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BANGLADESH
UPDATE139
New cases in 24hrs621
Total cases34
Death39
RecoveryGLOBAL
UPDATE109,823
Deaths1,792,899
Total cases

Outlook is grim for Bangladesh

Says a WB report on South Asia, dealing mostly with impact of coronavirus pandemic

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and WASIM BIN HABIB

Bangladesh's tremendous growth momentum in recent years is set to come to a crashing halt for the coronavirus outbreak in the country, with the poor and informal sector bearing the most brunt, said the World Bank yesterday.

This fiscal year, the country's GDP growth is forecasted to be between 2 and 3 percent, in a stunning decline from the 8.15 percent logged in last fiscal year.

At the start of this fiscal year, the government was hoping to register 8.20 percent GDP growth.

"The outlook is dire," said Hans Timmer, World Bank's chief economist for South Asia, at the launch of the Washington-based multilateral lender's latest South Asia Economic Focus report via a conference call on Friday.

The report, which was made public yesterday, is centred around the impact of coronavirus on the region.

The pandemic stands to wipe out the gains Bangladesh made over the past decade on poverty reduction, he said.

Since 2010, Bangladesh was able to bring down poverty from 31.5 percent of the population to 20.5 percent in 2018-19 and extreme poverty from 17.6 percent to 10.5 percent.

To avert the disastrous outcome, the government needs to ramp up social security programmes in the form of cash or food transfer to those who are above the poverty line and were gainfully employed in the informal sector but suddenly found themselves out of jobs for the

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Premature to project growth now

Says finance minister about WB report

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Finance Minister AHM Mustafiz Kamal yesterday said it was premature to project what will be the country's economic growth in the current fiscal.

"Our economy saw the usual growth in nine months," he said, adding it is unlikely to see the "imbalance" projected by the World Bank (WB) even if the country's economy experiences zero growth in the next three months.

He made the comments after the WB yesterday said that the regional economic growth in eight South Asian countries, including Bangladesh, is likely to be between 1.8 and 2.8 percent this year.

It is down from 6.3 percent projected six months ago, amid the fallout triggered by the

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WAITING FOR DUE PAY

Garment workers who have not been paid for months gather to demonstrate in front of their factory at Malibagh in the capital yesterday. They came out of their homes for the sit-in, risking infection at a time when the government is enforcing a nationwide shutdown and asking people to practise social distancing to stem the transmission of coronavirus.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

COVID-19 IN BANGLADESH

Highest cases recorded in single day

Four die in 24hrs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country yesterday recorded 139 confirmed cases of Covid-19 -- the highest in a single day since the first case was reported more than a month ago -- with four deaths due to the disease.

The total number of infected patients rose to 621 while the death toll reached 34.

The figures showed a falling trend with 94 and 58 confirmed cases respectively in the previous two days after the authorities had reported 112 cases on Thursday.

In the 24 hours till 2:30pm yesterday, 16 labs across the country tested samples of 1340 individuals, Prof Meerjady Sabrina Flora, director of the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) said in a bulletin.

Of the four deceased, two were aged between 30-40 years, one was above 70 while the other was above 60, she said.

Three more recovered from coronavirus infection in the last 24 hours, she said.

New cases were found in four districts

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Tk 5,000cr for farmers

PM unveils fresh stimulus package

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday announced a new stimulus package of Tk 5,000 crore to give financial assistance to small and medium farmers and help them face the fallout of Covid-19.

"Bangladesh Bank will formulate a new refinancing scheme of Tk 5,000 crore to pump running capital into the agricultural sector. We'll create this Tk 5,000 crore stimulus package only for the agricultural sector. We'll disburse money from this fund among farmers at only 5 percent interest," she said.

The PM came up with the package while delivering her introductory speech in a video conference from the Gono Bhaban with government officials from 16 districts under Khulna and Barishal divisions.

The money from this fund will be disbursed among small and medium farmers, including that of poultry and dairy sector, in rural areas, she said.

Besides, the existing disbursement of loan at 4 percent interest rate for spice items will continue, Hasina added.

Noting that the government has already allocated Tk 100 crore for the agriculture ministry for the mechanisation of harvesting process of crops, she said the government would also allocate another Tk 100 crore in this regard.

Hasina said the government would also allocate Tk 150 crore for the distribution of seeds and seedlings among the affected farmers so that

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Rice theft goes on, the poor bear brunt

Over 200 tonnes recovered, 29 held in 13 days

STAR REPORT

At a time when underprivileged people across the country are suffering from hunger and unemployment, theft of relief goods and corruption in the management are making matters worse.

Law enforcers have recovered a total of 4,167 sacks, each containing 50kg rice and arrested 29 suspects in the last 13 days.

Sex workers in Mymensingh, day labourers in Bogura, rickshawpullers in Barishal and minority communities in Natore and the hill tracts keep pleading that they were not receiving the goods meant for them.

In Bogura town, hundreds of people, mostly labourers, formed a human chain demanding food or work.

Many of the participants held hand written placards saying, "we are starving" at the event at Mozammar Saturday, reports our correspondent.

Contacted, Azizur Rahman, UNO of Bogura, said, "I went to the spot and talked to the people. I wanted a list from them. When they give us the list, we will

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COMMENTARY

The other deadly 'virus': inefficiency

This has been destroying us for decades

MAHFUZ ANAM

While we are haunted by the spectre of coronavirus damaging our society, its health and the economy, there is another "virus" that has been destroying us from inside for decades -- inefficiency. The vicious grip of the "inefficiency virus" is being exhibited almost on a daily basis as we take one measure after another to fight the global pandemic.

Having an efficient prime minister -- even her worst critics admit that she works very hard -- is hardly enough when she is served by a system that has no accountability, a structure given more to legalism than to performance and personnel to whom people are meant to be dominated rather than served.

While speaking to the district officials on April 7, the prime minister warned that "If we see the trend of its spread in the world, it is like mathematics; and if we gather the experience of other countries, we may face a massive blow in April and we are getting this sign and reports."

The PM's expression of "a massive blow" stands in stark contrast to the repeated messages of being "well prepared" to face the coronavirus that have been given out so far. She referred to "reports" which, if shared, would have given us a clearer picture of the "blow" that is on its way.

The dire situation that we face today is known. But are we prepared to face it? While we understand and appreciate the earnestness of the prime minister, we are afraid that the "inefficiency virus" will make our fight against the coronavirus difficult and ineffective and, in many unfortunate cases, fatal.

Let us examine our experiences so far. The early warnings were not heeded to say the least. I can live with the fact that when China was the

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Justice finally catches up with Majed

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Yet another paid for his brutality while assassinating Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his family members as sacked army captain Abdul Majed, a "self-confessed killer" of the Father of the Nation, walked to the gallows early yesterday.

Majed was fugitive for several decades and got arrested in Dhaka on April 7. He, as part of the conspiring army officers, ruthlessly killed Bangabandhu on August 15, 1975, barely four years after he led the country to snatch independence from the clutch of Pakistanis.

The conspiring officers did not spare Bangabandhu's wife, sons, daughters-in-law and other relatives. Bangabandhu's daughters Sheikh Hasina, now the country's prime minister, and Sheikh Rehana survived the massacre as they were abroad at that time.

The execution of Abdul Majed, convicted

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Booths set up at the Government Titumir College in the capital to collect samples for Covid-19 tests. At least 320 such walk-in booths will be installed across the country.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

SAMPLE COLLECTION

44 walk-in kiosks to open today

NGO initiative follows South Korean model; DGHS will run the tests

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Bangladesh has installed the South Korean model kiosks to collect samples for Covid-19 tests across the country with the support of a non-government organisation.

"We are encouraging other private or non-government organisations to come forward with such ideas. Certainly, such facilities will give a mileage to our testing facilities," Abul Kalam Azad, director general of Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), told The Daily Star yesterday.

He also said this booth will reduce the manpower needed for collecting samples. The NGO -- JKG Healthcare -- has been tasked with the collection of samples, while the DGHS will carry out the tests at their own lab.

"This will ensure safety of health workers while collecting samples from suspected patients and health professionals don't have to change their personal protective equipment [PPE] kit after every sample," he said.

Dr Sabrina Anif, convener of JKG Healthcare, said, "A total of 44 such sample-collection booths have been installed and we hope to start collecting samples from people to test for Covid-19 from tomorrow [today]."

She said out of 44, eight have been installed in Dhaka, eight in Narayanganj and the rest in other divisions.

"We will install a total of 320 booths in phases across the country following the South Korea model."

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The indigenous communities in the hill tracts celebrate Baisabi in a subdued manner yesterday as outdoor festivals for welcoming the new year were cancelled due to the Covid-19 outbreak. They usually go to rivers and water bodies to celebrate but this year many went up to the roofs of homes instead. The photo was taken in Rangamati. PHOTO: STAR

Rice theft goes on

FROM PAGE 1
provide them with the goods, as we have no lack of relief goods.”
People in Dekichhara Natun Para, a remote village in Bandarban’s Lama upazila, are seriously passing through hard times as most of the families are facing food shortage, Reng Yan Karbari of the village told The Daily Star.
Prodip Lakra, president of Jatiya Adivasi Parishad in Natore, said at least 70,000 ethnic minority people in the district were living in poverty.
Shilpi Pahan, a resident of Hugalbaria in Natore, said, “We work in other people’s farms as we have no land. But no one is calling us for any work.”
Mohammad Shahreaz, deputy commissioner in Natore, said they have distributed 5.5 tonnes of relief among the poor. “We will distribute more.”
In Barishal city corporation areas, around 40,000 people live in 19 slums. But the corporation has only 100 tonnes of rice for it’s relief effort.
Officials said the rice they have is really inadequate.
Hayatul Islam, 45, a rickshaw puller of Palshpur area, said, “I got nothing. I barely earned anything in two weeks. Only people who have good relations with influential party men got food support.”
Those who received the goods said they got 10 kg of rice, two kg of daal and three kg of potato and a soap.
Officials engaged in relief distribution said at least 20 percent of people in Barishal should get the relief goods, but in reality, only four to five percent got them.
Mayor Serniabad Sadik Abdulla said the city corporation received far less than what was required.
In Nilphamari’s Kishoreganj upazila, officials made a list of 71,371 families that lost their income due to the shutdown.
Only 38 tonnes of rice was released for them until yesterday. Officials said they needed at least 71.4 tonnes.
In Nilphamari town, only eight tonnes of rice has been distributed among 800 people. But there are

about 75,000 people in need, officials said.
THEFT MAKE IT WORSE
Police recovered rice sacks in Joypurhat, Bogura, Chapainwabagnaj and Madaripur in the last two days. Mostly, the local ruling party men were involved with the theft, law enforcers said.
Sohel Rana, assistant inspector general at the Police Headquarters, said, all units of police were asked to be vigilant against theft of relief goods.
Meanwhile, the local government ministry yesterday suspended a chairman and two members of three separate Union Parishads for their alleged involvement in irregularities in distributing relief goods.
They are Nurul Afsar, chairman of Mirzapur Union Parishad, Hathajari Upazila; Shahin Shah, member, ward no-6, Sukash Union Parishad, Singra Upazila, Natore; and Kabir Hossain, member, ward no-8, Pirojpur Union, Sonargaon Upazila, Narayanganj, said a release of the ministry.

New York City to keep schools closed: mayor

AFP, New York

New York Mayor Bill de Blasio said Saturday that public schools in the largest US city would stay closed until the end of the school year as the coronavirus pandemic continues to rage, even as the state’s governor stressed that the decision was his to make.
“There is nothing easy about this decision,” the mayor said at a news conference, before adding that “it clearly will help us save lives.”
But hours later, Governor Andrew Cuomo insisted the authority to make such a call was his.
“You can’t make a decision just within New York City without coordinating that decision with the whole metropolitan region, because it all works together,” Cuomo said.

Tk 5,000cr for farmers

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agricultural production does not hamper.
She said directives have already been given to the administration and the law enforcement agencies to allow the movement of people engaged in harvesting crops and facilitate the supply chain.
The PM asked the authorities concerned to arrange a weekly haat (makeshift market) in an open field in every area maintaining social distancing so that the farmers can sell their produce.
“Bangladesh is mainly an agriculture-dependent country. Our agricultural activities will have to continue. The most important thing is that it’ll have to ensure food security,” she said.
Mentioning that the land of the country is very fertile, she said, “If we can produce food properly, we’ll also be able to help many others [countries] meeting our demand. So, we’ll have to continue the production so that the people of the country don’t suffer.”
To ensure fair prices for farmers, the government will procure two lakh tonnes of paddy and rice extra this season than the previous one, Hasina said.
Mentioning that the government has taken various stimulus

packages and assistance, she said the government is always ready to help all kind of people, including farmers, workers, labourers, weavers, blacksmiths, and fishermen.
The PM asked the local administrations and locals to keep their respective areas protected so that no outsiders can suddenly go there.
She urged the people to be very careful over the novel coronavirus and follow the regular government directives as this virus is highly contagious.
Later, the PM exchanged views with the government officials, local representatives and the people of Bagerhat, Jhalakathi, Meherpur, Bhola, Satkhira, Patuakhali, Jhenidah, Magura, Pirojpur, Kustia, Jashore, Narial, Barishal, and Khulna.
During the views-exchange, Hasina warned that if anyone is involved in corruption over the relief distribution during this disaster will not be spared.
She also greeted the Christian community on the occasion of Easter Sunday.
PM’s Principal Secretary Ahmad Kaikaus moderated the video conference.
On April 7, the PM held a video conference with government officials from 15 districts under Chattogram and Sylhet divisions to discuss coronavirus outbreaks there.

Highest cases

FROM PAGE 1
-- Laxmipur, Lalmonirhat, Thakurgaon and Jhalakathi.
“Analysing the history of patients in these districts, we have found that most of them had travelled either Dhaka or Narayanganj within the last week,” Sabrina said.
Dhaka has the maximum number of positive cases with 50 percent of the patients while Narayanganj stands next to it.
Prof Sanya Tahmina, additional

director general of the Directorate General of Health Services said the government has intensified its efforts in tackling the virus outbreak.
Nearly seven lakh of personal protective equipment were brought in the country and about 4.68 lakh were already distributed among the hospitals, she said.
The government has decided to expand coronavirus testing facilities, Sania added.

Justice finally catches

FROM PAGE 1
killer of Bangabandhu and his family members, was carried out at Dhaka Central Jail in Keraniganj at 12:01 am yesterday, Mahbubul Islam, jailer of Dhaka Central Jail, told The Daily Star.
A prison official said the civil surgeon declared Majed dead at 12:15 am.
He said that other concerned officials including a magistrate, police representatives witnessed the execution as required by the law while inspector general of prisons Brigadier General AKM Mostafa Kamal Pasha also was also present.
Meanwhile on Friday, some family members of Abdul Majed met him at Dhaka Central Jail where he had been kept in solitary confinement on death row.
Earlier on Thursday, President Abdul Hamid rejected Majed’s petition for presidential clemency, filed by the convict’s lawyer Mosharraf Hossain Kajol on April 8.
Majed was arrested on April 7 from Gabtoli in the wee hours, after decades of remaining absconding.
He was nabbed by the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit of the police.
“Majed said he arrived in the country on March 15 or 16 from Kolkata. He claimed that he was hiding there for about 23 years,” Hemayet Uddin Khan, assistant public prosecutor, told The Daily Star.
The Supreme Court on November 19, 2009, upheld the death sentences of Abdul Majed and 11 other self-confessed killers of Bangabandhu. Of them, five were executed on January 27, 2010.
They were Syed Farooq Rahman, Sultan Shahriar Rashid Khan, Bazlul Huda, AKM Mohiuddin Ahmed and Mohiuddin Ahmed.
Six other convicts, including Abdul Majed, remained at large. The other fugitive killers are sacked Lt Col Khandaker Abdur Rashid, SHBM Noor Chowdhury, Shariful Haque Dalim, Rashed Chowdhury, and Risaldar Moslehuddin.
Another condemned killer, Aziz Pasha, died in Zimbabwe in June, 2001.
MAJED: THE MAN BEHIND SERNIABAT AND JAIL KILLINGS
Law Minister Anisul Huq, who is a state counsel for Bangabandhu murder trial, told The Daily Star that Majed went to the house of Abdur Rab Serniabat and unleashed the attack. After that he went to the Radio station.
Then water resources minister Abdur Rab Serniabat was brother-in-law of Bangabandhu, and brother of Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib.
The merciless derailed soldiers attacked Sernibat’s house at Mintoo Road and killed Serniabat’s daughter, son and his nephew.
Anisul Huq also said that Majed took part in the killing of the four national leaders inside Dhaka Central Jail in November 1975.
On November 3, 1975, four leaders of the Awami League, who led the Mujibnagar government in absence of Bangabandhu -- acting president Syed Nazrul Islam, prime minister Tajuddin Ahmad and cabinet ministers M Mansur Ali and AHM Quamruzzaman -- were brutally killed inside Dhaka’s Central Jail.
BIGGEST CHALLENGE
The law minister, in a video message released yesterday, said that it was the biggest challenge for them to nab and execute convicted fugitive killers of Bangabandhu.
But it was a slight relief that one of them -- Majed -- was nabbed and executed on the year of birth

centenary of Father of the Nation, he said.
“We promised that we will bring back all fugitive convicted Bangabandhu killers and execute them.”
We are reiterating our promise that we will bring back all fugitive killers and execute them, he added.
SPECIFIC INFORMATION ABOUT TWO FUGITIVES
Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan yesterday said that the country was more unburdened with the execution of Abdul Majed.
Talking to journalists while distributing food among the destitute at his Dhanmondi residence, home minister said that government was giving the highest effort to bring back all fugitive killers of Bangabandhu.
Asaduzzaman also said that the execution of Majed is a gift from the prime minister in the Mujib Year.
He said the government had specific information about two fugitives. “All five fugitive [killers of Bangabandhu] will be brought back and executed,” he said.
BURIAL IN SONARGAON SPARK PROTEST
Majed’s burial at his in-law’s family graveyard in Sonargaon sparked protest among the Awami League men, reported our Narayanganj correspondent.
“We have urged the local administration to remove the body of Majed from here. Otherwise, freedom fighters and the Awami League leaders, with the local people, will take steps in this regard,” said Freedom fighter Saiful Islam Bhuiyan, convener of the AL’s Sorangaon upazila unit.
Moniruzzaman, officer-in-charge of Sonargaon Police Station, said the body was buried there as per the government directive.
Local Awami League leaders can communicate with the higher authorities of the government in this regard.

44 walk-in kiosks

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The sample-collection booth, which looks like a glass cabin, is made in such a way that the environment inside, where the medical staff stands, is always sterile. The healthcare professionals can collect throat swabs of people who will stand outside the booth.
Sabrina also said the medical technologist standing inside the cabin can use the gloves affixed on the booth to collect samples from people sitting outside the booth.
According to officials, each time after the samples are collected, the gloves and the chair, on which the person whose samples were collected sat, will be disinfected.
“This method will keep the health professionals and also the hospitals safe as the booths will be installed in school or college premises,” Sabrina said.
It will also reduce the sufferings of people, as they do not have constantly call the hotline numbers for tests. They can go to the booths for voluntary testing.
The Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control, and Research (IEDCR) had started testing suspected cases on January 28, at a time when the coronavirus infection was taking a heavy toll on China.
Until march, only the IEDCR had the ability to carry out tests for Covid-19 in Bangladesh.
Over the last few weeks, testing facilities have been expanded to 14 labs -- nine in Dhaka and the rest in five other districts.
A South Korean hospital introduced this testing facility outside the H Plus Yangji Hospital in Seoul.

The other deadly ‘virus’

FROM PAGE 1
epicentre of the disease, we could have thought that we are not going to be affected. But when it spread to Italy and the evidence was clear that it was carried by travellers, we have allowed flights from China to operate till March 28. What could have led us to this inexplicable and “shooting ourselves in the foot” decision?
Then when Italy became the epicentre of the pandemic in Europe, we allowed returnees from Europe -- more than two hundred thousand of them -- to just walk into Bangladesh. In the name of screening what had at the airport was just a handheld temperature check gun.
Then came the fiasco with quarantine. In contrast to the declared policy of hundred percent quarantine on arrival, which proved to be a joke, no preparation was made to handle the volume of traffic. Earlier when students from China were flown back, they had to go through a well-organised quarantine procedure. But when the influx from Europe flooded our airport, the facilities proved highly inadequate because of abysmal preparation leading the authorities to abandon the idea.
Then came the most crucial mistake of all -- home quarantine without adequate preparation. Returnees from Europe, especially those from Italy, were allowed to return to their villages

with instructions to remain in “self-quarantine” without thinking whether it was practical and without ensuring that people understood what “home quarantine” meant. The blunder was further exacerbated by not keeping a record of their cell phone numbers -- which most returnees or their relatives had -- and their home addresses. This precluded any possibility of monitoring them later.
The “inefficiency virus” that Sheikh Hasina has had and will continue to have to grapple with is a multifaceted threat not necessarily confined to a set of inefficient individual officials. Its most debilitating manifestation is a lack of coordination -- the right hand not knowing what the left hand is doing. It exists at almost all levels -- between ministerial, within them, within departments of respective ministries, within sections of departments and finally between officials who run them as they are more interested in ensuring that protocol and hierarchy are maintained rather than whether a work is done or not.
The effect of a lack of coordination was well exhibited by the way our health sector functioned where the minister himself went public with the compliant that he did not know what was going on. The early gulf between claims and reality in terms of preparation of testing facilities, hospitals beds, availability of ventilators, availability of doctors at

REVISED GROWTH PROJECTIONS IN S ASIA (in %)				
Country	Fiscal year	2019	2020 (f)	2021 (f)
Afghanistan	Dec-Dec	2.9	-5.9 to -3.8	3.3 to 3.9
Bangladesh	July-June	8.2	2.0 to 3.0	1.2 to 2.9
Bhutan	July-June	3.9	2.2 to 2.9	2.0 to 2.5
India	Apr-March	6.1	4.8 to 5.0	1.5 to 2.8
Maldives	Jan-Dec	5.2	-13 to -8.5	6.3 to 7.3
Nepal	Mid Jul-mid Jul	7.1	1.5 to 2.8	1.4 to 2.9
Pakistan	July-June	3.3	-2.2 to -1.3	0.3 to 0.9
Sri Lanka	Jan-Dec	2.6	-3.0 to -0.5	0.2 to 1.2
f: forecast		SOURCE: WORLD BANK		

Outlook is grim

FROM PAGE 1
countrywide shutdown enforced by the government from March 26 to flatten the spread on coronavirus.
And the Bangladesh government has more fiscal space than the other nations in South Asia as its external debt is low and its budget deficit has largely been within the responsible bound of 5 percent.
Although the first confirmed cases of Covid-19 in Bangladesh were not announced until March 8, the government had started its contingency planning two months ago, said Hartwig Schafer, the WB’s vice-president for the South Asia regions.
“We are all in uncharted territory, so you can’t be too early on the planning for such events,” he said, adding that the Bangladesh government is doing the best it can given the resources in hand and the extraordinary circumstances.
The government has acted quickly with public health directives, stimulus package and scaled-up social protection programmes, said Mercy Meiyang Tembon, the WB’s country director for Bangladesh and Bhutan.
The WB is willing to make available more than \$6 billion for Bangladesh to tackle the outbreak and also jumpstart the economy once the lethal pathogen has been extinguished.
It is now working to divert funds it had approved projects previously. The lender has approved 46 projects worth about \$12 billion, and more than half of the sum has not been disbursed yet due to slow progress of the projects.
The WB is now looking to force start a \$300 million cash transfer project it had approved earlier but was taking a while to get off the ground.
It is also working with the other multilateral lenders like its sister concern the International Monetary Fund, the Asian Development Bank and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank to arrange more funding.
Given the uncertainty surrounding the duration of the pandemic and its economic and death tolls, the multilateral lender forecasts the GDP growth next fiscal year would be between 1.2 percent and 2.9 percent.
The Bangladesh economy will be “significantly impacted” by the coronavirus juggernaut, it said.
The low-income, people, especially informal workers in the hospitality, retail trade and transport sectors, and the small- and medium-sized enterprises will be hit hard.
“Poor people have a higher likelihood to lose their work and have no buffers to absorb a loss in income. Migrant workers who had escaped rural poverty by finding work in cities are forced back into rural poverty again,” the report said.
But the economy will particularly be knocked on two fronts: remittance inflows and garment exports, both sources of foreign currency for the country and livelihood for many marginally poor.
The decline in national and global demand for manufactured goods, particularly in the garment sector, risks creating unemployment and deepening poverty.
With 81 percent of total exports coming from the textile and garments sector, Bangladesh will suffer disproportionately, in part because the countries that suffered the largest

outbreaks are also the largest buyers of garments from Bangladesh, the report said.
On the other hand, some construction and infrastructure projects stopped in the country because equipment could not be imported, and technical staff could not travel.
The rest of South Asia is not faring any better though and is on course for its worst economic performance in 40 years.
Growth in the region, which comprises eight countries, will fall to a range between 1.8 and 2.8 percent in 2020, down from 6.3 percent projected six months ago, thanks to halting economic activity, collapsing trade, and greater stress in the financial and banking sectors.
India’s GDP is forecasted to grow at 1.5-2.8 percent, while Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and the Maldives will register negative growth this year.
In case of prolonged and broad national lockdowns, the WB warned of a worst-case scenario in which the entire region would experience a negative growth rate this year.
This deteriorated forecast will linger in 2021, with growth projected to hover between 3.1 and 4 percent, down from the previous 6.7 percent estimate.
The priority for all South Asian governments is to contain the virus spread and protect their people, especially the poorest who face considerably worse health and economic outcomes, Schafer said.
“The Covid-19 crisis is also an urgent call-to-action moment to pursue innovative policies and jumpstart South Asian economies once the crisis is over. Failure to do so can lead to long-term growth disruptions and reverse hard-won progress in reducing poverty,” he added.
In the short-term, the report recommends preparing weak healthcare systems for greater Covid-19 impacts as well as providing safety nets and securing access to food, medical supplies and necessities for the most vulnerable.
To minimise short-term economic pain, the report calls for establishing temporary work programmes for unemployed migrant workers, enacting debt relief measures for businesses and individuals and easing inter-regional customs clearance to speed up import and export of essential goods.
Once lockdown restrictions are loosened, South Asian governments should adopt expansionary fiscal policies combined with a monetary stimulus to keep credit flowing in their economies.
Since many South Asian countries have limited fiscal space, these policies should target people worst hit by the freeze on economic activity.
The report urges governments to adopt temporary spending measures and coordinate with international financial partners to avoid unsustainable long-term debt levels and fiscal deficits.
After tackling the immediate Covid-19 threat, South Asian countries must keep their sovereign debt sustainable through fiscal prudence and debt relief initiatives, Timmer said.
“And looking beyond the present crisis, lie great opportunities to expand digital technologies for payment systems and distant learning to unlock remote areas in South Asia.”

In dire

FROM PAGE 3
organisations are distributing relief on the main thoroughfares of the city.

“But we cannot even go there to collect as we are under lockdown,” she added.

Lovely Rani, president of brothel-based non-government welfare organisation “Shuktara Kallyan Sangstha”, said she has already contacted many government and non-government organisations for help but to no avail.

“The women here do not have any money to buy food. The children are starving... they need immediate help,” Lovely Rani pleaded to this correspondent.

Advocate Nazrul Islam Chunnu, convener of Jonoudyog (Mymensingh) that works for human rights and environment, told The Daily Star that these working women also deserve equal rights, especially in difficult times like these.

Contacted, Sheikh Hafizur Rahman, upazila nirbahi officer of Mymensingh Sadar, said, “We will arrange a special relief package for them soon.”



PHOTO: COLLECTED

Grameen Fashion and Fabrics Ltd handed over personal protective equipment to Khulna Shishu Hospital.

Caught up

FROM PAGE 3
they feel aches and pains.

Some women inhabitants said the financial instability is negatively affecting family relationships. Many residents of slums said

crime has gone up as well, due to increasing financial hardship and social insecurity.

Most of the inhabitants shared that their lives were now caught up in a cycle of uncertainty.

In the press release, the organisation said the impact of this outbreak goes beyond health and economic aspects, and it’s likely to leave a longer-term toll particularly on the poor households living in these settlements.

We will be begging

FROM PAGE 12
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“If the crisis centring coronavirus lingers and we cannot work, we will be forced to beg on the street,” said Sharif.

His concern was echoed by at least 10 other weavers at the wholesale market.

The coronavirus outbreak has bruised almost all businesses, but jamdani weavers are among the hardest hit.

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REUTERS, Dubai

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In France, newly reported coronavirus deaths fell by one-third from Friday to 635 on Saturday.

“A very high plateau for the epidemic appears to have been reached, but the epidemic remains very active,” said French health official Jerome Salomon, urging people to remain vigilant.

In the United States, New Orleans and hardest hit New York saw a slowdown in the number of new infections, deaths and hospitalisations, offer a shred of hope.

There were worrying signs the virus could be taking hold in new -- and vulnerable -- parts of the world, from the crowded slums of Mexico City, Nairobi and Mumbai to conflict hotspots in the Middle East.

In Mumbai’s crowded Dharavi slum -- one of Asia’s biggest and the inspiration for the 2008 Oscar-winning film “Slumdog Millionaire” -- more than 43 cases were confirmed.

Many experts and the World Health Organization are cautioning countries against lifting lockdown measures too quickly to avoid a second wave of infections.

China, where the virus first emerged at the end of last year in the central city of Wuhan, has seen an increase in imported infections as it starts to ease strict lockdown measures.

SBMCH unprepared

FROM PAGE 3
“There is no pressure of patients at this moment. Normally, around 1,800 to 2,000 patients remain admitted, but the number has come down to 400.”

Meanwhile, many areas of the city have been riddled with severe mosquito problems, said locals. In the absence of clean-up initiative, waterbodies have become mosquito breeding grounds, they added.

Sources at Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) said 42 healthcare institutions -- including the Sher-e-Bangla hospital -- treated around 7,000 dengue patients in Barishal division last year.

Dengue fever turned into an epidemic in the capital and spread to other districts last year, killing numerous people.

During the time, several expert teams from the health ministry collected mosquito larva from government office premises in Barishal -- including Circuit House, SBMC, Sadar Hospital, Nathullabad and Rupatali bus terminals, said Basu Deb Kumar Das, director of DGHS in Barishal.

He said dengue treatment will be hampered if coronavirus pandemic continues for a long time.

‘BCC DRIVES INADEQUATE’

Barishal City Corporation (BCC) authorities said they are continuing cleaning and anti-mosquito drives regularly.

“Our 34 workers spray 10 litres of larvicide to kill mosquitoes daily. Sometimes we use fogger machines,” said BCC Conservancy Officer Dr Rabiul Islam.

With that inadequate manpower, it is almost impossible to conduct drives in the entire city of 58sqkm, which also has 23 canals, said many conservancy workers.

“We are working to curb the mosquito menace,” assured Rabiul Islam. “Due to the ongoing situation [shutdown], it’s hard to conduct drives regularly, but we’re trying our best.”

“Residents will have to step up too... they need to keep their surroundings clean and destroy mosquito breeding grounds,” he added.

Dengue outbreak is generally noticed from June to October while August-October is the peak season, said Asit Bhushan Das, principal of SBMC.

Dr Mizanur Rahman, member secretary to Barishal Nagorik Parishad, said, “Dengue situation may become much worse than last year’s if we don’t take prompt steps.”

Bangabandhu

FROM PAGE 12
The government of India fully respects the view of the government of Bangladesh on the need for trials of those responsible for the genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes which were committed in Bangladesh. This is stated in unequivocal terms by Surendra Pal Singh, deputy minister for the Indian external affairs ministry today at the Lok Sabha. When asked about repatriation of Pakistani prisoners of war from India he maintains that the prisoners taken in the eastern theatre surrendered to the joint command of Indian and Bangladeshi forces. Therefore, the question of their repatriation will be in accordance with a joint decision by the governments of India and Bangladesh.

RELIEF SNAGS REVIEWED

During a meeting with Relief and Rehabilitation Minister AHM Kamaruzzaman, relief committee chiefs from various districts and subdivisions today complain of inadequate relief materials, delay in transportation, disruption in communication system and discrimination in relief efforts in different regions. The minister assures them of all possible efforts on his part to mitigate those problems. The minister also informs that the government is discussing with the Bangladesh Bank to provide the villagers with necessary credit through village cooperatives.

KEROSENE AGAINST RATION CARD

Kerosene oil for domestic consumption will be sold by the bonafide dealer agents of the respective oil companies to the consumers against the ration card of the head of the family concerned at the fixed price of Tk 2.25 per gallon, says a government handout issued today.

SOURCES: April 14, 1972 issues of Bangladesh Observer, Dainik Bangla and Ittefaq.

Protect your areas

FROM PAGE 12
should move unnecessarily from one place to another. “She urged the people of the country to be very careful about the novel coronavirus and follow the government directives regularly, as this virus is highly contagious.

The PM also asked everyone to stop all sorts of unnecessary movement and called upon all to strengthen the measures to protect themselves from the Covid-19 with their own initiatives.

Hasina put emphasis on keeping personal protection equipment (PPE), masks and medical equipment to keep free from the virus.

She directed the health ministry and local governments to take measures for disposing and dumping medical waste in a proper manner so that the virus cannot spread from these.

She asked everyone to use face masks, tissue papers and handkerchiefs, and to cough and sneeze into elbows in order prevent the infection.

মুজিববর্ষ অগ্রাধিকার
গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ
এন্টি টেররিজম ইউনিট
বড়ি নং-৩৫, মোহরগাছারী এলিট, রু-কে, শরিফাবা, ঢাকা-১২১২
www.atu.police.gov.bd
সংশোধিত উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি
স্মারক নং-৪৪,০১,০০০০,৩৬৫,০৪,০৪৫,১৩-১৪১
তারিখ: ১২/০৪/২০২০খ্রি
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মোঃ হুমায়ুন হক
বিশি-৭৭০১০৪৭০৪
পুলিশ সুপার (প্রশাসন)
নকে-আজিফিল আহজি, এন্টি টেররিজম ইউনিট
বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ, ঢাকা
ফোন: ০২-৪৬৬১০৭৪০, ফ্যাক্স: ৪৬৬১০৭৪০
E-mail: atu.spadm@police.gov.bd
জিডি-৭০৬

Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh
Bangladesh Police
Police Telecom & Information Management Headquarters
Police Telecom Bhaban, Rajarbag, Dhaka.
www.tim.police.gov.bd
2nd CORRIGENDUM OF
INTERNATIONAL TENDER NOTICE
Ministry Ministry of Home Affairs
Agency Bangladesh Police
Procuring Entity Name SP (Logistics), Police Telecom & Information Management
Tender Package Name UHF DMR Radio System for FPU.
Invitation Ref No 44.01.0000.057.11.048.19/1286/Betar
Date 02-03-2020.
Tender Last Selling Date 16-04-2020
Corrected Tender Last Selling Date 29-04-2020
Tender Closing Date and Time Date (dd-mm-yyyy) Time
19-04-2020 11.00 AM
Tender Opening Date and Time 19-04-2020 11.30 AM
Corrected Tender Closing Date and Time Date (dd-mm-yyyy) Time
30-04-2020 11.00 AM
Corrected Tender Opening Date and Time 30-04-2020 12.00 PM
Haroon
12/4/2020
(Haroon-ur-Rashid Hazaree)
SP (A&F)
Additional Charge of SP (Logistics)
Police T&IM, Rajarbag, Dhaka.
Ph: 8301105 Fax: 8301404
E-mail: splog.telecom@police.gov.bd
GD- 741

In dire

FROM PAGE 3
organisations are distributing relief on the main thoroughfares of the city.

“But we cannot even go there to collect as we are under lockdown,” she added.

Lovely Rani, president of brothel-based non-government welfare organisation “Shuktara Kallyan Sangstha”, said she has already contacted many government and non-government organisations for help but to no avail.

“The women here do not have any money to buy food. The children are starving... they need immediate help,” Lovely Rani pleaded to this correspondent.

Advocate Nazrul Islam Chunnun, convener of Jonoudyog (Mymensingh) that works for human rights and environment, told The Daily Star that these working women also deserve equal rights, especially in difficult times like these.

Contacted, Sheikh Hafizur Rahman, upazila nirbahi officer of Mymensingh Sadar, said, “We will arrange a special relief package for them soon.”



PHOTO: COLLECTED

Grameen Fashion and Fabrics Ltd handed over personal protective equipment to Khulna Shishu Hospital.

Caught up

FROM PAGE 3
they feel aches and pains. Some women inhabitants said the financial instability is negatively affecting family relationships. Many residents of slums said

crime has gone up as well, due to increasing financial hardship and social insecurity. Most of the inhabitants shared that their lives were now caught up in a cycle of uncertainty.

In the press release, the organisation said the impact of this outbreak goes beyond health and economic aspects, and it’s likely to leave a longer-term toll particularly on the poor households living in these settlements.

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Spain saw its daily death toll drop for three days straight -- but reported a slight spike again with 619 fresh fatalities.

And though Italy was nearing the 20,000 dead mark, its daily death toll and rate of new infections has started to level off.

In France, newly reported coronavirus deaths fell by one-third from Friday to 635 on Saturday.

“A very high plateau for the epidemic appears to have been reached, but the epidemic remains very active,” said French health official Jerome Salomon, urging people to remain vigilant.

In the United States, New Orleans and hardest hit New York saw a slowdown in the number of new infections, deaths and hospitalisations, offer a shred of hope.

There were worrying signs the virus could be taking hold in new -- and vulnerable -- parts of the world, from the crowded slums of Mexico City, Nairobi and Mumbai to conflict hotspots in the Middle East.

In Mumbai’s crowded Dharavi slum -- one of Asia’s biggest and the inspiration for the 2008 Oscar-winning film “Slumdog Millionaire” -- more than 43 cases were confirmed.

Many experts and the World Health Organization are cautioning countries against lifting lockdown measures too quickly to avoid a second wave of infections.

China, where the virus first emerged at the end of last year in the central city of Wuhan, has seen an increase in imported infections as it starts to ease strict lockdown measures.

SBMCH unprepared

FROM PAGE 3
“There is no pressure of patients at this moment. Normally, around 1,800 to 2,000 patients remain admitted, but the number has come down to 400.”

Meanwhile, many areas of the city have been riddled with severe mosquito problems, said locals. In the absence of clean-up initiative, waterbodies have become mosquito breeding grounds, they added.

Sources at Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) said 42 healthcare institutions -- including the Sher-e-Bangla hospital -- treated around 7,000 dengue patients in Barishal division last year.

Dengue fever turned into an epidemic in the capital and spread to other districts last year, killing numerous people.

During the time, several expert teams from the health ministry collected mosquito larva from government office premises in Barishal -- including Circuit House, SBMC, Sadar Hospital, Nathullabad and Rupatali bus terminals, said Basu Deb Kumar Das, director of DGHS in Barishal.

He said dengue treatment will be hampered if coronavirus pandemic continues for a long time.

‘BCC DRIVES INADEQUATE’

Barishal City Corporation (BCC) authorities said they are continuing cleaning and anti-mosquito drives regularly.

“Our 34 workers spray 10 litres of larvicide to kill mosquitoes daily. Sometimes we use fogger machines,” said BCC Conservancy Officer Dr Rabiul Islam.

With that inadequate manpower, it is almost impossible to conduct drives in the entire city of 58sqkm, which also has 23 canals, said many conservancy workers.

“We are working to curb the mosquito menace,” assured Rabiul Islam. “Due to the ongoing situation [shutdown], it’s hard to conduct drives regularly, but we’re trying our best.”

“Residents will have to step up too... they need to keep their surroundings clean and destroy mosquito breeding grounds,” he added.

Dengue outbreak is generally noticed from June to October while August-October is the peak season, said Asit Bhushan Das, principal of SBMC.

Dr Mizanur Rahman, member secretary to Barishal Nagorik Parishad, said, “Dengue situation may become much worse than last year’s if we don’t take prompt steps.”

Bangabandhu

FROM PAGE 12
The government of India fully respects the view of the government of Bangladesh on the need for trials of those responsible for the genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes which were committed in Bangladesh. This is stated in unequivocal terms by Surendra Pal Singh, deputy minister for the Indian external affairs ministry today at the Lok Sabha. When asked about repatriation of Pakistani prisoners of war from India he maintains that the prisoners taken in the eastern theatre surrendered to the joint command of Indian and Bangladeshi forces. Therefore, the question of their repatriation will be in accordance with a joint decision by the governments of India and Bangladesh.

RELIEF SNAGS REVIEWED

During a meeting with Relief and Rehabilitation Minister AHM Kamaruzzaman, relief committee chiefs from various districts and subdivisions today complain of inadequate relief materials, delay in transportation, disruption in communication system and discrimination in relief efforts in different regions. The minister assures them of all possible efforts on his part to mitigate those problems. The minister also informs that the government is discussing with the Bangladesh Bank to provide the villagers with necessary credit through village cooperatives.

KEROSENE AGAINST RATION CARD

Kerosene oil for domestic consumption will be sold by the bonafide dealer agents of the respective oil companies to the consumers against the ration card of the head of the family concerned at the fixed price of Tk 2.25 per gallon, says a government handout issued today.

SOURCES: April 14, 1972 issues of Bangladesh Observer, Dainik Bangla and Ittefaq.

Protect your areas

FROM PAGE 12
should move unnecessarily from one place to another. “She urged the people of the country to be very careful about the novel coronavirus and follow the government directives regularly, as this virus is highly contagious.

The PM also asked everyone to stop all sorts of unnecessary movement and called upon all to strengthen the measures to protect themselves from the Covid-19 with their own initiatives.

Hasina put emphasis on keeping personal protection equipment (PPE), masks and medical equipment to keep free from the virus.

She directed the health ministry and local governments to take measures for disposing and dumping medical waste in a proper manner so that the virus cannot spread from these.

She asked everyone to use face masks, tissue papers and handkerchiefs, and to cough and sneeze into elbows in order prevent the infection.

মুজিববর্ষ অগ্রাধিকার
গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ
এন্টি টেররিজম ইউনিট
বড়ি নং-৩৫, মোহরগাছারী এলিট, রক্ত-সে, শরিফাবা, ঢাকা-১২১২
www.atu.police.gov.bd
সংশোধিত উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি
স্মারক নং-৪৪, ০১, ০০০০, ৩০৫, ০৪, ০৪৫, ১৩-১৪১
এন্টি টেররিজম ইউনিট, যার কার্যক্রম স্মারক নং-৪৪, ০১, ০০০০, ৩০৫, ০৪, ০৪৫, ১৩-১৪১ তারিখ ১৬/০৪/২০২০খ্রি, স্মারক নং-১২৯ জাং ০৪/০৪/২০২০খ্রি এবং স্মারক নং-১১৬ তারিখ ২৬/০৪/২০২০খ্রি যুগে লক্ষি ২০১৯-২০ অব্দ সালে এন্টি টেররিজম ইউনিট, ঢাকার পুলিশ পরিদর্শক ও তদন্ত কর্মকর্তাদের পোশাক সেলাই ও রিক্র এবং কাজ এবং LAN Products জয়ের নির্দিষ্ট জারীকৃত উদ্ভূত সরকার পরিদর্শক'র বিভিন্ন তারিখ ও কর্মকর্তাদের নিম্নোক্ত ছক মোতাবেক সংশোধন/পরিবর্তন করা হলো।
“ছক-১”
ক্রা নং কাজের নাম/আইটেম বিদ্যে/কার্যক্রম ক্রমান্বয়ে তারিখ সংশোধিত/পরিবর্তিত তারিখ
১। পুলিশ পরিদর্শক ও তদন্ত কর্মকর্তাদের পোশাক সেলাই ও রিক্র সরবরাহ কাজ ক) নতুন সিডিউল বিকয়ের শেষ তারিখ: ১৬/০৪/২০২০খ্রি ০৪/০৪/২০২০খ্রি
খ) নতুন ন্যূনতম তারিখ ও সময়: ১৬/০৪/২০২০খ্রি তারিখ বেলা ১২.০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত ০৪/০৪/২০২০খ্রি তারিখ বেলা ১২.০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত
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২। LAN Products জাং ক) নতুন সিডিউল বিকয়ের শেষ তারিখ: ১৬/০৪/২০২০খ্রি ০৪/০৪/২০২০খ্রি
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বিজ্ঞপ্তি ছকে বর্ণিত তিনটি বিষয় ব্যতীত পূর্বে জারীকৃত সর্বশেষ বিজ্ঞপ্তি এবং সিডিউলের অন্যান্য শর্তাবলী অপরিবর্তিত থাকবে।
মোঃ হুমায়ূন হক
বিশি-৭৭০১০৪৭০৫
পুলিশ সুপার (প্রশাসন)
নরক-আজিউল আলম, এন্টি টেররিজম ইউনিট
বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ, ঢাকা
ফোন: ০২-৪৬৬১০৭৪০, ফ্যাক্স: ৪৬৬১০৭৪০
E-mail: atu.spadm@police.gov.bd
তারিখ: ১০৪

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Bangladesh Police
Police Telecom & Information Management Headquarters
Police Telecom Bhaban, Rajarbag, Dhaka.
www.tim.police.gov.bd
2nd CORRIGENDUM OF
INTERNATIONAL TENDER NOTICE
Ministry Ministry of Home Affairs
Agency Bangladesh Police
Procuring Entity Name SP (Logistics), Police Telecom & Information Management
Tender Package Name UHF DMR Radio System for FPU.
Invitation Ref No 44.01.0000.057.11.048.19/1286/Betar
Date 02-03-2020.
Tender Last Selling Date 16-04-2020
Corrected Tender Last Selling Date 29-04-2020
Tender Closing Date and Time Date (dd-mm-yyyy) Time
19-04-2020 11.00 AM
Tender Opening Date and Time 19-04-2020 11.30 AM
Corrected Tender Closing Date and Time Date (dd-mm-yyyy) Time
30-04-2020 11.00 AM
Corrected Tender Opening Date and Time 30-04-2020 12.00 PM
Haroon
12/4/2020
(Haroon-ur-Rashid Hazaree)
SP (A&F)
Additional Charge of SP (Logistics)
Police T&IM, Rajarbag, Dhaka.
Ph: 8301105 Fax: 8301404
E-mail: splog.telecom@police.gov.bd
GD- 741

S Lanka church ‘forgives’ Easter suicide bombers

Sri Lanka’s Roman Catholic Church yesterday said it had forgiven the suicide bombers behind the attacks that killed at least 279 people last Easter. Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith told an Easter mass — broadcast from a TV studio because of the coronavirus pandemic — that “we offered love to the enemies who tried to destroy us.” “We forgave them,” he said, adding that instead of retaliating, the nation’s Catholic minority had contemplated Jesus’ message of hope, and reduced tensions. The April 21 Easter Sunday bombers targeted three churches and three luxury hotels, killing at least 279 people and wounding 593. Police have arrested 135 people in connection with the bombings, blamed on the National Thowtheeth Jama’ath extremist group.199 people have been infected with the virus in the country, with seven deaths.

Taliban to free 20 prisoners

The Taliban yesterday said it was set to release 20 prisoners in the southern Afghan city of Kandahar, in a potential breakthrough after the insurgents walked out of talks with the government last week. “Today, 20 prisoners of the Kabul administration will be released,” Taliban spokesman Suhail Shaheen said on Twitter, adding that the group would be handed over to representatives of the Red Cross. The announcement follows a string of releases of Taliban prisoners by the Afghan government and came after the head of US and Nato forces in Afghanistan met with insurgent leaders to discuss a reduction in violence in the war-weary country. Washington signed a key deal with the Taliban in February that promised the withdrawal of US and foreign troops from Afghanistan by next summer, provided the militants start talks with Kabul and adhere to other guarantees.

Assange ‘fathered two kids in Ecuador embassy’



WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange fathered two children with one of his lawyers while holed up in Ecuador’s embassy in London for much of the past decade, a report yesterday said. The 48-year-old Australian is allegedly the dad of two boys — aged two and one — born to South African-born lawyer Stella Morris, the Mail on Sunday reported. The newspaper published the report alongside photographs of Assange with the toddlers and an interview with Morris who said they “fell in love” and were planning to marry. The couple have been engaged since 2017, according to the paper, which said it learned about the revelations in court papers seen last week. Assange is being held in London’s high security Belmarsh prison as he fights an extradition request by the United States to stand trial there on espionage charges.

SOURCE: AFP



Heathcare workers (L) acknowledge applause from policemen outside the Gregorio Maranon Hospital in Madrid, Spain yesterday, during a national lockdown to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 disease.

PHOTO: AFP

‘Death sentence’ for other patients

AFP, New Delhi

Liver patient Shahjahan’s family feared the worst when a New Delhi public hospital told her to leave because her bed was needed in a coronavirus unit.

The 40-year-old mother had been on a ventilator with an acute infection for almost two weeks when she left Lok Nayak hospital on Tuesday night.

She died at her family home in Delhi the next morning. Other hospitals had turned her away because of the pandemic.

“The authorities just left her to die. Even when they referred us to another hospital, they refused to give us an ambulance,” said Mohammad Khalid, a relative of Shahjahan.

The capacity of medical facilities around the world has been stretched by the surge of COVID-19 patients as outbreaks worsen in many countries.

It can cause people with other life-threatening diseases to miss out on vital care — especially in places like India, where healthcare systems are shakier.

Dozens of people with serious medical conditions are camped outside India’s national medical institute in tents set up by the Delhi government. Many of them had travelled from



other cities for now-cancelled appointments and can’t go back due to transport restrictions under the nationwide lockdown that began on March 25.

Outpatient departments at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) closed, forcing cancer patients and others with deadly ailments to take shelter in a grimy pedestrian subway and under canvas.

Though aid groups have provided some food and medicines, it had been 12 hours since Saryu Das had eaten when AFP met him.

His son, who had mouth cancer, lay on a thin mattress with his face covered by a scarf. Flies hovered around him. Four days later, he died.

The AIIMS did not immediately respond to requests for comment on the death and the patients outside. But hospitals across the vast

country of 1.3 billion people have been put on alert and its virus death toll is now at 287.

When Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the lockdown, he gave millions of Indians taking life-saving drugs only four hours’ notice.

Amulya Nidhi, a health activist based in Madhya Pradesh state, told AFP the government knew that vulnerable patients — including those with silicosis and tuberculosis, which kills tens of thousands each year in India, as well as pregnant women — were at risk.

“I’m getting distress calls from across India over access to basic medicines and treatment,” said Nidhi.

“It is important to expand healthcare facilities to fight COVID-19. At the same time, hospitals and ambulances have to be available for patients with other problems,” he said.

DEATHS RISE IN INDIA’S BIGGEST SLUM
Coronavirus cases in Mumbai’s densely populated Dharavi slum — one of Asia’s biggest — have risen to 43 including four deaths, officials said yesterday as they ramp up testing in a race to contain the spread of the illness.

India has been in a nationwide lockdown since March 25. India Saturday extended the lockdown for 2 more weeks.

Record numbers of imported cases in China

REUTERS, Shanghai

China is stepping up scrutiny of inbound foreigners and tightening border control after the number of single-day imported coronavirus cases set a record, helping double the daily number of newly detected infections.

New confirmed cases in mainland China reached 99 on April 11 from 46 the previous day, with all but two involving travellers from abroad.

In addition, highlighting another major source of risk, newly reported asymptomatic coronavirus cases nearly doubled to 63 on April 11, from 34 the previous day.

RMG workers

FROM PAGE 12

Limited staged a demonstration from morning till 2:00pm yesterday, protesting unpaid wages.

The workers started the agitation after they came to the factory in the morning to receive their wages but found the gate locked, the workers said. They were supposed to be paid yesterday, they said.

“We have been put under hardship as we have no money to pay house rent, for groceries due and there is no food in our houses, said Bokul Mia, a worker of the factory.

MA Shaheen, president of Garment Workers Trade Union Kendra, said they could not contact the owners of the factory.

However, they asked the workers to go back to their homes and be patient until April 16, the date fixed by the government to pay the wages of garment workers.

Meanwhile, workers of Fakir Knitwear demonstrated from morning till afternoon, protesting the sacking of workers.

The factory authorities took their ID cards and signatures while paying the wages, sparking protest among the workers, said Ainul Haque, assistant superintendent of Industrial Police-4 in Narayanganj.

Tensions cooled down after the authorities returned their ID cards and withdrew the decision to sack them, he said.

In Gazipur, hundreds of workers of East West Group, Newway Fashion and Florent Garments Ltd barricaded the Dhaka-Mymensingh road, demanding three months’ arrears.

They dispersed around 10:00am, one hour after the agitation started when the authorities of those factories assured the payment of arrears on April 16.

(Our correspondent from Savar, Narayanganj and Gazipur contributed to the report)



A woman runs past posters with messages in Manchester, Britain, yesterday, during a nationwide lockdown to prevent the spread of Covid-19 disease.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Boisabi

FROM PAGE 12

Mros, Sangran of Kyangs, Sankrai of Khumis, Bizu of Chakmas and Bishu of Tanchangyas.

This year, people are not busy shopping for their traditional clothes and food; nobody is inviting family members and friends and many people are facing food shortages.

“We are not celebrating Sankran following the govt order. Most of the villagers are starving,” said Lov Ring Mro, a school teacher in Alikadom upazila of Bandarban.

Rama Rani Roy, additional secretary at Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs Ministry, said in the last two days, a ritual of showering each other with water was held in the hills.

In the ritual called Maitree Pani Barshan, indigenous women and men sprinkle each other

with water that symbolises cleansing themselves of the weariness of the past year.

Sanjay Chakma, 55, a resident of Kalindipur area of Rangamati town, said he never witnessed such a situation in his lifetime. “Due to the coronavirus, my daughters are celebrating Fulbiju [making flower offerings] on our roof.”

Pratyasha Chakma, 22, a university student, said she and her friends had plans to hang out at Kaptai Lake. “But now I will celebrate in the backyard of our home.”

The first day of the celebration starts with Fulbiju. The Chakma people wake up early, clean their homes and decorate it with flowers, and make flower offerings in rivers, canals and springs to seek divine blessings for peace and prosperity.

Minister Sheikh Hasina has already taken various measures for all countrymen whenever the premier deemed necessary.

If required, the government will take additional measures, he said.

“The PM is well aware of the current situation. She is taking measures ...,” he added.

Asked about what is being done for the ultra-poor living in urban areas, he said none of those affected by the pandemic will be left out of government initiatives.

It has already taken various measures including for those living in mega cities and other areas. More of such measures will be visible soon, the minister added.

He also said the government announced stimuli for people belonging to all classes.

No other South Asian country has done what the Bangladesh government has done so far to tackle the situation, he said.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

উপজেলা স্বাস্থ্য ও পঃ পঃ কর্মকর্তার কার্যালয়

গোয়াইনঘাট, সিলেট

gowainghat@uhfpo.dghs.gov.bd

স্মারক নং: উপস্বাস্থ্য/গোয়াইনঘাট/এমএসআর/দরপত্র/২০১৯-২০২০/৩০৩

তারিখ: ১২/০৪/২০২০ইং

এম.এস.আর দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

উপজেলা স্বাস্থ্য ও পরিবার পরিকল্পনা কর্মকর্তার কার্যালয়, গোয়াইনঘাট, সিলেটের এর আওতাধীন একটি উপ-স্বাস্থ্য কেন্দ্রসমূহের জন্য ২০১৯-২০২০ইং অর্থ বছরের গ্রুপ চিকিৎসা-এমএসআর সম্মতি (মেডিকেল এক সার্ভিসেস সিটিফিকেশন) জরুরিভাবে নির্মিত পদ্ধতিতে পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট আইন ২০০৬ ও তৎপরবর্তী সংশোধনী এবং সরাসরি বিক্রিমালা ২০০৬ ও পরবর্তী সংশোধনী মতে নিম্নোক্ত ছক মোতাবেক প্রকৃত ব্যবসায়ী/সেবাবাহক/প্রকৃতকারী প্রতিষ্ঠান/প্রকৃতকারী/স্বত্বাধীনের বিধি হতে নিম্ন ও শর্তাবলী সর্বাঙ্গিক দরপত্র পূরণ সাপেক্ষে নির্ধারিত সিটিফিকেশন গ্রুপ চিকিৎসা নিম্নলিখিত বাক্যে দরপত্র আহ্বান করা যাবে।

১	মন্ত্রণালয়/বিভাগ	:	স্বাস্থ্য সেবা বিভাগ, স্বাস্থ্য ও পরিবার কল্যাণ মন্ত্রণালয়।
২	সংস্থের নাম	:	স্বাস্থ্য অধিদপ্তর।
৩	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারীর পদবী ও মোবাইল নাম্বার	:	উপজেলা স্বাস্থ্য ও পঃ পঃ কর্মকর্তা, গোয়াইনঘাট, সিলেট, ০১৭১৭৬৭২১৭।
৪	দরপত্র পদ্ধতি	:	উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র আহ্বানের মাধ্যমে।
৫	আবেদন উদ্দেশ্য	:	রাজস্ব ব্যয় (সিটিফিকেশন)।
৬	দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি নং ও তারিখ	:	স্মারক নং: উপস্বাস্থ্য/গোয়াইনঘাট/এমএসআর/দরপত্র/২০১৯-২০২০/৩০৩, তারিখ: ১২/০৪/২০২০ইং।
৭	দরপত্রের নাম/কাজের বিবরণ	:	২০১৯-২০২০ইং অর্থ বছরে গোয়াইনঘাট উপজেলা স্বাস্থ্য কমপ্লেক্স ও এর অধীন একটি উপ-স্বাস্থ্য কেন্দ্রের জন্য মোট ০৬টি গ্রুপ-এমএসআর সম্মতি সরবরাহ। গ্রুপ নং-(ক) ঈশ্বরদী (খ) মেডিকেল স্বাস্থ্যপতি (গ) গজ, বেজের ও তুলা (ঘ) জাদুঘরদাঙ্গা ও কিসেন সম্মতি (ঙ) সিলেট সম্মতি (চ) কেমিক্যাল এক রিয়েলিট।
৮	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী দপ্তরের নাম	:	উপজেলা স্বাস্থ্য ও পঃ পঃ কর্মকর্তার কার্যালয়, গোয়াইনঘাট, সিলেট।
৯	দরপত্র খোলার স্থান	:	উপজেলা স্বাস্থ্য ও পঃ পঃ কর্মকর্তার কার্যালয়, গোয়াইনঘাট, সিলেট।
১০	দরপত্র সিটিফিকেশন বিক্রয়ের সর্বশেষ তারিখ ও সময়	:	বিজ্ঞপ্তি প্রকাশের পর হতে ০৩/০৫/২০২০ইং অধিন চলাকালীন (২.৩০) ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত (সরকারী ও সামাজিক চুক্তির নিম্ন ব্যতিক্রম)।
১১	দরপত্র গ্রহণের তারিখ, সময়	:	০৪/০৫/২০২০ইং দুপুর ১২.০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।
১২	দরপত্র গ্রহণের স্থান	:	০১. উপজেলা স্বাস্থ্য ও পঃ পঃ কর্মকর্তার কার্যালয়, গোয়াইনঘাট, সিলেট। ০২. নির্ধারিত অফিসের এর কার্যালয়, গোয়াইনঘাট, সিলেট। ০৩. অফিসের ইন্টার্ন এর কার্যালয়, গোয়াইনঘাট, সিলেট।
১৩.	দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ ও সময়	:	০৪/০৫/২০২০ইং দুপুর ১২.৩০ ঘটিকা (সরকারী/সামাজিক চুক্তি) নির্ধারিত তারিখ হতে যাবে।
১৪.	দরপত্র সিটিফিকেশন বিক্রয়ের স্থান	:	উপজেলা স্বাস্থ্য ও পঃ পঃ কর্মকর্তার কার্যালয়, গোয়াইনঘাট, সিলেট।
১৫	দরপত্র আহ্বানের যোগ্যতা	:	এমএসআর সম্মতি সরবরাহের প্রকৃত ব্যবসায়ী/প্রকৃতকারী/সেবাবাহক/প্রকৃতকারী প্রতিষ্ঠান।
১৬	দরপত্র সিটিফিকেশন মূল্য	:	গ্রুপ নং-ক/খ/গ প্রতি গ্রুপে ৭৫০/- (সাতশত পঞ্চাশ) টাকা এবং ম/ঙ/চ প্রতি গ্রুপে ৫০০/- (পাঁচশত) টাকা (অফিসের/স্বাস্থ্য) চালানের মাধ্যমে কোড নং-১-২৭১১-০০০০-২০১৬ ও সোনালী ব্যাংক, গোয়াইনঘাট শাখার জমাদান করিয়া চালানের মূল্য হিসেবে ব্যালান্সের বিধি জমা প্রদান সাপেক্ষে শর্তাবলীতে গ-খ গ্রুপের দরপত্র সিটিফিকেশন ও শর্তাবলী সর্বাঙ্গিক গ্রহণের পরিকল্পনা।
১৭	দরপত্র দপ্তরের নিয়ন্ত্রণাধীন আমানত “উপজেলা স্বাস্থ্য কমপ্লেক্স, গোয়াইনঘাট, সিলেট” এর অনুবর্তন ব্যাংক ড্রাইফট/পে-অর্ডারের মাধ্যমে	:	গ্রুপ ও কাজের বিবরণী ক-ঈশ্বরদী (ইউসিএল বহির্ভূত) = ৭০,০০০/- (সাত হাজার) টাকা মাত্র খ-সার্ভিসেস স্বাস্থ্যপতি = ৪০,০০০/- (চল্লিশ হাজার) টাকা মাত্র গ-গজ, বেজের ও তুলা = ৪০,০০০/- (চল্লিশ হাজার) টাকা মাত্র ঘ-জাদুঘরদাঙ্গা ও কিসেন সম্মতি = ২৫,০০০/- (পঁচিশ হাজার) টাকা মাত্র ঙ-সিলেট সম্মতি = ২৫,০০০/- (পঁচিশ হাজার) টাকা মাত্র চ-কেমিক্যাল এক রিয়েলিট = ২০০০০/- (দশ হাজার) টাকা মাত্র
১৮	সরবরাহকারী	:	কার্যালয় (সিটিফিকেশন অব এওয়ার্ড) মোকদম।

* কর্তৃপক্ষ যে কোন দরপত্র গ্রহণ অথবা সকল দরপত্র ব্যক্তিগত করার অধিকাংশ সম্ভব করবে।

* অন্যান্য শর্তাবলী দরপত্র সিটিফিকেশন সফল হলে।

ডাঃ মোঃ রেহমত উদ্দিন
উপজেলা স্বাস্থ্য ও পঃ পঃ কর্মকর্তা
গোয়াইনঘাট, সিলেট

তারিখ: ১২/০৪/২০২০ইং

STOCKS		COMMODITIES		As of Friday		ASIAN MARKETS		Friday Closings		CURRENCIES		STANDARD CHARTERED BANK		
DSEX	CSCX		Gold ▲ \$1,715.50 (per ounce)		Oil ▲ \$31.48 (per barrel)	MUMBAI	TOKYO	SINGAPORE	SHANGHAI	USD	EUR	GBP	CNY	
Closed	Closed					Closed	▲ 0.79% 19,498.50	Closed	▲ 0.38% 10,157.61	BUY TK	83.95	90.78	103.67	11.78
										SELL TK	84.95	94.58	107.47	12.38



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‘Coronavirus is guiding us towards some sort of innovation’

Local firms are rallying in combat with the disease

MUHAMMAD ZAHIDUL ISLAM

Local companies have started producing sophisticated medical devices and much-needed personal protective equipment (PPE), a development that comes as a sign of relief amid the mounting fear of coronavirus epidemic that has so far claimed 34 lives in Bangladesh.

Some garment factory owners have already made thousands of

state minister for ICT, told The Daily Star.

“Coronavirus is wreaking havoc on our lives and at the same time guiding us towards some sort of innovation,” he said, adding that if the local companies can carry on the innovation, it will take the country to a new height.

Palak particularly mentioned the name of Walton that is making ventilators using the patent and

On March 31, the ICT division of the government received the patent, design and source code of ventilators from Medtronic, following which both Walton and Medtronic’s research and development team are working closely.

According to the Directorate General of Health Services, Bangladesh currently has just 1,250 ventilators -- 500 in public hospitals and 750 in the private ones -- while

Saturday for free.

“This is the first initiative of manufacturing face shields and safety goggles in the country,” Murshed added.

Different garment factories were already making protective suits, masks, gloves, shoe covers and caps for PPEs but making goggles and face shields is a whole another ball game, Walton officials said.

“With the goggles and face shields, PPE manufacturing has now gotten a complete shape in Bangladesh,” Murshed said, adding that the country can consider exporting PPEs after this.

Officials of another local electronics manufacturer, Minister Hi-Tech Park, said they have designed a ventilator and sent samples for pre-testing to two private medical colleges.

“After receiving the medical colleges’ reports, we will make the necessary changes based on their suggestions and submit those to the authorities concerned for approval,” said MA Razzak Khan, founder of Minister Hi-Tech Park.

Khan is hopeful that the design would be approved within this week and from next week they would be able to go for production.

Minister can make about 100 ventilators a day. “But it all depends on the supply of component parts,” he added.

Meanwhile, the Military Institute of Science and Technology, an engineering university run by the Bangladesh Armed Forces, has also designed a ventilator and will soon send it for the clinical trial, said Syed Mahfuzur Rahman, head of biomedical engineering department of the institute.

In another development, Snowtex Group, a garment exporter, is leading PPE manufacturing and is in the process of producing 50,000 units, according to Sarkar Mohammad Khaled, its managing director.



pieces of PPE suits, masks, gloves, shoe covers and caps, while tech companies are manufacturing other components of the equipment like face shields and safety goggles.

The tech firms are also making ventilators that offer the best chance of survival by taking over the body’s breathing process when coronavirus infection causes the lungs to fail.

This is a massive success and a giant leap by the companies of Bangladesh, Zunaid Ahmed Palak,

design of Medtronic, an Ireland-based medical device company run by an iconic Bangladeshi expatriate Omar Ishrak.

The government is monitoring the process of manufacturing ventilators by Walton, according to the state minister.

“We will get a prototype within this week,” Palak said, adding that the company will make about 50 ventilators of global standards in the first phase for testing.

it might require thousands more to face the challenges dramatically brought on by coronavirus.

Walton is also making some other medical devices like face shields and safety goggles for the safeguard of physicians and medical assistants, said Golam Murshed, executive director of the company.

The company already made 1,000 pieces of these devices and handed those to the Directorate General of Health Services on

Defaulters barred from funds meant for affected industries, firms

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Defaulters would not get any credit facility from the bailout package the government has unveiled for the coronavirus-hit industrial and service sectors, the central bank said yesterday.

The borrowers who have rescheduled their bad loans for more than three times are also not allowed to get loans from the bailout package, which is dedicated to the businesses affected by the coronavirus.

The Bangladesh Bank yesterday set the guidelines of the bailout package amounting to Tk 30,000 crore unveiled last week.

The duration of the package is three years and the affected customers will be allowed interest waiver for a maximum of a year. Borrowers will get the loans as working capital.

As per the guidelines, borrowers will get loans at 4.50 per cent. Banks will enjoy 9 per cent in interest as the central bank will foot the bill for the rest of the interest as subsidy.

The affected clients who have already borrowed from banks will be permitted to take a maximum 30 per cent loans from their existing credit limit. The new borrowers will get 30 per cent loans of their requirement.

The most affected borrowers will be given priority while disbursing loans from the fund and banks will provide the loans from their own coffer.

In a separate move, the central bank has increased the ceiling of loan-deposit ratio to 87 per cent from the existing 85 per cent for conventional banks and 92 per cent from the existing 90 per cent for Shariah-based banks.

The revised ceiling will come into effect from April 15, according to a central bank notice.

This means conventional and Shariah-based banks will be permitted to disburse loans Tk 87 and Tk 92 respectively against clients’ deposit of Tk 100, said a central bank official.

The initiative will create room for banks to disburse more loans, which will play a positive role in resolving the ongoing crisis, he said.

The central bank yesterday also took a fresh policy measure for the coronavirus-hit exporters by providing them funds.

As part of the move, exporters will be allowed to take out loans from the Export Development Fund (EDF) of the central bank to settle import payments.

On April 5, the government expanded the EDF from \$3.5 billion to \$5 billion.

Exporters who open back-to-back letters of credit will get the facility. A back-to-back LC involves two letters of credit to secure financing for a single transaction.

The interest rate of the loan is 2 per cent and exporters would have to pay back the fund within six months.

Public banks can spearhead govt’s rescue efforts: WB

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Public banks in Bangladesh and other South Asian nations can play a positive

role in figuring out the impending financial crisis from the coronavirus pandemic by providing financial services to the rural economy, said the World Bank yesterday in a report.

The report styled “The Cursed Blessing of Public Bank” said the lenders had played a positive role during the financial crisis between 2008 and 2010.

Although they suffer from inefficiency and are likely to reduce competition and thus slow innovation, their lending can be countercyclical, and they are more likely than private banks to provide services to people in remote areas and poor people during a recession.

“That is an opportunity in the current crisis,” said the Washington-based multilateral lender.

In the current economic situation, public banks are needed to provide countercyclical lending -- as they did during the last global financial crisis.

And in some cases, they may be needed to inject capital into weak private banks.

If financial markets start crumbling due to the economic consequences of COVID-19, then public banks may provide a crucial policy tool to stabilise the banking system and prevent further economic turmoil.

“They will need to support the economic transition in the long-run.”

To fulfil these functions -- in addition to strengthening their frameworks and operations -- public banks across the region may require additional capital infusions to address their still weak balance sheets, the report said.

Bangladesh has 60 banks in total, of which 8 are public banks. And public banks have better coverage across districts than private ones.

However, public banks’ share of loans to agriculture and micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSME) is not very different from that of private banks.

One reason is that all banks, independent of their ownership, are required to lend a

certain share to agriculture and MSMEs.

Public ownership includes state commercial banks (SCBs) and state development banks (SDBs) -- about 23 and 2 per cent of the banking sector’s assets, respectively.

The state-run banks represent nearly 65 per cent of all rural branches, being responsible for ‘social safety net’ payments and other government services but with limited compensation).

SCBs and SDBs have 53 and 88 per cent of all their branches in rural areas, respectively, while private commercial banks (PCBs) have just 35 per cent, and foreign commercial banks (FCBs) have none.

Credit to agriculture and MSMEs is only a small part of the SCBs’ loan portfolios, suggesting a limited developmental impact.

Credit to traditional key targets for improving the incomes of poor and excluded groups (agriculture, fishing, forestry, and MSMEs in the industry) is low for SCBs at just 13 per cent of their total portfolio, which is not that different from PCBs and FCBs at 9 and 6 per cent respectively.

SCBs’ loan portfolio is heavily skewed towards large loans, and their branch network in the urban areas largely overlaps that of the private sector.

Nevertheless, part of the credit could be for large infrastructure projects that contribute to development and private banks are less capable to finance.

Despite the benefit of significant rural and state deposits, SCBs fall short in their intermediation function.

SCBs receive a large part of their deposits from the public sector (about 40 per cent) as well as rural areas (about 35 per cent, a benefit of rural branches and implicit government guarantees).

Nevertheless, the credit to deposit ratio of SCBs is the lowest among all bank groups at just 60 per cent.

Combined with SCBs’ high default loans and low profitability and capital adequacy, the WB suggested a need for policy#makers to clearly articulate the value proposition of public ownership in the banking sector.

ECONOMISTS BACK WB’S GDP SCENARIO



GDP GROWTH PROJECTION LOGICAL

AHSAN H MANSUR

Executive director of Policy Research Institute

The World Bank’s projection on GDP growth for fiscal 2019-20 is logical as all economic activities have come to a halt. The GDP growth in the third and fourth quarters will be negative and the government should make an all-out effort to recover the economy from the stringent situation when the lockdown is lifted. A large number of people have already lost their jobs due to the ongoing economic fallout from the coronavirus pandemic. At least 4-5 crore people are struggling to survive their life due to the food shortage. The government should address the issue immediately, or else a social unrest will create. The government is yet to give any declaration on how to cater food to the people. Some relief works are being carried out by district and upazila administrations, but this is not enough at all given the going dreadful crisis. The government should form committee comprising local government representatives, eminent citizens, and staff of NGOs at village or union level to distribute the relief goods to the underprivileged people. The committee will monitor the relief programme in order to prohibit corruption. Both fiscal and monetary policies should be widened with a view to keeping the economy afloat. The government has already taken measures to expand its fiscal programmes by taking bailout packages, which is a time-befitting initiative. Expansionary monetary policy is also important at this moment as such stance help pump required money into the market.



ARRESTING DOWNTURN TO RELY ON HOW FAST GOVT RESPONDS

KHONDAKER GOLAM MOAZZEM

Research director of Centre for Policy Dialogue

The World Bank has made a dire projection about economic growth. And arresting the downturn in economic growth hangs on how fast the government responds with effective measures to address the Covid-19-induced health and economic emergency. Weakness in tackling the massive health risk will worsen the economic crisis.

The ongoing shutdown has hit wide spectrum of the economy from exports, remittance, domestic economic activities to jobs and income, thus increasing the risk of worsening poverty. Some efforts to mitigate the negative impact on the economy are seen in the government’s declared measures. But the big challenge is to ensure finances from banks as much as needed. Recovery and arresting the downfall will also depend on the types of steps the government takes to bail out millions of micro and small businesses in the informal sector. The risk of many people becoming poor is very high in the informal sector. More than 98 per cent of 78.18 lakh economic units represent cottage, micro and small-scale enterprises. And 80 per cent of workers in these firms are involved mostly on a full-time basis but largely without proper contracts. About 90 per cent of the firms have no VAT registration and are likely to be out of commercial banking facilities. Hence, these enterprises would find it difficult to get support under the bank-based revolving fund facility. The government may consider a third bailout package for informal sector enterprises along with other affected groups such as farmers to ensure cash flow. The government can also consider giving food and cash support to people in distress in urban areas.

GDP GROWTH WILL FALL DRASTICALLY, NO DOUBT

AB MIRZA AZIZUL ISLAM

Former caretaker government adviser

There is no doubt that the country’s GDP growth will decrease to a drastic level this fiscal year due to the ongoing shutdown. The government will have to take an expansionary budget to figure out the ongoing crisis. The volume of the social safety net and a good number of incentive measures should be taken on a priority basis. There is no reason to be worried if deficit financing in the next fiscal year becomes wider than usual as this will help give a boost to the economy. But the government should avoid borrowing from the banking sources as it will put an adverse impact on the private sector. Donation and soft loans should be mobilised from the foreign donors and multilateral agencies in order to tackle the situation. The government should monitor the implementation of the bailout packages strictly so that no habitual defaulter manages to benefit from the programmes.



PROJECTION RIDICULOUS, LUDICROUS, DONE HASTILY

PROF SHAMSUL ALAM

Member of General Economics Division

This is an undeveloped projection. The projection has been made too hastily. The coronavirus pandemic is still unfolding. It is so ludicrous as the projection has been made on an unfolding issue. This is ridiculous. We don’t know what its impacts on the economy will be.

The pandemic may last two months. Or it may last three months. So,

we have to wait until it is over. Before the Covid-19 goes away, we can’t make the projection. Definitely, it would have impact on the economy. The fallout may be higher or lower than we are expecting. Nobody can say how complex or devastating the situation will be. We don’t know from what basis they have come up with the projection. We have been enforcing countrywide lockdown from March 26. Before that, the economy has been running as usual. Offices were open. Later, factories and industries were closed gradually and transport movement suspended. When the crisis will be over, we will assess the impacts of the coronavirus on the agriculture, industries and services sectors to come to a conclusion about the exact effects. We can’t make this type of projection [World Bank’s projection] in advance.

ECONOMY TO TAKE AT LEAST 3 MONTHS TO RETURN TO SOME NORMALCY

KAS MURSHID

Director general of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies

It is not possible to predict outright by what percentage the growth will fall. But it can be said that it will take a big hit. It would take at least three months for the economy to return to normalcy to some extent. After July, our economy will start picking up. But we do not know what the condition of the world economy will be. As the global economy has already entered into a recession, it will probably take time. Our recovery will not help much as Bangladesh’s economy is also largely dependent on the global economy. Global component is very big in our economy. It is beyond my control. Domestic economy is in our control, particularly the service and agriculture sectors. We have to ensure normalcy in the service and agriculture sectors as quickly as possible. And it will only be possible when the challenge of the pandemic reduces to a large extent. Instant direct support will help affected businesses survive and the stimulus package will help other groups of businesses respond when right conditions return. A large portion of low-income people returned to their villages following the general holiday and shutdown. Yet there are still people in slums and measures should be taken to address the problems of the people living in slums. Arrangement should be there. NGOs and civil societies are trying to help the people living in the slums. But it seems to me that the initiatives are scattered. These good efforts and activities should be made useful. And coordination is needed to ensure good results. The government should come up to coordinate. If the government has any plan of its own, that should be included. There is huge energy among civil societies to help do voluntary activities. It is vital for the government to use this resource. Coordination through bureaucratic system will not be helpful. Rather, the government can form committees at local level involving public officials, civil society and private sectors to provide support.



Stock brokers against regulator's right in issuing new licences

AHSAN HABIB

The stock market regulator has no right to set the criteria for issuing new stock brokerage licences; rather, the bourses can exert their authority to do so as per the demutualisation rules, stock brokers said.

The regulator published the draft rules of Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (Trading Right Entitlement Certificate), 2020 last month incorporating the criteria for issuing TREC and sought opinions from bourses within April 15.

In response, the Dhaka Stock Exchange has already given its consent to the rules.

DSE Brokers' Association yesterday sent a legal notice to the DSE, saying the bourse has given the consent "surreptitiously".

"How could the DSE give accord to the draft rules proposed by the stock market regulator which is bound to cause serious repercussions in the entire capital market?" read the legal notice sent by Law Valley Barristers & Advocates on behalf of the stock brokers.

The BSEC framed the draft rules without lawful jurisdiction as it has laid down criteria that includes fixation of fees, security deposit and time factor of issuance of the TREC, it said.

The regulator has no authority to determine the criteria, the timeframe of issuing TREC, fees and security deposit against new TREC, the association pointed out citing relevant rules.

"This is simply usurpation of power by the BSEC."

According to the demutualisation act, the bourse will set the criteria for giving TREC and will take approval from the regulator.

All the directors of the DSE as well as its company secretary received the legal notice, which called for sending a "note of protest" to the BSEC on the draft rules within seven days of receipt of the notice.

If they fail to issue the note of protest to the BSEC, the general members of the DSE shall be constrained to hold an extraordinary general meeting to remove all the directors of the DSE, it said.

A top official of the DSE confirmed that they received the legal notice and would take the next steps.

"The legal notice was not issued to us, so we have nothing to say about it," said an official of the BSEC, preferring not to be named.

Though the BSEC has no right to fix the criteria for issuing new stock brokerage licences, the DSE did not oppose the move of the regulator. Rather, it gave consent to the draft rules, said Kazi Firoz Rashid, a lawmaker and chairman of Kazi Firoz Rashid Securities, a stock broker.

"This is why we sent the legal notice," he said, adding that the BSEC published the draft rules in haste, which raises questions about the intentions of the regulator.

This April was a bitter pill to swallow for sweet makers

AHSAN HABIB and JAGARAN CHAKMA

At the turn of the year, sweet makers were impatient for the month of April to arrive.

This year, coincidentally, their two major selling events -- Shab-e-Barat and Pahela Baishakh -- fell in the April and that too just a week apart.

They were bracing for a bumper April, but transpired was a cruel demonstration of the saying 'Man proposes, God disposes'.

Sweet makers have had their most bitter experience this year as demand hit rock bottom owing to the coronavirus pandemic.

The holy Shab-e-Barat, the night of fortune and forgiveness, is an occasion when special prayers and doa are organised at mosques and homes and sweets are distributed among the devotees and sent to relatives.

Similarly, the sale of sweet surges on the occasion of Pahela Baishakh, the first day of the Bangla new year that falls on April 14, thanks to the growing corporate culture of sending sweets to clients and others.

Between April 9 and April 17 last year, sweet makers sold as much as 100 tonnes of sweet items worth about Tk 3 crore per day.

"The two main sweet-selling events have been hit hard this year due to coronavirus," said Kamruzzaman Kamal, director for marketing at Pran-RFL, which owns the Mithai brand. Mithai has 43 showrooms across the country.

Because of the pandemic, all the sweet shops have remained closed since March 25 in line with a government order, which has enforced countrywide lockdown to flatten the curve of coronavirus that has so far infected 621 and killed 34 in Bangladesh.

Sweetmeat is not a basic food and people are not in a joyous mood, so its sales have dropped.

Premium Sweets, a high-end brand in the segment, used to sell several tonnes of sweet on the occasion of Pahela Baishakh, but its business has totally tanked this year, said Mahbubur Rahman Bakul, head of corporate affairs of the company.

Pahela Baishakh is the major occasion for sweet makers, he said.

"We are passing hard times because of the lack of production and sales."

Premium Sweets has 15 outlets in Dhaka and five outlets in Canada.

"Business fell in both countries," Bakul said, adding that the company is paying salaries by bringing money from the

showrooms in Canada as the domestic outlets are not making any money.

This year, Well Food has not recorded any sales ahead of Shab-e-Barat, whereas it normally sells about two tonnes of sweetmeats on the night, said Syed Nurul Islam, chairman of the group.

Well Food is a chain shop that sells

night of Shab-e-Barat.

Restaurants and bakeries missed the business this year, said Robin, also the owner of Shaikat Hotel in Bogura.

"This was the day when our premier sweet items sell the most. But there were no sales on the two major occasions. We have not seen such a situation in our lifetime."

Bangladesh, according to Mohammad Anwar Hossain, senior information officer of the religious affairs ministry.

Mahmudul Hasan, a citizen of Khulna, normally holds a special doa at his house on Shab-e-Barat as the night is considered holy. He sends some sweets to the houses of relatives. "But this year, I had not arranged



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different types of sweetmeat and bakery items.

According to Islam, Well Food has emphasised on the safety of its staff, so the group has not received any internal order.

The company has already cancelled many orders for the upcoming Pahela Baishakh too, he said.

"Because of the pandemic, very few people want to buy sweets."

This year, sweet sales plunged on the occasion of Shab-e-Barat as no restaurants were open and mosques were reluctant to arrange special prayers and doa, said Rejaul Karim Sharker Robin, secretary general of the Bangladesh Restaurant Owner's Association.

According to industry insiders, the sales of sweetmeat rise to Tk 50 crore on the

The business loss during the pandemic will impact many small hotel and restaurant owners, he added.

According to the association, there are about 60,000 restaurants and bakeries in Bangladesh and almost all of them make sweets and jilapi on the day as demand explodes.

Mohammad Selim, president of Rahmatpur Mosque Committee in Narayanganj, normally buys 60 to 70 kilograms of jilapi for Shab-e-Barat night every year on behalf of the mosque. But this year he bought none.

"All the mosques followed the government direction on avoiding religious gatherings. So, we had no reason to buy sweetmeats," he said.

There are about 350,000 mosques in

such doa."

"The loss of the sweet makers is unexplainable as they have failed to catch the main occasion of Pahela Baishakh," said Mohammed Ali, president of the Bangladesh Sweets Manufacturers Association and owner of Muslim Sweets, a popular brand.

"All outlets of all brands selling sweets have been shut due to the lockdown. How will the sweet makers sell the items?"

People are panicking because of the rising cases of coronavirus infections so they are not buying sweets, he said.

Corporate houses give advance order for sweets ahead of Pahela Baishakh, but the situation is different now.

"There is no way we could manage to recover the losses," Ali said.

How Bangladesh can cash in on record low oil prices



REZAUL KABIR

Energy is a major requirement for the development of a country and directly or indirectly plays an important role in revenue generation.

Crude oil is a key source of energy which is constantly driving the world economy.

At this critical moment of coronavirus pandemic, I want to highlight the impact of the oil price plunge in the international market as Bangladesh has to spend a huge amount of foreign currency every year on importing crude oil which affects the economy of the country in many ways.

Oil price had been in the range of \$45-60 a barrel for the last 3-4 years but the sudden outbreak of coronavirus is now putting a strain on the international oil market.

The lethal pathogen that is spreading like wildfire is bringing the economies of many countries to their knees and leaving an overwhelming impact on oil prices.

As most of the countries affected by coronavirus are resorting to tough measures like lockdown, their economies are grinding to a halt.

There is no doubt that imposing lockdown is a tough decision for any economy but it is the most effective way to contain the spread of the deadly virus as life is more important than economy.

Partial and full lockdown in many countries has brought down fuel consumption by almost 30-40 per cent all over the world creating a supply glut in the international market.

Most of the oil importing countries have cut back on their oil purchase orders because of a shortage of oil storage capacity, while international oil companies did not bring down oil production to that extent.

Ultimately, the situation led to a surplus supply of oil in the international market, which is why prices crashed to \$20 a barrel.

If the lockdown continues until the end of April, oil price may plunge further to about \$10 a barrel as oil purchase orders from the importing countries might hit rock-bottom due to a huge amount of unused fuel at home.

Against this backdrop, international oil

companies might think of cutting oil production to keep the market stable.

Bangladesh is one of the oil-importing countries but it does have adequate or surplus storage capacity, refinery as well as standard distribution and marketing policies.

Hence, the government can consider the following proposals that can also help formulate cost-saving and long-term business policies.

1) The Sangu platform was built for offshore drilling and gas supply from offshore facilities to the national grid in Chattogram.

The platform is connecting 10-12 wells of Sangu gas field and the depth of each well is around 3,500 metres.

The gas field is abandoned and all the wells are sealed off.

The Sangu platform is connected with a production pipeline to the Chattogram port that can be 20-22 kilometres long.

These 10-12 wells of the Sangu field and 20-22km pipeline could be used as storage tanks for the imported crude oil.

Additionally, the government may need to build a structure at the Sangu platform for oil tankers to make the platform suitable for unloading crude oil from ships and carrying the oil to the empty wells/pipeline for storage.

This oil can later be transported to Chattogram oil refineries for processing. It may reduce carrying cost by saving time and facilitate quick unloading without additional port arrangements.

Before that, Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation and Bapex can jointly conduct a feasibility study on this platform and the wells to check if those are viable for storing oil.

The feasibility study may assess the present status of the platform and the pipeline, and consider other aspects like hole cleaning, pressure test of the wells for finding leaks, and pressure test of the pipeline to Chattogram from the Sangu platform.

It can also calculate the capacity of the 10-12 wells and 20-22km pipeline.

2) The government can install a floating refinery close to the Sangu platform.

The refined oil can then be distributed through riverways to different river ports inside the country.

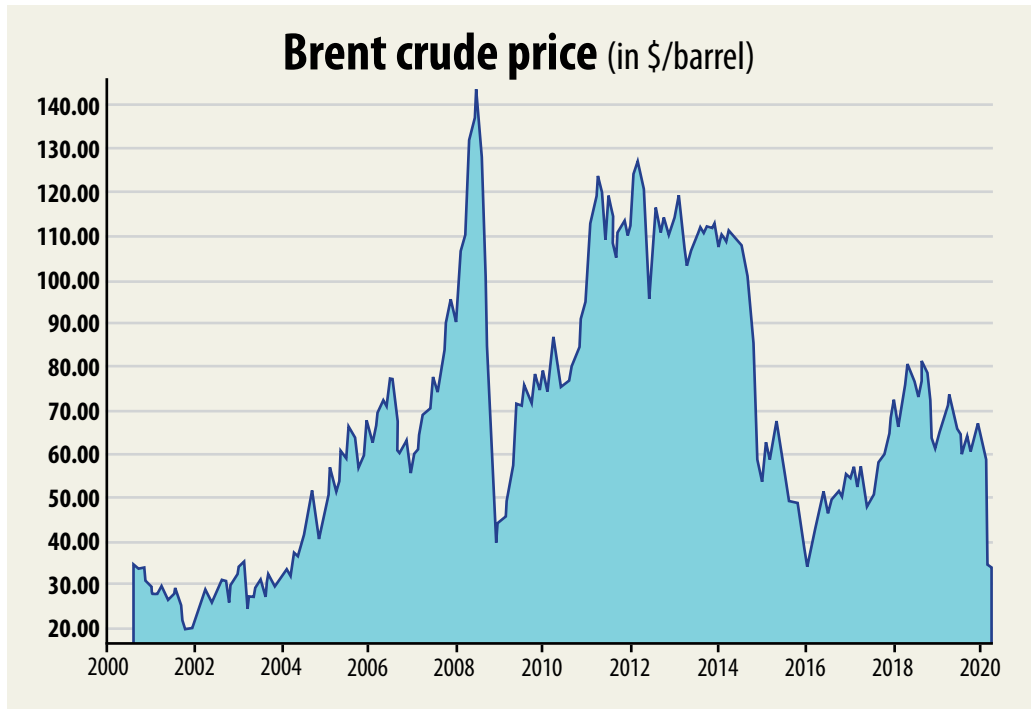
It may reduce domestic carrying costs and will ensure quality of products as well.

3) All the abandoned gas wells can also be used as reservoirs of diesel or unrefined crude oil following the above procedure.

Onshore gas fields are already safe and secure and they can make the marketing process quite easier.

Following the means mentioned above, Bangladesh can purchase and reserve a huge volume of refined or unrefined oil for further use and thus save foreign currencies at this critical moment.

The writer is a petroleum geologist and an international oil and gas exploration



For now, the leather sector's priority is to just stay afloat



AMRAN HOSSAIN

JAGARAN CHAKMA

Leather goods and footwear manufacturers and exporters see little possibility of returning to normalcy this year as demand at home and abroad will be depressed for the global coronavirus pandemic.

The exports of the next most promising sector after garment might fall by 20 to 25 per cent this fiscal year from the \$1.3 billion registered in fiscal 2019-20, sector players say.

"We don't do how long the prevailing situation will continue," said Nasir Khan, chairman and managing director of Jennys Shoes, one of the pioneers in manufacturing and exporting of footwear.

There are two seasons for the export-oriented footwear sector: winter and summer.

Local exporters have completed the shipment of summer orders, he said, adding that the winter orders would most definitely be lost.

The order cancellations or suspensions have started to come through though as international buyers are forced to shutter stores owing to demand collapse and strict lockdown measures to flatten the curve on coronavirus.

The amount of work order cancellation in the leather goods and footwear industries was \$316 million as of March 26, said Md Saiful Islam, president of the Leathergoods And Footwear Manufacturer & Exporters Association of Bangladesh (LFMEAB).

Bangladesh's major export destinations, including the US, Italy, Spain, the UK and

Germany have been highly affected by the outbreak of the lethal pathogen. When normal life resumes in the countries is up in the air.

"Even if normalcy is restored within the next three months and local production starts as usual, where will we ship our products to? We are in complete uncertainty," Khan said.

The sector can't project what the losses would be in the end, said Mohammad Nazmul Hassan, managing director of Leatherex Footwear Industries.

"It will depend on how long the pandemic lingers," he said, adding that they don't know what the solution should be at the moment.

No member of LFMEAB would be able to recover the losses this year, said a leader of the association requesting anonymity.

"But everybody should accept that staying alive is the priority in the prevailing situation," he added.

In the first eight months of the fiscal year, the leather and footwear sector exported products worth of \$851 million, according to data from the Export Promotion Bureau.

Of the sum, footwear exports brought home \$596 million, down 9 per cent year-on-year. The state agency has not published the export figures for March yet.

The sector employs around two lakh semi-skilled and skilled people. Forty active factories in the footwear sector employ about 1.5 lakh people.

The government has a target to export \$5 billion worth of leather and leather goods by 2021, which, given the surreal times, seem a pipe dream.

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR
LATE S. M. ALI

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Pilferage of rice in time of crisis

Make example of these criminals

IT is a sad reflection on the society that at a time of such unprecedented national crisis some of us continue to be slaves of our baser instincts. Otherwise how is it possible for a human being to misappropriate rice allocated by the government for the most indigent section of the population all over the country?

This is not just any other disaster. The outlook is bleak, as much as due to the impact on public health as the economic fallout of the pandemic. The lockdown has created some associated problems the most acute of which is the loss of earning for daily wage earners and those that were already dependent on various government relief programmes. The government has taken a timely decision to provide rice at Tk 10 per kg to those who are affected by the lockdown. But that effort is being blunted in some parts of the country.

Admittedly, the quantity made available so far may not be enough but even that small amount cannot get to many of those it is meant for. It is shocking that those who are entrusted with the distribution responsibility have misappropriated a good part of the rice. There are reports also of irregularity in distribution.

There have been 22 incidents of misappropriation of rice in 20 upazilas and as many as 2,832 sacks of rice each containing 50 kg of rice have been recovered in the last fortnight, according to the local administration and police. And only the day before yesterday the Rapid Action Battalion seized all of the 168 sacks of rice, weighing 8,400 kg, meant for open market sales from a house and warehouse of a local Awami League leader in Nandigram upazila of Bogura. Can there be anything more appalling?

Profiteering at the time of a grave national calamity is the worst form of criminal offense. The offenders must be dealt with most severely without any consideration of party affiliation. These incidents also bring to the fore the need for strict monitoring of the distribution of all relief items whether cash or food so that the efforts by the government to mitigate the effects of the crisis are not nullified by such pilferage. Otherwise the needy will suffer.

Boro crops must be harvested on time

Provide labourers with necessary safety gear

ALTHOUGH every year during this time farm labourer from different regions of the country go to the haor areas to harvest boro paddy, this year farmers are facing a labourer crisis to harvest their crops. The fear of the coronavirus infection and the lockdown enforced by the government are the reasons behind this. Although harvesting boro is a major source of income for many of our labourers across the country, this year some are willing to let go of the income while others are either not finding any transport or do not have the money to go to the boro producing areas for work due to the country-wide shutdown. We are concerned because if the boro harvest cannot be started in a week in the haors, either rains or flash floods will destroy the crops.

Since boro is one of the major crops grown in the country, it is crucial to harvest the crops on time to ensure food security. The government should make a proper plan and implement it within a week to ensure that crops are harvested in due time. It has already taken some measures to solve the problems our farmers in the haor areas are facing. The agriculture ministry has allocated Tk 110 crore to help farmers buy harvester machines at a subsidy and is also making special arrangements for transportation of labourers from different districts to the haor areas. Also, the prime minister already announced a stimulus package of Tk 5,000 crore to provide financial assistance to the small and medium farmers, which is commendable.

However, for the time being, the government should focus on boro harvest and solving the labourer crisis. Allocating money to help farmers buy harvester machines will do little to help the small and marginalised farmers. We think, agricultural equipment—combine harvesters, reapers, transplanters, etc.—should be provided to the farmers free of cost. Since even the rich farmers do not want to buy the machines because they only have to use it once a year, bringing the machines from other districts to support them seems like a good idea.

However, there is no alternative to bringing in more labourers to harvest the crops, ensuring that they take proper precautions and are provided with appropriate safety gear. Since there seems to be some confusion regarding transporting labourers from outside the Sylhet region amid shutdown, the ministry should give a proper directive on this. Also, non-agricultural workers of the respective districts who have lost jobs due to the shutdown can be engaged in agricultural work to solve the crisis to some extent. But before doing that, the government should develop a mechanism to oversee that the workers maintain the physical distance and take necessary safety precautions while working in the field.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Help the animals on the streets

I have noticed the terrible state many of the dogs in my neighbourhood are in. And to make matters worse, some people suspect them of carrying and spreading the virus, thereby preventing the possibility of these animals finding shelter. With barely any human interaction, the dogs on the streets are finding it difficult to eat with each passing day. They seem weaker and more helpless. It is evident that they are suffering, one simply needs to look at them to comprehend their state. The situation for these dogs and perhaps many other animals, is dreadful. I therefore, urge the responsible authorities to show some compassion upon these animals so that they could at least be fed and taken care of.

Abu Sayem Khan, by email

TOFAIL AHMED

CORONAVIRUS pandemic has changed not only actions and attitudes but also the doctrines and philosophies of states and economies worldwide. The market doctrinaires and market fundamentalists have overnight converted to state interventionists, the authoritarians and totalitarians showing liberal attitudes and liberal democracies are imposing bans on free movements. These are all the compulsions of the time and fundamentals to existence.

The old classical capitalist attitude towards society is, people are needed for economy and production. People's labour power is more important than their lives. The cleaver and enlightened capitalists since world war two transformed themselves to welfarists for generational supply of labour power for a sustainable productive system of capitalist growth and capitalist reproduction. The recent outbreak of Covid-19 added radically new dimensions to it. Because, it is not only a threat to economy and production, it poses threat to the very existence of Homo Sapiens on the planet irrespective of economic and social positions.

Political stars like first line heir to the British Crown, British Prime Minister, Iranian Ayatollahs to Canadian First lady; film stars, sports stars, business and media stars who are not in the attack and death list! Globally it created a "pandemic war" like situation which may be moving towards a new world order, which is unprecedented in world history of economic crisis, pandemics and wars. No hither to fought wars affected so many countries and states at a time within five months. No pandemic after 1800 CE has been so devastating in terms of spread. A new world order is going to emerge which is creating a new economic order too, may be known as "pandemic driven economic order" for a decade.

The USA may be in the lead. The current US administration declared a two trillion-dollar pandemic package which is about 10 percent of US GDP. The Indian government's initial package is Rs 1.7 lac crore which is 1 percent of their GDP. The great economic minds of India globally famous such as Amartya Sen, Avijit Banerjee, Esther Duflo, Aravind Subramaniam, Kausik Basu, Amit Seru and many others are advising government to increase the package to at least 6-7 lac crore, 4-5 percent of the GDP. Bangladesh also declared a stimuli package of Tk 72,750 crore. All these are initially hesitant or careful steps towards the mitigation of the crisis. Still there are a lot of uncertainties around it.

We have not heard yet any notable statement from Bangladeshi economists, only politicians are making all optimistic and stray comments. TV talk shows are busy airing corona guidance and sporadic talk shows. Philanthropy and donation news are also seen along with community and voluntary initiatives



NAIRUL KHASRU

screening procedures. At one point they started shouting and screaming, some incoherently, others complaining about lack of food and water, uncomfortable environment and inordinate delay in carrying out the procedures, which they felt was unnecessary as they had undergone similar procedures in Rome and Dubai with negative results. The police appeared to handle the situation superbly, managing to calm the group and persuade them to co-operate with the authorities. Thereafter, the appropriate procedures were carried out without any further incidents. The matter should have ended there. But it did not.

Within hours, the foreign minister decided to speak, expressing his strong displeasure at the behaviour of the group, and holding probashis responsible for "importing" coronavirus to Bangladesh. He then added that probashis behave like "nobabzadas" (royalty) whenever they come to Bangladesh. A few days later the state minister for health told the press that a probashi from Italy had come to Bangladesh and then returned to Italy after transmitting coronavirus to his own mother.

Bangladesh is one of the very few countries where coronavirus still appears to be at the containment stage although the number of cases are significantly rising as more people are being tested. Bangladesh, being a part of the global village, has had tens of thousands of people arriving into its territories in the last three months from various destinations through land, air and sea. They include probashis, foreign nationals,

from concerned citizens. I may be wrong and also not properly informed. But our corona responses are too little, too late. We still lack far sightedness and seem unready for long-term consequences. Our stimulus package is industry, production and economy based, not human centred. Garment seems at the centre of our industrial stimulus package which contribute 6 percent to the GDP. The agriculture, rural and urban informal sector, expatriate workers and rest of other industries and services contribute the other 94 percent of the GDP. Growth is important but as a non-economist I believe at this moment, people and people's lives are more important than growth and all medium and long term economic concerns. Our immediate concern is saving lives.



I like to echo here what the world famous economist are suggesting to Indian government. First of all, what they are saying is, growth and economic sustainability is important. There cannot and should not be any trade-off between economy and lives. Economic sustainability is also important for supporting lives. But the crisis of a particular "time" is a very important factor to fix priority. Their advice is, within the next 12 months, economic recovery is possible. At least for the next three months, all efforts need to be devoted to combat the virus with all the possible ways and means and keep the food supply along with supply of other bare basic minimum necessities running. Three month's regimented effort is needed for taking total control of the pandemic crisis.

The Chinese and South Korean experience shows the way in that direction. Our health infrastructure (Bangladeshi) does not match theirs. We live under a very fragile health care situation. We have village based

community clinics, union health centres, Upazlia health complexes, district level hospitals and medical colleges. Eighty percent investments of health are contributed in buildings and ninety percent revenues are spent on salaries. Real health service capacity is under scrutiny. Rich people do not take treatment here, middle class depends on private sector, and part of the poor only depend on public hospitals and clinics. Under the above circumstances, we have to have quick assessment of our capacity in terms of means, materials and health professionals (which include doctor, nurses, medical technologist, hospital beds, ICU, ventilation facilities, etc.) and the demands of the crisis. The whole nation needs to be mobilised under a single agenda, i.e. combating the

coronavirus. The health professionals here are the front line fighters. They are the infantries, the artillery, armour, supply, signal, all have to be in their support. The general administration, police, army, politicians, local government leaders, all should be in the second line in support of the frontline. On the other hand, community management is another front which has to be strictly managed.

The four priority actions at this moment though late, but better late than never, are suggested for consideration of the government and the people: i) Completely lockdown all the "hotspots" for at least one month and restrict indiscriminate movement everywhere; ii) Massive efforts for identification through proper tests and separation and treatment of identified patients; iii) Ensuring food and other necessities at the door step of the needy; and iv) Procurement of medical essentials and their supply and utilisation (equipment and medicines) in all competent hospitals and health outposts.

The relaxation in people's movements

Demonising of probashis has damaged Bangladesh's efforts to contain coronavirus

ON March 14, a group of probashis (expatriates), arriving from Italy, were transferred to a local facility to go through the government's newly initiated coronavirus

screening procedures. At one point they started shouting and screaming, some incoherently, others complaining about lack of food and water, uncomfortable environment and inordinate delay in carrying out the procedures, which they felt was unnecessary as they had undergone similar procedures in Rome and Dubai with negative results. The police appeared to handle the situation superbly, managing to calm the group and persuade them to co-operate with the authorities. Thereafter, the appropriate procedures were carried out without any further incidents. The matter should have ended there. But it did not.

Within hours, the foreign minister decided to speak, expressing his strong displeasure at the behaviour of the group, and holding probashis responsible for "importing" coronavirus to Bangladesh. He then added that probashis behave like "nobabzadas" (royalty) whenever they come to Bangladesh. A few days later the state minister for health told the press that a probashi from Italy had come to Bangladesh and then returned to Italy after transmitting coronavirus to his own mother.

Bangladesh is one of the very few countries where coronavirus still appears to be at the containment stage although the number of cases are significantly rising as more people are being tested. Bangladesh, being a part of the global village, has had tens of thousands of people arriving into its territories in the last three months from various destinations through land, air and sea. They include probashis, foreign nationals,

sailors, business people, government officials, travellers and so on. Any one of them could unsuspiciously carry the virus and transmit to others, some might even have left the country after unwittingly transmitting it to locals. It is impossible to know how and when the virus was transmitted in Bangladesh as many carriers remain asymptomatic while spreading the virus.

Therefore, if or when coronavirus does spread in Bangladesh it could be for numerous reasons and from numerous sources, some identified others not. In these circumstances using words such as "importing" and pointing a finger at probashis was neither wise nor factually correct. In the same breath, mocking the probashis was not only deeply offensive but also, as it transpires, designed to provoke hatred.

On March 21 the foreign minister announced that the dead bodies of probashis, particularly those who had died abroad of Covid-19, a disease caused by coronavirus, should not be sent to Bangladesh for burial. This was a bewildering announcement.

By then the WHO's guidance on disposing of such dead bodies was well known and governments were burying or cremating them following strict public safety measures with very little contact from the families, let alone allowing them to go through the country's air cargo procedures to be shipped abroad. It must be said that the announcement was not only unnecessary, it was devoid of any empathy for the dead and their families.

There was immediate backlash against probashis on social media. This was followed by numerous reported incidents of threats, verbal abuse and physical aggression on probashis all over the country. They were mocked, abused and spat at. Their properties were vandalised. There are allegations of some law enforcers extracting money from probashis using the threat of torture for, allegedly, not obeying the government's instructions to stay in home quarantine. There have been instances of red flags

being hoisted to identify where probashis live, not dissimilar to the way the fascist thugs were going around identifying Jewish properties in Nazi Germany. There have also been reliable reports of deaths occurring of patients due to hospitals' refusal to treat them simply on accounts of being probashis, even though they were not exhibiting any symptoms of coronavirus.

This probashi bashing campaign has no doubt harmed Bangladesh's efforts to contain coronavirus. The government's clear instructions to all citizens to stay at home, frequently wash hands and

On March 21 the foreign minister announced that the dead bodies of probashis, particularly those who had died abroad of Covid-19, a disease caused by coronavirus, should not be sent to Bangladesh.

maintain social distancing were clouded by the erroneous perception held by many that the probashis were the carriers and spreaders of the virus and only if they were forced out of circulation, everyone else could continue a near normal life. Hence, rather than adhering to the government's instructions to the letter, many were involved in atrocities described above. Many shops and buildings put up signs and instructed security guards not to allow any probashis in, whereas the proper thing, as practised in many countries, would have been to deny entry to anyone who had any recognised symptoms of coronavirus regardless of who they were.

may not be started before mid-May, 2020. Allow limited train movements with half the seat capacity, in the same way domestic airlines by filling half of the seats may start flying and the truck movements with all medical precautions have to be kept going from mid-April. A large truck fleet can be mobilised for the easy movement of goods all over the country. The Chittagong port may operate with its utmost capacity. All offices and educational institutions may start limited operation online after April 15 to keep the country on the move.

In the second line of priorities are the followings: i) Farmers and farm families have to be supported to keep agricultural production flow intact and public procurement of farm products need to be thought of as an option. It is not only rice or paddy, other perishable products as well may be procured to make those available to the people and also to keep control on price. It will be an incentive to sustain growth and employment in agriculture; ii) Natural calamity season is also in the offing, adequate preparation for that is also to be kept in mind; iii) In cities like Dhaka, dengue outbreak has to be kept in check; iv) The greatest Muslim religious occasion Ramadan and Eid festival are going to be observed during the month of April and May. Necessary support and restraint need to be observed in observance of Ramadan and eid; v) Side by side, in dealing with coronavirus, hospitals and doctors have to be separated to treat other critical patients. Current arrangements for advising patients with minor complains through medical hotlines are appropriate measures.

This is the time also to consider massive enhancement of resources for building our health care system. We can also consider spending 4 to 5 percent of our GDP in health care. Government may appoint a taskforce to identify the projects and sectors from where money can be diverted to health. Total safety net budget, PM's special fund, and community and NGO efforts may be directed towards feeding the people in need in the cities and villages. Designing complicated projects with target group is irrelevant under the current situation, especially safety net, anybody and everybody irrespective of former economic status are entitled to have support. Then people will not be desperate to move and stay calm. At this time, we need not be very wise but must act quick and smart in distributing food for the needy. It is not a trade-off, only a crash programme for six months on health and social safety. Economic recovery could be the agenda we will be pursuing from the end of May this year. But for now, saving lives must come first. The economy cannot flourish on the dead bodies of people.

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A verified account of a probashi who returned to England a week or so ago tells an astonishing story. He had arrived in Bangladesh in January 2020 and in early March started a coronavirus awareness campaign in his locality which included advice for people to do their prayers at home rather than at mosque to avoid congregation. This angered some locals. One evening a group of 20 of them marched to his house to tell him that he has coronavirus and therefore he must stay at home at all times or return to England. He pledged to return to England. In his own words: "As soon as I said that, they became euphoric and started shaking hands and hugging each other. I knew that if any one of them had the virus then their behaviour was putting them all at risk. But I was too scared to say that because they would have beaten me up."

The extent of the damage this distraction has caused to the government's containment effort will likely crystallise in the next few weeks. Furthermore, this demonising of probashis has come at a time when many of the 9 million so called remittance fighters are going through an unimaginable level of anxiety and hardship all over the world. Many, alone without families, or resources in coronavirus hotspots around the world, are in daily fear of hunger and death. Reports are now coming in on hourly basis of deaths of probashis in Europe, Middle East, America and other parts of the world, some in the most heart-breaking, loneliest and horrific of circumstances. No word of empathy, compassion or gesture of kindness has been shown towards them from the Bangladesh authorities, except that they are not wanted in Bangladesh dead or alive. The are apparently not included in USD 8.5 billion stimulus package. While these people were hailed as heroes and remittance fighters in good times, if they now feel they have been jettisoned by their own country at the first sign of a crisis, then would they be so wrong?

Nairul Khasru is a British Bangladeshi barrister and a part-time tribunal judge in England.

Magical thinking in the time of Covid-19

This is the first article of a two-part series.

#Research-Mesearch



NADINE SHAANTA MURSHID

OVER the past few weeks, I have heard variations of “I don’t know why but I don’t think Bangladesh will be affected by Covid-19 in the way that other countries have been.” That obvious kind of magical thinking, expressed by a friend, an uncle, and even my mother, is almost endearing; for, it is so clearly an expression of love. And fear. It makes you want to hug them and say, “yes, me too.”

But it’s hard not to fret, especially about the working class who always bear the brunt of disaster. Workers in the global South form the backbone upon which global capitalism is built and billionaires are made. Yet, it is those workers who are treated like cattle that capitalists feel free to herd at will.

It is perhaps no surprise, then, that amid the coronavirus shutdown that the government of Bangladesh consciously termed a “holiday,” presumably to prevent panic and hysteria, workers, mostly migrant, left Dhaka for their homes in the village. In direct conflict with the government’s shutdown protocol, the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) asked workers to return to work, threatening their mostly female workers with nonpayment of their wages and termination if they did not return to work. That absent transportation, hundreds of these workers were forced to walk back to the city on foot, is a gendered human rights concern. That BGMEA, upon admonishment by civil-society, withdrew the directive to return to work, expecting workers to then walk back to their village homes, is classic class oppression. That the Home Minister then asked law enforcement to prevent people from entering the city to aide BGMEA’s mission is neoliberalism 101. Indeed, worker exploitation and oppression are inherent to neoliberalism.

That amid this fiasco, workers received limited messaging about the deadly virus and that no effort was made to keep workers safe from it as they travelled back to Dhaka make clear that there is no concern for their lives.

The only concern is for the labour that they can collectively provide to fill the pockets of those who “own” them. This is not merely irresponsible; this is gross negligence on the part of BGMEA, signalling an enduring modus operandi akin to slavery. If these workers die in the coming weeks, who will take responsibility?

This debacle regarding garment workers in Bangladesh is but one of a host of other problems that are specific to the global South: inaccurately reported numbers of Covid-19 related deaths; growing stigma resulting in rejection of patients suspected of being infected with Covid-19; and, inadequate measures to prevent spread of the virus.

We already know that social distancing, or physical distancing as we’ve been calling it to centre social solidarity amid the crisis, is a luxury that few can afford. Further, it appears that such protocols may deepen existing social and economic disparities, particularly in countries where much of the population live in informal settlements or slums.

Physical distancing, as such, has to be applied differently in densely populated locations: not individually, but by communities—*bostis, paras, mohollas*, neighbourhoods, even villages, if need be, to curb transmission from one locality to another. Each unit, ideally, should have its own designated clinic for Covid-19 patients, which, absent reliable testing, should treat everyone with Covid-19 symptoms as infected, trace their contacts, and quarantine everyone, while those with severe symptoms should be hospitalised. Testing has been unreliable in many locations and serve as a warning for countries that are behind in the pandemic, as they plan to prevent transmission of infection.

That raises the question of preparedness. Bangladesh’s medical and health infrastructure remains underequipped to handle a pandemic. It should be stated unequivocally that Bangladesh does not have the capacity to treat severe cases of Covid-19 given the nation’s limited number of ventilators they have—one for every 340,000. Clearly, there is a need to acquire ventilators. Multilateral aid agencies and international organisations, the United Nations in particular, that forced countries like Bangladesh to adopt neoliberal policies

(such as, privatisation and deregulation) must bear responsibility for providing assistance to ramp up medical infrastructure to tackle this pandemic. That the World Bank has approved USD 100 million in financing for Bangladesh to respond to Covid-19 is a promising start.

On an individual level, wearing masks is a practical way to curb transmission. Those who *can* isolate themselves should do so as not to unnecessarily burden the health care system. Employers are particularly well-placed to use their discretion to ensure that non-essential work that can be done from home is done from home. Amid limited supply of surgical masks, the Center for Disease Control suggests the use of cloth masks for use in public spaces. But concerns about correct use remain—such masks need to be disinfected after each use, which depends on availability of water and sanitation. People need to be made aware of these risks. Educating people about Covid-19 and preventive measures could still go a long way toward minimising transmission of the virus. One of the key problems with the way the Bangladesh government handled the otherwise effective shutdown was that decisions (such as announcing a holiday)

were made seemingly without informing citizens about Covid-19 and the extent to which they were vulnerable to it.

As the number of Covid-19 cases surge, a crisis looms.

At the time of this writing, three districts and over 50 neighbourhoods across Dhaka have been identified as hotspots and are now under police enforced lockdown. Amid limited testing, we know that this kind of lockdown will have little effect; for the spread to stop, the lockdown has to be enforced across the country, while keeping essential services open.

It is time that Bangladesh seek help from the regional hegemon, India, a country that has long benefited from Bangladesh’s friendship (the Rampal Coal Plant in the Sundarbans come to mind). Given that Bangladesh is surrounded by India on all three sides, it is also in India’s interest to make sure Bangladesh effectively addresses the crisis of Covid-19. Mahindra, an Indian company, is making ventilators; Bangladesh should leverage their friendship to acquire said ventilators. But, given how India has been dealing with the crisis within India—

by utilizing nationalistic tropes of unity, banging pots and pans, and lighting *diyas*, while starving its poor and beating members of marginalised communities amid a lockdown—it’s not clear if India will be able to rise to the occasion and be the true regional superpower that it postures as and save the region from disease and destruction. Perhaps the only viable and able bilateral aid donor at this time is China.

It is when we find ourselves backed up against a wall that we start indulging in magical thinking. I’ve done it, so have others, and none of it is because we don’t know how to think critically. It is because when the world seemingly closes in on us, and our brains start to spin, our hearts try to stabilise us, even if in the form of false hope. And there are a lot of (false) hope out there. A study by Qasim Bukhari and Yusuf Jameel, and another by Chin and colleagues, suggest that the virus may slow down in humid or hot conditions. Another study suggests that the BCG vaccine may be protective against Covid-19. These are all possibilities, not proofs. The BCG vaccine is currently undergoing clinical trials as a cure for Covid-19 (as are others). Until trials reveal conclusive positive results about the efficacy of possible cures, this much is clear: there is no magic potion that will make the virus disappear. Not yet.

As such, these studies, while inspiring magical thinking (and perhaps even hope), cannot become excuses for further inaction and shirking of responsibilities—effective public health interventions are *required* to slow down transmission of Covid-19 till we have effective tests and, importantly, vaccines. Said interventions must include direct cash transfers and rationing to ensure food security for workers. Famines occur when the haves hoard everything, leaving nothing for the have-nots. Let us not do that, even if the current crisis (understandably) triggers war-time and famine related trauma. Finally, Bangladesh should *not* take a page out of the United States’ playbook and roll out a plan that primarily benefits corporations and industrialists as if trickle-down economics hasn’t already been debunked.

PHOTO: STAR

Hundreds of people, mostly RMG workers, walking to Dhaka in flocks at Patgram of Mymensingh to resume work.

The Sanders campaign: A requiem

Biden won the battle, but Bernie won the war



ASHFAQUE SWAPAN

“Politics is the art of the possible.” — Otto von Bismarck, German chancellor

AFTER a spirited, valiant battle for the Democratic nomination for US presidential elections in November, Bernie Sanders, a US senator from Vermont, called it a day.

Cheer up, Bernie supporters!

Former US Vice President Joe Biden may be the putative Democratic candidate, but Sanders did himself proud. The proud, octogenarian curmudgeon’s rants against “the billionaires and millionaires” in his trademark thick Brooklyn accent will continue to reverberate in the 2020 campaign.

The Biden campaign is scrambling to woo him. Come November, the US presidential election might go down to the wire. Democrats realise they need every possible vote. Bernie supporters are a critical chunk they can ill afford to lose.

Though my favourite candidate was Elizabeth Warren, a US senator from Massachusetts, I deeply admire and love Bernie and his supporters. I also have to say, with regret, that their campaign was seriously hamstrung, a crucial point to which I shall return.

But first of all, let’s give credit where credit is due. Bernie Sanders put back the soul into the Democratic Party. Gentrified and technocrat-driven in the recent past, the party sometimes seems driven by policies that do not take the measure of how horribly the bottom half of Americans have been

shortchanged in the past few decades. Wealth distribution is obscenely lopsided, benefiting a tiny percentage at the very top of the American socio-economic pyramid.

The economic gap is driven by class and demographics of race and age. No wonder the Sanders campaign managed to really fire up the young. Saddled with huge college loans, facing dismal job prospects and scary health care costs, young people have an acute sensitivity to the inequities of US society.

His overarching indictment of the gross inequity of US society struck a chord with a substantial part of the Democratic electorate. It was backed by specific radical policy prescriptions.

Bernie supporters, stand tall and be proud. His name won’t appear on the November ballot, but expect Biden to incorporate a number of your policy planks, or come really close. And that’s not just to woo you (although there’s a bit of that, too), it’s also because Sanders’ presidential campaigns in 2016 and this year have changed Democratic politics. A publicly-run health system dubbed Medicare-for-all used to be a non-starter; many of this year’s candidates backed it. Ditto for student loan debt forgiveness.

Former US President Barack Obama once said there are two kinds of politics—transactional and transformational. Several decades down, Biden or former

presidential candidate Hillary Clinton may well become historical footnotes; Sanders, on the other hand, could be remembered for his transformational politics.

Now, Bernie supporters, some tough love on how to make that happen.

First, you have to recognise where you screwed up.

Democratic politics is a messy, imperfect business. Integrity, principled commitment to the common good is wondrous. But it’s not enough. At the end of the day, you have to *convince* enough people that your policies are right and you can win. And to do that, you need to be flexible, engage in give and take, cut policy deals here and there.

You can be pure as the driven snow, and become a political martyr. Or you can expand your coalition. My own interactions with the odd expat Bangladeshi who had “felt the Bern” left me sceptical. Passionate and utterly sure of themselves, they were not inclined to brook any compromise at all.

In fact, the Bernie campaign tacitly conceded they could not win a majority. They based their strategy on a plan that expected the non-Bernie primary vote do be divided and their candidate romping hope with 30 percent of the vote.

It did not quite pan out that way.

After the first primaries in Iowa, New Hampshire and Nevada, Bernie supporters were delighted with his performance. Then South Carolina happened. African American voters, a decisive factor in the state, voted overwhelmingly for Biden.

The African American community gets to decide who gets to be the Democratic nominee and I deeply respect that. This proved to be the undoing of Sanders. After an overwhelming win in South Carolina, Biden didn’t look back.

No, Bernie supporters, it was not because the fat cats of the Democratic Party all ganged up against you, because they didn’t. They were still sitting on the fence.

After the primaries in Iowa, New Hampshire and Nevada, the Biden campaign was in its death throes. It had no money and virtually non-existent infrastructure in the vast majority of states. He still won convincingly, sometimes overwhelmingly.

Why did African Americans support Biden? I would speculate two reasons. One is Biden’s unflinching, devoted support of Obama during his presidency. Their second reason, I suspect, is what drew all other non-Bernie players to coalesce against Sanders as well.

I forget which astute analyst made the observation, but he was right on the money—what Biden had going for him was the greatest ever get-out-the-vote incentive for Democrats in recent history, Donald Trump, our current president.

Trump is the king of dirty politics, and he is flush with campaign cash. My feeling is that many primary voters ultimately chose Biden although they liked and admired Bernie. They figured many of “democratic socialist” Bernie’s policy positions—Medicare for all, moratorium on deportations and decriminalising illegal border crossings—would make him easy prey for the Trump campaign.

Biden, though not particularly exciting, seems a much safer bet. For a vast majority of Democrats, defeat of Trump, well, trumps, all other policy considerations.

We will have to wait until November to see if they made the right call.

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Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders addresses supporters during a campaign rally in Denver, Colorado, February 16, 2020.

PHOTO: AFP



NORMAN VINCENT PEALE
(1898-1993)
American religious leader.

The way to happiness: Keep your heart free from hate, your mind from worry. Live simply, expect little, give much. Scatter sunshine, forget self, think of others. Try this for a week and you will be surprised.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS
1 – nova (1960s dance)
6 Sub door
11 “The Tempest” sprite
12 Nebraska city
13 Sports summary
14 To The greatest degree
15 “Scram!”
17 Even score
18 Seattle team
22 Therefore
23 Requisite
27 Layers
29 Model Campbell
30 Movie theater fixture
32 Overtune
33 Natural seasonings

DOWN
1 Tavern
2 Smelter supply
3 Attack command
4 Beaches
5 Greek vowel
6 Sinatra’s birthplace
7 Writer Tan
8 27th president
9 Spiced tea
10 Tortoise’s rival

ACROSS
16 Possess
18 Hardens
19 Rocker Clapton
20 Worrying, according to some
21 Mariners
24 Raggedy Ann, for one
25 Radiate
26 Dance moves
28 Bean container
31 Veto vote
34 Old photo tint
35 Flying toy
36 Computer symbol
37 Uncool fellow
40 Purpose
42 Coral island
43 Had a snack
44 Tennis need

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1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48

YESTERDAY’S ANSWERS

AS C O T A M I S S
P H O N E P O S I T
P I N C E T E R R A
E N M E S H A I M
A T A H I T M E U P
R O N I D E A L S
P H O T O S U N A
S H O W S U P R E D
A R T T O O B A D
L A T T E T O H A R E
A S I A N N I N E R
D E E P S S O A R S

BEETLE BAILEY
BY MORT WALKER



BABY BLUES
BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT





(1) Volunteer of Bidyanondo Foundation spraying disinfectant-mixed water. (2) Women sitting on the ground maintaining social distance and waiting to receive relief supplies from the local police authority. (3) A doctor at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University's Fever Clinic recording details of a patient.

COVID-19: What is it exactly?

RIDWAN ISLAM, PROFESSOR DR EVA RAHMAN KABIR AND PROFESSOR DR HASINA YASMIN



Geographic distribution of Covid-19 cases worldwide, as of 11 April, 2020.

SOURCE: WHO

The usual pace of human life has suddenly come to a halt, thanks to an invisible organism. A novel form of coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, responsible for the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), has completely changed our lives in just a few months. On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) officially declared the COVID-19 as a pandemic. The confirmed cases of COVID-19 have exceeded 1.79 million globally, with a death toll of over 109,654, according to worldometers, as of 12 April, 2020. However, the available data shows a difference in the severity of coronavirus outbreaks between the countries that reacted quickly and decisively with social distancing and preventative measures such as Taiwan, Vietnam, etc., and those that acted late such as Iran, Italy, UK, etc. Scientists all over the world are working very hard to explain why the virus is behaving in such an extreme way.

new people. The novel SARS-CoV-2 has engineered itself to utilise the host body more efficiently that gives it replication and survival advantage. The dying lung cells are sloughed, fill the airways with junk, and the virus gets deep inside. Eventually the lungs get clogged with dead cells and fluid, which makes it extremely difficult to breathe. The virus may progress to infect ACE2-bearing cells in other organs.

As we know, the immune system will fight back in order to get rid of the virus. This causes inflammation and fever. However, in simple terms, our immune system goes crazy in extreme situations. It causes more damage than the virus would do. Blood vessels open up, allowing immune cells to reach the site of infection. Ideally, that is what we want as a defence mechanism. However, if the blood vessels are too leaky, it will fill the lungs with even more fluids. Such an over-reactive immune response leads to a situation called cytokine storm. Cytokine storm leads to more lung damage and eventually develops acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS). Breathing becomes difficult, resulting in lack of oxygen in the body. This was responsible for many deaths in the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic as well as the 2003 SARS outbreak. It is highly probable that the same might be happening in case of COVID-19. During the cytokine storm, immune system loses control and goes on without hitting the right target, resulting in people becoming more susceptible to bacterial infection. In addition, organs other than lungs, such as the heart, may also be affected by the cytokine storm. This might explain why COVID-19 patients develop secondary bacterial infection and multi-organ failure.

The question is why do some people get incredibly sick with the virus, while others do not? Age could be a factor. Elderly people are thought to be more susceptible possibly because of their compromised defence system that cannot start the effective initial response. On the contrary, children are generally found to be less affected as their immune system is less likely to develop the cytokine storm. However, clinical cases suggest no one is safe; everyone is getting affected. This makes the case more complicated and brings into play genetic factors, the viral load one is exposed to, and other microorganisms present in the individual's body.

The *New England Journal of Medicine* has published a report on SARS-CoV-2's stability on surface and in aerosol (air). The study showed that the SARS-CoV-2 can remain stable for more than three hours in aerosol, 72 hours on plastics, 48 hours on stainless steel, 24 hours on cardboard and four hours on copper, allowing the virus to infect more readily. Let us consider R_0 , a parameter that shows the infectability of a virus. The R_0 value of SARS-CoV-2 is around 2.5, meaning one person infects another 2.5 people on average. This is not a small number from the viewpoint of epidemiology. However, this R_0 value of SARS-CoV-2 is lower than that of related diseases such as SARS and MERS. One may wonder then, what is the big deal about SARS-CoV-2? Why are

people so worried?

Most respiratory viruses tend to infect either the upper or lower respiratory tract. An upper-respiratory infection spreads more easily but tends to be milder. On the other hand, a lower-respiratory infection is harder to transmit, but is more severe. However, with the case of the current SARS-CoV-2, different studies show that it seems to infect both upper and lower airways owing to their ability to exploit the host system better. This double-faced nature of this virus explains why it can spread among people before the symptoms even show up. It means the infected person starts shedding and transmitting SARS-CoV-2 while he or she is asymptomatic. This trait of the new virus has made the management and control of the disease very difficult. Perhaps it even transmits while still confined to the upper airways, before making its way deeper and causing severe symptoms. This makes the disease even more severe than related SARS (classic) and MERS diseases because the latter ones were usually transmitted after we could see the symptoms. That is, SARS-CoV-2 is mutated to become a completely different form of virus and causes a disease with different symptoms, spreads and kills more readily.

If you survive COVID-19, it is because your body has learned how to fight the virus. You have produced the antibodies against the pathogen. And if you are willing to share them, you are now someone's new best friend! On March 20, 2020 a team at Johns Hopkins University received FDA approval to try this technique. There is a high probability that it may work. This same technique was used successfully to treat Ebola in 2014. However, the approach carries a risk as well. Antibodies to a virus can make a viral infection worse in some cases, such as with dengue fever. We are yet to know how COVID-19 will react to it.

However, as of now there is no proper solution to COVID-19. The scientists' community is working hard to manage COVID-19. About 70 clinical trials are going on worldwide for developing an effective therapy, including drugs and vaccines. According to WHO, vaccination is one of the most effective ways to prevent diseases. A vaccine helps the body's immune system produce antibodies, a special protein (immunoglobulin) to recognise and fight pathogens like viruses or bacteria, which then keeps us safe from the diseases they cause. Some people may be wondering why it is taking so much time to develop "just" a vaccine. There are three basic steps: vaccine development, testing for its efficacy in human trials, and finally formulating the vaccines in marketable forms. Among these three steps, the first one (development of vaccine) takes the least amount of time, and we are still in that first step! If everything works out, we may have a vaccine for COVID-19 in 9 to 18 months. On 30 March 2020, Johnson & Johnson (NYSE: JNJ) (the Company) announced the selection of a lead COVID-19 vaccine candidate from constructs it has been working on since January 2020; the significant expansion of the

existing partnership between the Janssen Pharmaceutical Companies of Johnson & Johnson and the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA); and the rapid scaling of the Company's manufacturing capacity with the goal of providing global supply of more than one billion doses of a vaccine. The Company expects to initiate human clinical studies of its lead vaccine candidate at the latest by September 2020 and anticipates the first batches of a COVID-19 vaccine could be available for emergency use authorisation in early 2021, a substantially accelerated timeframe in comparison to the typical vaccine development process.

When it comes to drugs that can be used in treating patients with this virus, a recent clinical trial conducted in France indicated that hydroxychloroquine (an anti-malarial drug) in combination with azithromycin (an antibacterial agent) might be an effective therapeutic strategy. FDA has given emergency-use authorisation for hydroxychloroquine sulfate and chloroquine phosphate to treat COVID-19 patients. Hydroxychloroquine hampers the virus' ability to replicate in two ways. Firstly, the drug enters the endosomes within the cells. Endosomes are usually acidic which is necessary for the replication of many viruses including SARS-CoV. The chemical property of the drug increases the pH of the endosomes, making them more basic in nature and thus inhibits viral replication. Secondly, the drug also prevents SARS-CoV from sitting onto ACE2 protein described earlier and hampers the entry of the virus. This stops the ability of the virus to infect. FDA is now undertaking a larger clinical trial of hydroxychloroquine because the reported clinical trial in France was carried out in a "small" cohort. Azithromycin (an antibiotic) was also used in the clinical trial to inhibit any potential secondary infection caused by bacteria in SARS-CoV-2-infected patients. Some studies are also using zinc (Zn), a trace element, and people wonder why. Zn inhibits RNA-dependent RNA polymerase (RdRP) and blocks viral replication. But Zn cannot enter the cell by itself. It requires an ionophore (a carrier) to get inside the cell, such as chloroquine group of drugs. It should be noted that there is currently no FDA approved vaccine or drug for COVID-19. However, antiviral drugs used in influenza such as Favipiravir and Remdesivir and a combination of anti-HIV drugs Lopinavir-Ritonavir are being reported to be promising drug candidates in the treatment of COVID-19. Favipiravir, a patented drug in Japan, has been recently designated for Japan's standard treatment for COVID-19. China has also previously announced the use of Favipiravir to be safe and effective in treating COVID-19 patients.

Although corticosteroid (anti-inflammatory drug) treatment is not routinely recommended to treat SARS-CoV-related pneumonia, according to the new pathological findings of pulmonary edema and hyaline membrane formation, timely and appropriate use of corticosteroids together with ventilator support may be considered for the severe COVID-19 patients to prevent acute

respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS) development, which is thought to be majorly associated with COVID-19 related mortality. In fact, China approved Tocilizumab, an anti-inflammatory drug, to manage their COVID-19 patients. It sounds contradictory since WHO has initially recommended not using ibuprofen, a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug since it has been reported to increase ACE2 production, which is beneficial for the virus since, as we discussed, COVID-19 binds with ACE2 and then enters the body. Thus, in this case ibuprofen's action is not desired. WHO has also recommended discontinuing Captopril (Angiotensin Converting Enzyme, ACE, inhibitors) and Valsartan (Angiotensin Receptor Blockers, ARBs) classes of drugs in hypertensive patients infected with COVID-19. This recommendation was based on animal data. The European Society of Cardiology, however, has highly encouraged the continuation of these drugs in hypertensive patients until enough human data is available to prove the benefits of their discontinuation. The reason is again underlying molecular mechanism. It has been shown in separate studies that discontinuing ACE inhibitors and/or ARBs would, in fact, increase the free ACE2 level in the lungs, which is used by COVID-19 to enter the body. Therefore, discontinuing these drugs may worsen the COVID-19 infection. However, all these studies must be validated before we get an effective therapeutic regimen.

So, the question is, what do we do? Ideally, we need a vaccine that is effective and can be produced in mass. It might take several months. Until we have a vaccine against the novel SARS-CoV-2, self-quarantining is the only measure to be taken to prevent the sharp rise of the viral infection, though this is not easy. "Flattening the curve" also requires extensive monitoring of each individual to keep the infected people away from transmitting the virus further. That is exactly how Singapore and Taiwan initially managed to control the further spread of this deadly disease. We must consult with the health care providers and follow the guidelines provided by the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR). Health care providers can best advise what to do if one has symptoms of COVID-19. For now, the only short-term solution is social distancing and maintaining good hygiene. Social distancing means complete physical isolation and not visiting your loved ones so that you do not put them in a more dangerous situation than yourself. Good hygiene includes washing our hands frequently and properly with soap and water or with an alcohol-based hand sanitiser. The lipid shell of the virus gets ripped apart by soap in 20 seconds of thorough handwashing. If soap and water are not available, using hand rubs is considered to be effective since it destroys the virus. Surfaces also need to be cleaned with disinfectants. FDA has also just announced that devices intended to kill pathogens or microorganisms in the air, such as sterilisers, disinfectant devices, air purifiers, etc., need to be made available which will assist removing this deadly virus from the environment. These are the right things to do to fight COVID-19.

The COVID-19 situation has escalated into an unprecedented global crisis in just a few weeks. It has impacted everyone. Each of us can help stop the spread of COVID-19 by maintaining strict social distancing and good hygiene. Please don't panic. We need to be aware and vigilant to fight this virus.

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Dr Hasina Yasmin is a Professor of the Department of Pharmacy, BRAC University.

COVID-19

Disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus

Novel coronavirus

Coronaviruses are viruses that circulate among animals but some of them are also known to affect humans.

The 2019 novel coronavirus was identified in China at the end of 2019 and is a new strain that has not previously been seen in humans.

Prevention

When visiting affected areas

Avoid contact with sick people

Wash your hands with soap and water

If you develop cough, use a medical face mask

Whenever you travel, apply general hygiene rules

Symptoms

FEVER

COUGH

DIFFICULTY BREATHING

MUSCLE PAIN

TIREDFNESS

Transmission

VIA RESPIRATORY DROPLETS

2-14 days

estimated incubation period

SOURCE: EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR DISEASE PREVENTION AND CONTROL

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Policemen ask people to stay indoors after placing Nobabganj Road in the capital's Lalbagh area on lockdown.



A few children play football on an empty street of Dhaka, near Motijheel yesterday, as the countrywide shutdown continues due to the coronavirus pandemic. Even though people are being implored to stay at home and maintain social distancing, not everyone is paying heed to the plea.

Football sponsors at a loss

AFP, Paris



With stadiums dark, match shirts folded in closets and most players confined at home, football's sponsors have lost all visibility and are growing restless. European clubs are struggling to offer their 'partners' a return on their investments as sport grapples with the coronavirus pandemic. "We're trying to do activities with our players for our sponsors, who are even more demanding since the lockdown. But it's very complicated because of the health crisis," one club marketing manager told AFP.

The stars, the surest way for sponsors to attract an audience, are at home, many back in their native countries. Worse, there are no games for them to play. Matches on TV display the brands on the team jerseys or around the pitch to millions of viewers. At West Ham, one of the sponsors, high-risk finance company Basset & Gold has just gone bankrupt, blaming the coronavirus crisis. Many sponsors are in sectors hit especially hard, such as airlines and hotel and restaurant chains. Some sponsors are beginning to cancel payments. "It's quite obvious that having no more events, everything has to

be suspended, it seems so logical to me. It's a case of force majeure," Marc Vanhove, the boss of the Bistro Regent restaurant chain, which sponsors the Bordeaux shirt, told AFP. The chain suspended its contract, which runs until 2023, he said, "until we have the dates for the resumption". French hotel group Accor, PSG's main sponsor, left open the question of whether it would pay the full amount provided for in its contract (about 50 million euros a year), before saying two days later that it had honoured its commitments. With matches cancelled and some broadcasters, notably in

France, beginning to withhold payments, club finances are already strained. Deloitte said the primary source of revenue for its top five clubs is commercial and averages 49 percent of total revenue. Lower down the Deloitte table, the proportions change. For the clubs placed 16 to 20, 65 percent of revenue comes from broadcasting. One market expert, who did not wish to be named, said that the risks of deserting can outweigh the financial costs, especially for companies "who are doing well" in sectors that are seen to be less affected, such as technology or the food industry.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Ariful longs for home

ANISUR RAHMAN



Swimmer Ariful Islam could have caught a flight to Bangladesh before lockdown was enforced in France early last month, but the 21-year-old decided to stay back there in home quarantine in a bid to keep his family members and others in Bangladesh safe from the coronavirus. Ariful, a member of the national swimming team, has been in France since September, 2018 under the International Olympic Committee's scholarship. The Bangladesh Navy swimmer was preparing himself for the now-postponed Tokyo Olympics, but due to the postponement of the Games, Ariful's scholarship has also been extended by a year. Ariful has been confined inside his apartment in Petit-Couronne of Rouen for the last 30 days along with four other swimmers from African countries. There were others though including a Syrian swimmer, also under the IOC scholarships, who left the apartment just a day before the announcement of lockdown.

"I could have left France early last month before the lockdown but I didn't do so as it would have been bad for Bangladesh and my family had I carried the virus," Ariful told The Daily Star over phone from France. "I'm bored at home as I was used to doing training every day. I wish I could return home to my mother, father, brothers and sister even though the situation in Bangladesh is deteriorating every day. But then again there is no scope of returning as all flights are closed," Ariful said. The lad from Kishoreganj had a scare when a neighbour contracted COVID-19, but he kept himself calm. "Last month, a woman got infected close to our building and I was a bit scared about the incident. May be she came back after being cured. The elderly citizens above 56 years in France are most affected by the coronavirus. We have to accept the current situation and stay strong to keep the virus away," said Ariful. Even during these times, Ariful is keeping himself busy with cooking. "I go to the kitchen market once a week on government vehicle with government permission. Though I used to cook only on Saturdays and Sundays earlier, now I'm cooking every

day. And I have been cooking better and better," said the former BKSP student. In the last South Asian Games in Nepal, Ariful won two silver medals and a bronze medal, thanks to the improvement in his timing during his one-and-a-half year's training in France. The swimmer claimed he has improved his 100m breaststroke timing to 1.20 minutes (SA Games timing) from 1.70 minutes (in 2018) while his 50m breaststroke timing has improved to 28.19 seconds from 30.2 seconds. The swimmer informed that the IOC, Bangladesh Olympic Association and Bangladesh Swimming Federation are in regular contact with him while he is keeping in touch with his family and advising them to stay at home. Ariful last came to Bangladesh at the end of December last year before leaving for France on February 2. He is planning to return home, subject to the improvement of the situations in both France and Bangladesh.



Chappell draws 'lessons from Tendulkar, Redpat'

PTI



Former Australia captain Ian Chappell has compared the ongoing pandemic with a five-day game, saying the need of the hour is to display patience, determination and initiative to tide over the crisis. Chappell cited the example of two "influential innings" of Sachin Tendulkar and fellow Australian opener Ian Redpat, which according to him displayed all the three qualities needed to bail out of the current situation. "With the Covid-19 pandemic biting hard, citizens of all countries are being asked to display - among other attributes - patience, determination, and a bit of initiative. These are qualities essential to playing Test cricket at a high level," Chappell wrote in a column for espnricinfo.com. "To highlight the point I've chosen two particularly influential innings. The first one is a Sachin Tendulkar masterpiece in Chennai in 1998 [against Australia]. His brilliant second-innings 155 won the Test, but it wouldn't have happened without the initiative displayed by Tendulkar in the lead-up to the series. Chappell rates that innings as one of the best of Tendulkar and said the master blaster's initiative and determination stood out. The other innings which stood out in Chappell's memory in this context was that of Redpath against the West Indies at the MCG in 1976. "Combine Tendulkar's initiative and determination with Redpat's patient courage and you have some of the qualities required to survive this devastating pandemic," the 76-year-old signed off.

Moss dies at age 90

AFP, London

Motorsport great Stirling Moss has died aged 90 following a long illness, the British driver's wife announced Sunday. "It was one lap too many," Susie Moss told Britain's Press Association. "He just closed his eyes." Although Moss never won the Formula One title, he finished runner-up four times and third three times. In an era where it was common for drivers to race in different disciplines, a 14-year career saw Moss win 212 of the 529 races he entered. In Formula One, Moss won 16 Grand Prix. But such was the enduring fame of the debonair driver that, for decades afterwards, the rhetorical phrase "Who do you think you are, Stirling Moss?" was supposedly the standard question all British policemen asked speeding motorists. "Yes a policeman did once ask me," Moss told the Daily Telegraph in a 2012 interview. "But I couldn't work out if he was taking the mick."

'In 1971, we could see the enemy'

EKUSH TAPADER

On February 26, 1971, with political turmoil at its peak and the two states -- East and West -- of the then Pakistan on the verge of civil war, a rebellious Roqibul Hasan, the only cricketer from the East amid the 10 other cricketers from the dominating West, was cheered when he walked onto the ground with a 'Joy Bangla' sticker on his bat to play for Pakistan in an unofficial Test against an International XI at the Dacca Stadium. Roqibul could only make a solitary run in both innings, but the 18-year-old knew that he would have to fight a different kind of war to survive and keep his hopes of playing cricket in the future alive. He realised he would have to fight a war that was beyond bat and ball, a war that would last for the coming nine months and see the birth of a new nation: Bangladesh. For those nine months, the sporting activities throughout the



Roqibul Hassan batting against the touring International Eleven on 26th February, 1971 with the 'Joy Bangla' sticker on his bat.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

We cannot be hopeless if we want to live. I fought during 1971 and I will fight again. I will say this on behalf of the athletes -- we will fight it. Sports people are fighters. They play the game to win according to the rules. We fight, go out and kick out the enemy.

ROQUIBUL HASSAN

nation were halted as the whole country was at war, fighting for liberation. Fast forward 49 years and a lot of similarities can be found. For the past few weeks, all sporting events in the country and around the globe have been halted as the whole world fights one common enemy -- coronavirus. Roqibul, who was one of those who fought and won the liberation war back in 1971 for the country, tried to identify the similarities and differences between the two struggles so far apart in the timeline while sharing his story with The Daily Star. No sporting events were being held back in 1971 just as it is the scenario now. Then, many were confined indoors while others were

fighting with guns and shells on the streets. Like Roqibul, who had taken part in the Liberation War, a number of players are now doing their bid in the fight against Covid-19. Athletes of all sports are coming forward and making their contributions to help those in need at this perilous time. The biggest example was set by the 27 cricketers, who decided to donate half of their month's salary on March 25 to a government fund fighting the coronavirus pandemic. Is there a similarity between the two times? Former Bangladesh captain Roqibul could find one: "The similarity that I find between the two is that both the wars are against the interest of humans," explained Roqibul. But it is rather the dissimilarities that came to the fore. "The war in 1971 was for freedom which later turned to be a mass war. We responded to the call of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and participated in the Liberation War. But back then we could see the enemy we were fighting against. But now the war is not between two states. It is a war against a virus, Covid-19, that has made the whole world come to a standstill. This is not

only the enemy of Bangladesh, nor can we see this foe. This is a huge difference," said Roqibul. In 1971 everything was halted for nine months. In 2020 all activities have once more been postponed but for an uncertain period. While there is this uncertainty regarding the resumption of sporting events, according to Roqibul, everything will not go back to normal all of a sudden even when this period of uncertainty and standstill comes to an end. "We do not know when this fight against coronavirus will end. We don't even know if it will end. I read in a lot of journals that this coronavirus might recur. Maybe after six months we will get the vaccine -- a weapon to fight. But then we will have to fight against the economic downturn caused by the coronavirus pandemic. We may have to be ready for a different type of war in the future," continued Roqibul. The former opener had witnessed the nation's sporting events coming to a halt due to the Liberation War. But seeing the whole world stand still for a virus pandemic is an unexpected scenario for Roqibul. "I have not seen such a situation before. I can not believe the gravity

of the situation when I think about it at home. Maybe something similar to this happened during World War II. It is a great disaster that has taken control over the whole world. I have not witnessed anything like this and I would not want to ever again. I can fight enemies that I can see. But how can I fight the one I can't even see? Maybe we will come up with a weapon to fight this but the human kind are incurring a huge loss in the meanwhile. Humanity will win but maybe at a huge cost," sighed Roqibul. People find inspiration to fight through sport and hence it is more than just entertainment. There are a lot of instances of a team fighting back and winning even after being asked to follow on in a Test. And Roqibul, who played 15 first-class Tests, believed that the world would fight back and defeat the pandemic. "We cannot be hopeless if we want to live. I fought during 1971 and I will fight again. I will say this on behalf of the athletes -- we will fight it. Sports people are fighters. They play the game to win according to the rules. We fight, go out and kick out the enemy," Roqibul ended with an inspiring message to the sports fraternity.



Players of Juventus FC v Real Madrid FC -- two Nicaraguan Premier League clubs -- bump fists before the match in Masaya, Nicaragua on Saturday. Even though sporting activities around the world have been cancelled due to Covid-19, Nicaragua remains one of the very few countries which is still continuing with the football league.

PHOTO: REUTERS



PADMA BRIDGE RAIL LINK PROJECT
IS BEING BUILT WITH BSRM
COUNTRY'S NO. 1 STEEL EXPERT
BSRM building a safer nation



‘We will be begging on the streets’

Jamdani weavers see dark days ahead

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR, back from Narayanganj

Defying the government’s request to stay home to stem the spread of coronavirus, Sharif Hossain left his house in Sonargaon before the crack of dawn last Friday.

In a shopping bag, he carried three Jamdani sarees made by him and his fellow weavers two weeks prior to the shutdown, enforced since March 26.

His destination was the wholesale market of Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) Jamdani palli at Rupganj in Narayanganj.

Though Sharif knew that the market was closed, he wanted to try his luck.

He was desperate to sell the sarees to earn something for the coming weeks and pay wages to his three weavers and three helpers.

For a Friday morning, the otherwise bustling marketplace was starkly deserted, with hardly any buyers. Only a couple of children were playing cricket, a group of four were chit-chatting under a shed and a person was selling masks and alcoholic hand rubs.

“Any other Fridays, I would bring three or four sarees and all would be sold in about only 10 to 15 minutes. But today, I have brought three sarees and sold only one in three and half hours, since I arrived here at 6:00am,” Sharif said in a dismal tone.

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Jamdani looms that are supposed to be working in full swing lie idle in Noapara of Narayanganj ahead of Pahela Baishkh and Eid.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

6 more die showing Covid-19 symptoms

STAR REPORT

At least six people, including two women, died after showing Covid-19-like symptoms in six districts since Saturday afternoon.

Healthcare officials at the respective districts collected samples from them for tests to check whether they were infected with novel coronavirus.

In Netrakona, a 55-year-old man breathed his last with such symptoms at Mohanganj Upazila Health Complex yesterday afternoon.

The victim of Mollickpur village under the upazila returned home from Dhaka around 10 days ago and had been suffering from fever and respiratory problems, said Subir Sarker, resident medical officer of the health complex.

A woman, 34, perished with fever, cold, cough, and respiratory disease at the isolation unit of Kushtia General Hospital yesterday, said Tapas Kumar Sarkar, resident medical officer of the hospital.

In Chuadanga, another woman, 65, died with flu-like symptoms at the isolation unit of Jibonnagar Upazila Health Complex yesterday morning, said Juliet Parwin, upazila health and family planning officer.

A boy, aged 13, died with coronavirus-like symptoms at his village home in Savar yesterday, said Saimul Huda, upazila health and family planning officer.

In Jhenidah, a 60-year-old man lost his life with flu-like symptoms on the way to Kaliganj Upazila Health Complex around 9:00pm on Saturday.

The victim of Khanjapur village under the upazila was suffering from cold, cough, and breathing problems, said Shamima Shirin, upazila health and family planning officer.

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PRAYER TIMING APRIL 13

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4:35 12:45 4:45 6:24 7:45
JAMAAT 5:10 1:15 5:00 6:28 8:15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Europe’s death toll tops 75,000

UK PM leaves hospital; virus mutes Easter celebrations

AFP, Rome

Billions around the world celebrated Easter Sunday from lockdown at home as the European death toll from the virus topped 75,000 despite cautious hope that the pandemic is slowing in the continent.

More than half the world -- over four billion people -- are in lockdown worldwide as governments scramble to halt the pandemic’s deadly march across the globe.

The death toll from the virus soared past 110,000, with more than 1.7 million reported infections globally.

Europe is by far the hardest-hit continent and yesterday marked a grave milestone with more than 75,000 dead, according to an AFP tally.

The United States was quickly emerging as a hotspot as well, and on Saturday marked its own grim landmark: more than 20,000 dead, out of around half a million infected.

The US now has the highest death toll and the most cases out of any country in the world.

In Britain, the death toll continued to mount and fatalities are likely to soon top 10,000.

Virus-stricken Prime Minister Boris

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU’S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

Bangabandhu retains cabinet and defence portfolios



April 13, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

REALLOCATION OF PORTFOLIOS

Prime Minister Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman retains the defence and cabinet affairs after reallocating portfolios among the members of his expanded cabinet today. Among the eight new ministers, Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury has been allocated the portfolio of information and broadcasting while Abdul Mannan will hold the charge of home affairs. Both portfolios were earlier held by the prime minister himself. Bangabandhu will also retain all portfolios other than those distributed among the 22 ministers. INDIA’S SUPPORT FOR WAR CRIMINALS’ TRIALS

Eminent Indian Poet Subhash Mukhopaddhya calls on Bangabandhu on April 13, 1972.



SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Protect your areas from outsiders

Says PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Sunday urged all, including the local administration and people, to protect their respective areas by not allowing outsiders for a few days to prevent the coronavirus spread.

“Everyone, keep your own areas protected. Don’t allow anyone to suddenly enter your areas from outside,” she said.

Hasina said this while delivering her introductory speech in a videoconference from the Gono Bhaban with government officials from 16 districts under the Khulna and Barishal divisions.

She said people had contracted the coronavirus in many places as they moved from one area to another. “So, keep your areas protected -- at least for a few days. No one

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

STAY HOME, STAY WELL

The virtues of going virtual

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

With the countrywide shutdown to curb the spread of coronavirus now in its third week, boredom is likely to set in for a large majority of the population self-isolating at home.

The Covid-19 pandemic has led to the temporary closure of almost all tourist spots and cultural programmes both at home and abroad. All food courts are closed in Bangladesh and many parts of the world to contain the spread of the highly contagious coronavirus.

However, people can still look at museums exhibits, and experience the feel of the theatre from the comfort and safety of their homes.

The National Museum of Natural History in Washington DC, and London’s British Museum are offering online experiences, reports The Guardian. It also reported that people could go to the Disney theme parks through 360-degree virtual tours of parks like Disney World and Disney Land online. People can enjoy the magic of the parks from home. Google’s Arts & Culture section opens a new world to checking out the sights from home. People can visit virtually some of the wonders, including the Taj Mahal, the Eiffel Tower, Sydney Opera House and some others, reports insider.com.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Boisabi limited to indoors

SANJOY KUMAR BARUA and ANVIL CHAKMA

The indigenous communities of the hill tracts will not celebrate their new year amid the coronavirus fears.

There will be no outdoor celebration during “Boisabi”, which precedes the Bangla new year by two days.

People who live in poverty usually earn something during the celebrations by selling different goods, but they will have nothing this year, community leaders said.

Mohon Dewan, a resident of Rangamati’s Rangapani area, said he had some money set aside for the celebrations. But since there will be no festivities, he has given the money to some of his poor neighbours so that they do not have to go hungry on the new year’s eve.

The word Boisabi is an acronym of the words for the festival in languages of the different communities: Boishu of Tripuras, Sangrai of Marmas, Sankran of

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1



When social distancing is strictly advised to contain the spread of coronavirus, a group of people, in desperation for government relief, climb onto a truck and take away supplies, risking exposure. The photo was taken in Jamalpur yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

RMG workers take to streets demanding pay

STAR REPORT

Hundreds of readymade garment factory workers in Savar, Narayanganj and Gazipur took to the streets yesterday demanding wages of the previous month and arrears.

In Savar, hundreds of workers of at least 11 factories demonstrated in front factories in Hamayetpur, Olail, Fulbaria, Rajason and different areas of Ashulia since morning.

Later, many of them stopped the agitation after the authorities of some of the factories assured them of payment of wages within a short time, said Khairul Mamun Mintu, organising secretary of Garment Workers Trade Union Kendra.

The workers were forced to take to the streets amid the countrywide shutdown as some of the garment workers were not paid their wages for the last month, which is supposed to be cleared by the 10th day of the following month, he added.

Many workers are in wretched condition as they are neither getting food assistance nor their wages, the workers’ leader said.

The workers agitated in front of some of the garment factories demanding wages, said inspector Javed Masud of Ashulia Police Station.

“The managers of some of the smaller factories have gone into hiding, but we are looking into the matter”, he said.

Our Savar correspondent could not reach the superintendent of police (SP) and ASP of Industrial Police-1 at their mobile phones.

In Narayanganj, the workers of Abloom Knit Design

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