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# Cautious hope for a few states

Spain eases lockdown as death toll drops; Italy, New York report lowest fatalities

AFP, Madrid

Spain reopened parts of its coronavirus-stricken economy yesterday as slowing death tolls in some of the worst-hit countries boosted hopes the curve may be starting to flatten and lockdown restrictions could soon be eased.

Watched by a world that is keen to temper a brutal pandemic-induced recession, some Spanish factory and construction staff were set to return to work within strict safety guidelines.

However China, where the virus emerged late last year, recorded its highest number of infections in weeks -- most of them imported cases -- as warnings echoed that lifting restrictions too early could unleash a second wave of Covid-19.

French President Emmanuel Macron was set to warn the nation that its lockdown would stay in place for several more weeks at least, while outlining steps for recovery.

More than half of the planet's population is staying home as part of efforts to stem the spread of the virus, which has now killed at least 114,000 people and infected over 1.8 million, overwhelming healthcare systems and crippling the world economy.

Yet there is cautious optimism the virus may have reached its peak.

Spain's death toll fell again yesterday with 517 fatalities, plus the lowest daily figure of new confirmed infections since March 20.

France and the US also saw a drop in daily Covid-19 deaths, along with Italy which reported its lowest fatalities

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A rickshaw-puller, wrapped in a PPE-like dress, transporting two police officials in the capital's Fakirapul who appear to be a lot less cautious than the former. Like the duo, many people roam around the streets of Dhaka disregarding all government directives on social distancing.

PHOTO: RASHED SUMON

STAY HOME, STAY WELL

## Bond better with your children

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Due to the countrywide shutdown to curb the spread of coronavirus, children have been confined to their homes and their daily routines have changed completely all of a sudden.

It is imperative to help children feel settled at home as confinement can be a reason to become restless. Suddenly they cannot meet their schoolmates and friends, which can aggravate the problem.

It has become a tough task for parents to keep children inside the home to protect them from the risk of contracting Covid-19.

Experts said during this crisis period parents should be more patient to make their children understand the situation and of the importance of staying at home.

"Tell your kids that there are some new germs in the environment. We have to stay home and you [children] also have a role to play," said Tanjin Jahan, a

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# Where are the welfare funds?

Transport workers passing tough times amid shutdown get little financial help from unions

TUJIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY and RASHIDUL HASAN

As evening falls, an eerie silence now replaces the usual cacophony of honking buses, hawkers shouting out their wares, and music blaring from sidewalk shops at Gabtoli Bus Terminal.

Around 15 people, seated in a few groups, were gossiping by the array of buses when The Daily Star visited last week. They wore no masks or gloves, and were oblivious to maintaining the recommended social distancing during the coronavirus outbreak.

They were transport workers -- drivers, conductors and helpers -- assigned by their owners to look after the buses that have been at a standstill for more than two weeks now.

"I am here to guard the buses of my owner. He gives me Tk 100 per day as khoraki [daily allowance], which is not enough for three meals," said Rabiul Islam, a helper of Himel Paribahan.

He spends nights inside a bus and eats at local restaurants during the day. His wife and three-year-old daughter are in his village home in Rangpur.

Rabiul used to get Tk 500 for each

round trip and earn between Tk 7,000 and Tk 8,000 per month.

But everything changed after the government suspended operation of all public transport from March 26 to April 4 to slow the spread of coronavirus in the country. The suspension was later extended to April 25.

"I don't know when buses will start operating again. It's not possible to live here for a long time like this. When will the situation become normal?" asked Rabiul.

More than 50 lakh transport workers are living in misery as they have no earnings for the past two weeks. They are usually paid on the basis of the number of trips.

While some like Rabiul are guarding their owners' vehicles, most workers have returned to their village homes.

Although the government kept vehicles carrying goods, including trucks and covered vans, out of purview of the suspension, only few workers operating vehicles carrying daily essentials have jobs as export-import remain halted.

FEDERATION DOING VERY LITTLE

During this ongoing suspension, the

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## Tangail transport workers suffering

MIRZA SHAKIL, Tangail

Several thousand transport workers and their families in Tangail have been passing days in hardship since bus services were suspended on March 26.

Movement of non-emergency vehicles were suspended on that day as part of the country's ongoing efforts to contain the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The transport workers, including drivers and their assistants, employed by bus operators, usually do not get any fixed salary. Instead, they are paid a cut of earnings from total trips a bus makes each day. There are nearly 1,000 buses under different owners and operators in Tangail.

No one, not even the owners' association or the workers' union, came forward to help them out in this time of distress, said transport workers.

Many of them, looking dejected, were seen sitting around in Tangail New Bus Terminal complex last

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Transport workers passing an idle time as the government has imposed a countrywide shutdown to contain the spread of coronavirus. The photo was taken at Gabtoli Bus Terminal, one of the busiest terminals in the country.

PHOTO: STAR

## FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

# 'Rebuild Shonar Bangla'



Bangabandhu addressing the members of the Awami League parliamentary party on April 9, 1972.

April 14, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

### BANGABANDHU'S NEW YEAR APPEAL

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman today calls upon the people irrespective of their political opinion, cast or creed to take a determined vow to dedicate themselves to the welfare of the suffering masses of Bangladesh. In a message to the nation on the eve of Pohela Boishakh, the prime minister says, "Let this be our new year's pledge that Bangladesh must be built as Shonar Bangla."

The prime minister says that the Bangla year 1378 (1971 Gregorian) will remain forever bright and unforgettable in human history because this year

Bangladesh carved its place on the world map at the cost of three million lives. After a long 25 years of struggle, sacrifice and bloodshed, the green flag with a red orb today flies over Bangladesh, he adds

He calls upon the people, "Let us take a vow in the name of millions of martyrs to dedicate ourselves to the task of building up this country so that we all can keep the honour and sanctity of this flag intact."

The prime minister further says that 75 million people live in Bangladesh on only 56,000 square miles. For all-

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## 7 sent to jail for rape, spreading clip of incident

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A Sirajganj court on Sunday sent seven college students to jail in two cases filed in connection with raping and spreading the video clip of the incident via internet.

Police arrested them after the girl's father lodged the cases on Saturday.

The incident of rape happened around eight months ago, and the video went viral recently.

The victim, a second-year college student, had a relationship with Tanveer Hossain when they studied at a school in Ullapara upazila. After their admission to different colleges, they continued the with relationship, said Mosharraf Hossain, sub-inspector of Ullapara Police Station.

Tanveer, 19, had a physical relations with the girl promising to marry her and videoed the incident

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### PRAYER TIMING APRIL 14

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