, people from low income families wait in queues for relief in the capital's Kamalapur yesterday. With the country under a shutdown for over a week over coronavirus, many underprivileged people are in dire need of food as they have become jobless. Some government, private and voluntary organisations are lending them a hand.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN



Govt expands ICU facilities outside capital

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

As confirmed cases of the novel coronavirus in the country are on the rise, the government is expanding the intensive care unit (ICU) facilities outside the capital to treat the critical patients.

As of yesterday, a total of 15 ICU beds dedicated for corona patients have been installed in three divisions -- Sylhet, Rajshahi and Mymensingh, according to Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Apart from these, there are 34 beds at the two government hospitals dedicated for corona patients -- 26 at Kuwait Bangladesh Friendship Hospital and eight at Sheikh Russel Gastro Liver Hospital, Aminul Hasan, director of Hospitals and Clinics of DGHS, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Besides, there are five beds at Sajida Foundation Hospital and six at Regent Hospital dedicated for Covid-19 patients, he said.

"We are planning to set up 84 more ICU beds in the divisional headquarters for the Covid-19 patients by this week," the DGHS director said.

According to DGHS, there are 508 ICU beds in government hospitals and 737 ICU beds in private hospitals.

Although the government has expanded its ICU facilities in recent times, experts said it is still a far cry from what would be required to meet the demand if the situation turns worse in the coming days.

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Covid-19 death toll rises in Spain, US

Global deaths cross 55,000; Germany says infection rate slowing; experts predict grim economic future

AGENCIES

The number of confirmed coronavirus deaths accelerated past 55,000 yesterday as the United States, Spain and Britain grappled with their highest tolls yet and the world economy took a massive hit.

The human scale of the pandemic has never been starker -- experts warning that more than one million cases of COVID-19 disease confirmed globally is probably only a small proportion of total infections as testing is still not widely available. Many countries are only testing cases that require hospitalisation.

The United States recorded 1,169 COVID-19 fatalities in the past 24 hours, the Johns Hopkins University tracker showed, the highest one-day death toll recorded in any country.

The United States accounts for around a quarter of confirmed cases but Europe is far from being out of danger -- Spain reported more than 900 deaths in 24 hours yesterday, for the second day running. The virus has now killed nearly 11,000 people across Spain.

While Italy still leads the world in

fatalities, France, Belgium and Britain have also been hard hit. The UK government is rushing to build field hospitals after a one-day toll of 684.

The worldwide number of officially confirmed fatalities from the novel coronavirus rose to 55,132, according to a tally compiled Johns Hopkins University at 3:30 BST.

More than 1,041,126 declared cases have been registered in 188 countries and territories since the epidemic first emerged in China in December. Of these cases, at least 221,262 are now considered recovered. Since 1900 GMT on Thursday, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Libya and the Northern Marianas have announced their first deaths.

The battle waged by public health experts across the world ebbed and flowed on Friday, with German experts saying the rate of new infections is slowing thanks to lockdown measures, but Asian city-state Singapore confirming it would close schools and workplaces to fend off a possible upsurge in cases.

"We are seeing that the spread of the

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ADB ON BANGLADESH High outbreak of Covid-19 may hurt economy

7.8pc growth forecast for current fiscal year

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country's economy will suffer a lot if there is a significant coronavirus outbreak, the Asian Development Bank said yesterday.

The warning came on the 9th day of the nationwide shutdown aimed at slowing down the spread of the highly contagious disease. However, the shutdown suspends many economic activities and puts thousands of jobs at risk.

The Manila-based multilateral lender early last month said the Covid-19 pandemic could wipe out \$3.02 billion off Bangladesh's \$300 billion-plus economy in the worst-case scenario of a significant outbreak.

In such a scenario, 894,930 jobs will be lost, according to last month's ADB analysis.

ADB yesterday said its preliminary estimates indicate that about 0.2 percent to 0.4 percent of Bangladesh's GDP may be lost due to spillover effects of the global Covid-19 pandemic.

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RELIEF DISTRIBUTION

Hasina warns against graft

Gives 31-point directive

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has urged the people to visit physicians if they show any symptom of coronavirus and not to pay heed to any rumour about the virus.

Issuing a 31-point directive on Thursday night in view of the Covid-19 outbreak, she warned that no corruption would be tolerated in the relief distribution.

Hasina advised that there should not be a wholesale use of personal protective equipment (PPE) by all.

Speaking to BSS, PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim said, "The prime minister has given the 31-point instruction in the

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Treat patients or face action

Health minister warns pvt hospitals against turning away patients; 5 more test positive for Covid-19

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Five more people tested positive for coronavirus, bringing the country's total to 61, Health Minister Zahid Maleque said yesterday.

He also said private hospitals and clinics that have been refusing to treat patients would face action.

"We're noticing some private hospitals not giving adequate services while some clinics and chambers, to some extent, are kept shut. At this moment, your withdrawal is not logical. Stand by the people and serve them," he told a press briefing via video conference.

"We are watching. We will not hesitate to take necessary measures."

The warning comes after medical personnel in the capital and elsewhere reportedly refused to treat people due to fears that they were Covid-19

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A woman cooking on a makeshift stove near Bangabandhu Avenue in the capital's Gulistan area yesterday. People from the underprivileged group in the city are already bearing the brunt of coronavirus as they cannot earn a living amid a countrywide shutdown. Many depend on the relief from the government and private organisations.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

STAY HOME, STAY WELL

It's time for revision

HSC candidates have ample time to better prepare for exams

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

After the government suspended the Higher Secondary School Certificate and equivalent examinations on March 22 amid growing uncertainty over coronavirus, education officials recommend the examinees see an opportunity in the delay and prepare better.

The examinations were scheduled to take place between April 1 and May 13 but it was suspended and will be rescheduled if the situation regarding the coronavirus outbreak improves, said education ministry officials on Thursday.

Around 13 to 14 lakh examinees registered for this year's higher secondary and equivalent examinations.

The outbreak of the virus in the country has been causing anxiety as it has been taking a toll on almost every domain of people's lives and disrupting their everyday routine.

In an attempt to contain the outbreak, the government declared a 10-day general holiday from March 26 to April 4 and then extended it to April 11.

Ziaul Haque, chairman of Dhaka Education Board, said this is an unusual situation but students must keep their morale high in times of crisis.

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