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A grim picture keeps unfurling

Five more die; 41 new cases; authorities testing only those showing symptoms

WASIM BIN HABIB and MOUDUD AHMED SUJAN

Things look ominous as coronavirus infections keep surging in the country with the authorities reporting five new deaths and 41 confirmed cases yesterday, the highest in a single day.

Until 2:00pm yesterday, the death toll stood at 17 while the number of confirmed Covid-19 cases at 164, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Experts attributed the rise in cases to the availability of testing facilities, but pointed out that it might still not be the whole picture.

The authorities were testing only those who were showing symptoms, they said, adding that asymptomatic cases from different areas should also be tested.

"Although the number of tests has increased, it's still not adequate. The authorities are still not collecting samples from across the country," Ridwanur Rahman, a medicine and infectious disease specialist, told The Daily Star.

Currently, coronavirus tests in Bangladesh is concentrated in five clusters. "Given the number of test samples, it's not possible to say that the transmission is limited to clusters only. The more tests we conduct, the more we will be able to understand the extent of the transmission," he told The Daily Star.

The Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control, and Research (IEDCR) started testing suspected cases on January 28, at a time when the coronavirus was taking a toll on China.

Until march, only the IEDCR had the ability to carry out the tests in Bangladesh.

In the last few weeks, the testing facilities have been expanded to 14 labs -- nine in Dhaka and the rest in five other districts.

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People intercept a police patrol van near the capital's Muga General Hospital yesterday protesting the non-arrival of a TCB truck there. The truck, which sells daily essentials at fair prices three days a week, was supposed to arrive in the area at 8:00am, but it did not show up until noon. Inset, people left sandals, bags and chunks of cement concrete to book their places in queues to buy the essentials.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

COVID-19 SYMPTOMS 10 more die in 7 districts

STAR REPORT

At least 10 people have died with Covid-19-like symptoms in seven districts since Monday night.

Health officials of respective districts said they collected samples of the victims to test whether they were infected with Coronavirus.

In Narayanganj, a 30-year-old man died of fever, cough, cold and breathing issues at his residence in the town's Deobhog area early yesterday. The sample collected from his body was sent to IEDCR for tests.

Besides, a 55-year-old man of Chashara area in Narayanganj died at a hospital in Dhaka early yesterday. He was tested positive for Covid-19.

Besides, authorities shut down the emergency unit of the Narayanganj 100-bed General Hospital on Monday night as two nurses and a ward boy who worked there tested positive for coronavirus.

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BANGLADESH
UPDATE



41
infected in 24 hours



164
Total cases

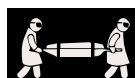


33
Total recovery



17
Death

GLOBAL
UPDATE



76,420
Total deaths



292,467
Total recoveries



1,365,004
Total cases

Incentives for doctors, other health staff

Announces PM, blasts those evading their responsibilities

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said the government has decided to give incentives to doctors, nurses, health workers and other employees who are fighting the war against Covid-19.

"I want to reward those who are directly engaged in the fight against Covid-19 since March," she said.

The PM was addressing the public representatives and officials from 15 districts of Chattogram and Sylhet divisions through videoconferencing from the Gono Bhaban.

Hasina said the government would give a special incentive to encourage them. Besides, there would be a health insurance of Tk 5-10 lakh for them if they were

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This is a crucial month: PM



BSS, Dhaka

Mentioning that April is a crucial month regarding the Covid-19 outbreak, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said anybody with symptoms of coronavirus infection must see a doctor and must not hide symptoms.

"Please don't conceal the disease and you may infect others if you hide it and it's not a matter of shame ... we've made all kinds of arrangements for the treatment and we've also taken steps for protecting those who will provide treatment to the Covid-19 patients," she said.

She said this while discussing the outbreak with public representatives and officials of the 15 districts of Chattogram and Sylhet divisions via video conference from the Gono Bhaban.

Hasina said the whole world has become stagnant as

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China sees no Covid-19 deaths for first time

Reports drop in new cases; UK PM stable in ICU; Japan declares emergency

AGENCIES

Mainland China yesterday reported no coronavirus deaths for the first time since the pandemic began, and a drop in new cases, a day before the central city of Wuhan, where the virus emerged late in December, is set to lift its lockdown.

Japan declared a month-long state of emergency over a spike in coronavirus cases, ramping up efforts to contain infections but stopping short of the strict lockdowns seen in other parts of the world.

In London, Prime Minister Boris Johnson was stable in intensive care yesterday after receiving oxygen support to help him battle Covid-19, while his foreign minister led the government's response to the accelerating outbreak.

The upheaval of Johnson's personal battle with the virus has shaken the government just as the UK enters what scientists say will be the deadliest phase of the pandemic, which has killed 5,373 people in Britain and 70,000 worldwide.

In the mainland China, the National Health Commission said yesterday it had 32 confirmed cases, down from 39 on Monday. For the first time since the commission

began publishing nationwide data in late January, Hubei's provincial capital of Wuhan saw no new deaths, joining the rest of mainland China, which has recorded none since March 31.

Wuhan, a city of 11 million that reported only two new infections in the past fortnight is due to allow residents to leave the city today, for the first time since it was locked down on January 23 to curb the spread of the virus.

With mainland China well past February's peak of infections, authorities have turned their attention to imported cases and asymptomatic patients, who show no symptoms but can still pass on the virus.

Total infections in mainland China stood at 81,740 on Monday with 3,331 deaths, the commission said. It reported 30 new asymptomatic cases, nine involving incoming travellers. Of the new asymptomatic cases, 18 were in Hubei.

By the end of Monday, 1,033 asymptomatic patients were under medical observation.

TIGHTER LAND BORDERS
Overseas arrivals made up all 32 of the new cases with symptoms, down from 38 a day

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Blood banks may run dry

Voluntary organisations see sharp fall in donation amid virus outbreak

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY and RASHIDUL HASAN

The blood donations different voluntary organisations and blood banks receive have decreased sharply amid the outbreak of novel coronavirus, raising fears that many patients in need would not get the blood.

With the Ramadan starting late this month, when donations usually dip, getting blood for thalassemia and cancer patients and those requiring regular dialysis would be challenging if the shutdown continued for a long time, the organisations said.

The organisations requested eligible people to donate blood and save lives.

According to the Directorate General of Health Services, Bangladesh needs between 10 and 11 lakh bags of blood every year.

Voluntary organisations deliver around 30 percent of the total demand while the rest comes from direct donations, Sheikh Daud Adnan, programme manager of Hospital Services Management of DGHS, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BRCS), Quantum Foundation, Sandhani, Badhan, and Police Blood Bank are among the prominent voluntary blood donors' organisations and banks.

Daud said they collected 8.38 lakh bags last year directly from donors at different hospitals and different voluntary organisations. This does not include blood collected by different army hospitals and other blood banks.

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TOURISM SECTOR

Operators incur loss of Tk 1,500cr

RASHIDUL HASAN

Covid-19 related loss to the country's tour operators in the last three months has been around Tk 1500 crore and is likely to shoot up to Tk 6000 crore by the end of this year, said Tour Operator Association of Bangladesh (Toab).

The estimates were presented yesterday in a report titled "Impacts on Bangladesh Tourism and TOAB due to COVID-19", which was later sent to the Bangladesh Tourism Board (BTB).

Toab, a platform of around 700 tour operators of the country, also revealed that they have already been forced to cut 5000 jobs in the last three months since January.

The report was prepared on the basis of a questionnaire answered by its members regarding inbound, outbound and domestic tour package losses, office rent expenses, staff salaries and other expenses.

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Cargo boats lie idle on the Balu river in Purbachal area on the outskirts of the capital yesterday as the country is on shutdown over coronavirus. The vessels are used to carry sand to different areas.

PHOTO:
ANISUR RAHMAN

BANGABANDHU KILLING

Convicted killer held, sent to jail

He was holed up in Kolkata for 23 years, got back home last month

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hours after his arrest, a Dhaka court yesterday sent Capt Abdul Majed, convicted killer of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, to Dhaka Central Jail in Keraniganj.

A team of Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit of Dhaka Metropolitan Police detained him from the capital's Mirpur, CTTC chief Monirul Islam told The Daily Star.

Hemayet Uddin Khan, assistant public prosecutor of the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka, told The Daily Star, "Majed returned to the country on March 15 or 16 from Kolkata. He claimed that he had been hiding there for about 23 years."

The lawyer talked to Majed before the court proceedings began.

A CTTC high official, requesting anonymity, said during primary interrogation, Majed, the self-declared killer of Bangabandhu, told them that after returning home, he stayed in different houses, but had communications with his family.

Chief Metropolitan Magistrate of Dhaka AM Zulfikar Hayat sent him to jail after he was produced before the court.

The court also sent a copy of the order to the Dhaka District and Sessions Judge's Court, which earlier sentenced him to death in the case.

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