



94

New cases in 24hrs



424

Total cases



27

Death



33

Recovery



## Cash aid for extreme poor

Under govt's third stimulus package, 34 lakh families to get monthly allowance through mobile banking; farmers to get loan at 3pc interest rate

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and MOHIBUDDIN ALAMGIR

The government is set to unveil its third stimulus package soon, offering cash aid to poor families that have been hit hard by the ongoing shutdown amid coronavirus scare.

It plans to transfer between Tk 2,000 and Tk 3,000 a month to each of 34 lakh poor families across the country through mobile banking. The aid will continue for three months starting from April, said officials of the Prime Minister's Office and the finance ministry.

The stimulus package will also include a scheme -- between Tk 5,000 crore and Tk 10,000 crore -- to help farmers boost crop production, they said.

Finance ministry officials said they plan to provide growers with farm loans at 3 percent interest against the existing rate of 9 percent.

"Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is likely to announce the third stimulus package later this week as part of measures to safeguard the most vulnerable segments of society," a top official at the PMO told The

Daily Star.

Hasina on March 25 announced a Tk 5,000 crore package for paying wages and allowances of workers and employees of export-oriented industries.

Later on April 5, she unveiled a Tk 67,750 crore stimulus package to offset the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

Under the third package, if Tk 2,000 is provided monthly to each of the poor families for three months, the government would need around Tk 2,040 crore. But if the amount is Tk 3,000 per month, it would need Tk 3,060 crore, said officials.

"We plan to send the money to vulnerable groups through mobile phones. We will select them through mobile phone tracking and send the money. We have already talked to three large mobile phone operators, and they gave positive feedback..." said a top official at the finance ministry.

Officials said the vulnerable segments include rickshaw and rickshaw-van pullers, transport workers, construction and hotel

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The coronavirus outbreak has turned the vibrant capital into a ghost town. For Aleya Begum, surviving here has now become a day-to-day struggle. The 70-year-old, who lives alone on the footpath in Katabon area, is too weak to stand in queues for relief. She eagerly waits yesterday to see if anyone comes up with a pack of relief goods.

PHOTO:  
ANISUR RAHMAN

## Death toll 27 as 6 more die

37 of 94 new Covid-19 cases are from Dhaka

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Six more people died of novel coronavirus yesterday, the highest in a single day since the first confirmed case was reported in the country on March 8.

It took the total number of deaths from Covid-19 to 27, said the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR).

Another 94 people tested positive for the virus in 24 hours till 2:30pm yesterday, raising the number of confirmed cases to 424.

"With deep sorrow, we're saying that although the number of infected people came down from the previous day, six more people died in the last 24 hours," IEDCR Director Prof Meerjady Sabrina Flora told a press briefing via video conference from the capital yesterday.

The increase came after a day when the number of deaths had fallen to one, but the infections crossed a hundred for the first time in a single day.

Apart from the death, there remains a matter of concern as recovery of patients was not reported in 24 hours.

Some 33 patients have so far recovered.

During her regular press conference on Covid-19, Prof Flora said of the six deceased, all aged between 30 and 90, five were male and one was female. Three of them were from the capital, two from Narayanganj, and the other was from Patuakhali.

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## CORONAVIRUS INFECTION CURVE For now, the only way is up



### NUMBER OF CASES KEEP SOARING



ZYMA ISLAM

If statistics from other countries are to be believed, Bangladesh is now at the shoulder of the epidemic curve, and the only direction that this can go is up.

Thursday's test results were a turning point with the number of detected coronavirus cases crossing a hundred (112) for the first time in a single day. The authorities yesterday said another 94 people tested positive for the virus.

Together, this number (206) is more

than the total number of cases for the entire last month.

If one assumes March 8 -- the day when the authorities reported the first Covid-19 case in Bangladesh -- the beginning of Week 1 of the crisis, then by the end of the fourth week, on April 4, the country had only 70 cases.

This week, that number stands at 424. This is a 505 percent increase from the figure of Week 4.

What can the nation expect in the

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### COVID-LIKE SYMPTOMS 6 more die in 5 dists

STAR REPORT

At least six people died of Covid-19-like symptoms in five districts in the last two days, while four tested positive for coronavirus in four districts yesterday.

Meanwhile, local administrations yesterday locked down three districts and two upazilas to prevent the spread of the virus.

Health officials have collected samples of the deceased for tests, report our correspondent after talking to the officials concerned.

In Narayanganj, a 48-year-old man died of Covid-19-like symptoms at his residence at Charpara area under Kanchan municipality yesterday morning.

In Laxmipur, a 25-year-old man died of fever and diarrhoea at his residence in Saheberhat union under Kamolnagar upazila yesterday morning.

What can the nation expect in the

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## Don't go out after 6pm

Legal action against rules breakers; emergency services, journos exempted; shutdown extended till April 25

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday ordered people not to leave home after 6:00pm and extended the ongoing shutdown until April 25 as coronavirus cases and deaths continue to rise, according to a gazette of the public administration ministry.

Anyone defying the order will face penalties, it said.

"Everyone is requested not to leave home unless it is really necessary," the gazette said.

Announcements were made on loudspeakers at different mosques in the capital, urging people to stay indoors after dark.

This is the third time the government extended the nationwide shutdown, which officials prefer to call general holidays.

On March 23, the government announced closure of all public and private offices from March 26 to April 4. On April 1, it was extended to April 11. The second extension was announced four days later.

Garment factories and educational institutions will also remain closed until April 25.

In the gazette notification, the ministry said the holiday

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A guard keeps watch at the gate on a road in the capital's Khilgaon Tilpapara yesterday. Police have locked the area down after a resident tested positive for Covid-19. Inset: locals put up a barricade on Hussaini Dalan road in Old Dhaka to stop traffic entering their area. A notice hung on the barricade says entry of outsiders is prohibited.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC Global death toll crosses 100,000

Europe eyes extending lockdowns several more weeks; IMF says pandemic to trigger worst recession since Great Depression

AGENCIES

European countries yesterday signaled that they were preparing to extend lockdowns several more weeks despite positive signs as the global death toll from the coronavirus epidemic crossed 100,000.

Governments have forced businesses to close and limited the movement of half the world's population, halting economic activity and prompting the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to warn that the world faces its worst downturn since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Some 17 million Americans have so far lost their jobs, prompting the US government to launch a \$2.3 trillion rescue package, while the European Union late Thursday struck a 500-billion euro (\$550 billion) deal to help hard-hit member states.

The United States is now emerging as the global hotspot of the virus. More than 1,700 people died on Thursday from almost 500,000 cases, bringing its total death toll to the second highest in the world after Italy. It also has the largest number of cases

anywhere in the world by far.

More than 1.6 million infections have been recorded globally, according to an AFP tally.

Thousands of deaths across Europe yesterday helped to drive the confirmed global toll at 1,00,156 with nearly half of the deaths reported in the past week.

But there was relief in Britain as Prime Minister Boris Johnson, among the world's most high-profile virus sufferers, was moved to a normal hospital ward after three days in intensive care.

"He is in extremely good spirits," a government spokesman said.

And across Europe and the United States, officials sought solace in slightly improving figures.

Spain, the third hardest-hit country, saw its lowest day toll in 17 days, and Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said Thursday the "fire started by the pandemic is starting to come under control".

France also reported that fewer people were in intensive care for COVID-19, the

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