

Storm brewing

Experts say, as govt declares entire Bangladesh risk-prone; highest deaths and infections recorded in a single day; 9.2 percent of all samples tested positive

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ten people died from Covid-19 and 341 tested positive in 24 hours till 2:30pm yesterday, with public health experts warning that the country is now going through the third stage of coronavirus transmission when the virus spreads quickly.

This was the highest number of deaths and infections reported so far in a single day.

The death toll now stands at 60 and the total number of detected cases at 1,572. In the 24 hours, 2,019 samples were tested, officials said in a daily bulletin on the country's coronavirus situation.

Overall, 9.2 percent of all samples have tested positive, which is higher compared

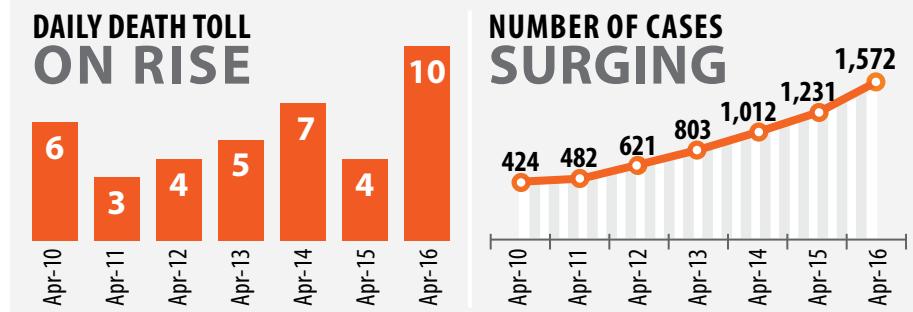
to the countries hit hard by the pandemic, including Italy, Spain and the USA, at a similar stage.

Talking on the issue, Ridwanur Rahman, a renowned medicine and infectious disease specialist, said most of the coronavirus cases in the country were going unreported as "only a small number of samples" were being tested daily.

He also warned of tougher days ahead. He believes the situation was likely to take a turn for the worse as the authorities lost the opportunity to control the situation a long time ago.

"The country now is crossing the third stage of coronavirus transmission. The fourth and final stage is when death cases hit the peak," he said.

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People in protective gear, presumably healthcare employees, watch as a father puts his child, who was tested positive for coronavirus, into an ambulance. The man extending his arms from the vehicle to hold the child is the uncle. The risk of spreading the virus multiplies due to such practices. The photo was taken on Dhaka Medical College Hospital premises yesterday morning.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Ration cards for 50 lakh more

Says PM; govt mulls engaging retired health workers to serve covid-19 patients

Bss, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the government would bring 50 lakh more poor people under its ration card facilities to provide them with rice at Tk 10 per kg to mitigate their sufferings caused by the coronavirus outbreak.

"Currently, 50 lakh extreme poor and distressed people are getting rice at Tk 10 per kg under the government's ration card facilities. We have taken a decision to bring 50 lakh more such people under the facilities to minimise their hardship in the current situation that has emerged following the Covid-19 outbreak," she said.

The PM was addressing public representatives and officials from nine districts of Dhaka division on the coronavirus situation. She joined the programme through videoconferencing from the Gono Bhaban in the morning.

Hasina said in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak, the government started selling rice at Tk 10 per kg to the poor and distressed people who have no ration cards.

"But problems are being created in the rice distribution and we have postponed the programme for now as some



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On the front line, yet so ostracised

Nurses wanted at hospitals, not wanted back home; facing eviction threats

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and ZYMA ISLAM

Yasmin Islam, a nurse at the surgery ward of Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College and Hospital, received a call from her landlord while she was at work last week.

"If you go to the hospital, you can't come home for a month. And if you come home, you can't go to the hospital for a month," said her landlord from Babar Road in the capital, where Yasmin has been a tenant for one and a half years.

"The problem started when I went to the roof to hang some wet clothes to dry. A member of the landlord's family was there. She told me that I shouldn't come to the roof because I could be carrying the virus," Yasmin said.

She later asked her landlord to talk to the hospital director so that he could be reassured that she was not dealing with coronavirus patients, but he would not hear of it.

"It was heartbreaking because the landlord's sister has cancer and I routinely nurse her for free as a good neighbour."

She has forcefully been going home each day since the day she was asked to leave, and a representative from a nurses' union called Shwadhinota Nurses Parishad spoke to her landlord.

But the landlord has been attempting to tar her character, by accusing her of going out too much. While the community might be sympathetic towards a healthcare employee living alone in the city, there are no feelings to spare for an unmarried girl who "goes out too much", Yasmin told The Daily Star.

Mustafizur Rahman, the central committee president of Shwadhinota Nurses' Parishad, said he was routinely getting complaints from nurses that they were being threatened with eviction.

"A nurse from Kuwait Moitree Hospital's ICU called me at 10:00pm last week. She was saying that her landlord was not letting her in," he said.

"She lives in Shewrapara, which is far from Kuwait Moitree Hospital. She could not even go back to the hospital. I had to

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RMG protest rages on

BGMEA claims wage of 87pc workers disbursed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Salaries of about 87 percent of the garment workers have been disbursed, the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) claimed yesterday as workers staged demonstrations demanding wages in different parts of the country, mostly in the capital and its adjacent districts.

The agitated workers blocked many streets and important highways finding no other means as they are finding it extremely difficult to make ends meet.

The BGMEA, the country's apex association of garment manufacturers, said many of the workers who have taken to the streets were not

Others too risking it all

RASHIDUL HASAN and TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHKARY

While most expecting fathers dream of holding their child for the first time to feel the joy of holding his future in his arms, the reality was very different for one Shariful Islam.

A senior reporter of Jamuna Television, Shariful became the father of a baby girl on April 11.

However, he had to refrain from touching his baby when a nurse showed him his new born.

The journalist's job requires him to be outdoors in the time of the coronavirus outbreak. And so, to keep his baby safe, he instead took a photo in his mobile phone and saw his daughter by zooming into the picture.

"It's all for the safety of my baby girl. As I go outside every day and mix with people, I put all my emotions and feelings aside," he said.

Shariful is among several other professionals who are on the frontlines of the Covid-19 pandemic.

When social media is flooded with different types of rumours, mainstream newspapers, television channels and online news portals are coming up with authentic information, analyses, and suggestions for their readers and viewers to keep safe and stay healthy.

Many reporters, photographers and videographers, especially those working for news channels, have to visit hotspots exposing themselves to the coronavirus. Several TV reporters and staffers have already been infected with the coronavirus.

On the other hand, a huge number of law enforcers are

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5 more die of Covid-19 symptoms

STAR REPORT

At least five people, including two children, died with coronavirus-like symptoms across the country yesterday.

In Sylhet, a 10-year-old girl died yesterday. She was from the city's Upasahar area and was taken to a private hospital in the morning as she had been suffering from flu-like symptoms for a couple of days, reports our Sylhet correspondent.

The hospital referred her to the Coronavirus Isolation Centre of Sylhet Shaheed Shamsuddin Ahmed Hospital, suspecting it to be a Covid-19 case, said Dr Premananda Mandal, civil surgeon of Sylhet.

Later, her family members took her to Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital in the city, where doctors declared her dead.

Meanwhile, at least four people from Chandpur district died after showing similar symptoms in



Workers of Binni Garments Ltd in the capital's Kamalapur demonstrate in front of a police vehicle, demanding what some of them said was last month's salary. Some workers alleged that they went there after the management told them that they would be paid, but the factory gate was found shuttered, inset.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

32 Rohingyas die on drifting boat at sea

Coast Guard rescues 396 more; UN says they were at sea for nearly two months

REUTERS, Dhaka

At least 32 ethnic Rohingya died on a ship that drifted for weeks after it failed to reach Malaysia, officials of the Bangladesh coast guard said yesterday, following the rescue of 396 starving survivors.

For years, Rohingya from Myanmar have boarded boats organised by smugglers in the hope of finding refuge in Southeast Asia, usually making voyages during the dry season from November to March, when the waters are calm.

A human rights group said it believed more boats carrying Muslim-minority Rohingya were adrift at sea, with coronavirus lockdowns in Malaysia and Thailand making it harder for them to find refuge.

"They were at sea for about two months and were starving," a Bangladesh coastguard official told Reuters in a message, adding that the ship was brought to shore late on Wednesday.

The 396 survivors would be handed to the U.N. refugee agency, said the official, who had initially said they would be sent to Myanmar. The official also revised the death toll to 32 from 24.

Video images showed a crowd comprised mostly of women and children, some stick-thin and unable to stand, being helped to shore. One emaciated man lay on the sand.

One refugee told a reporter the group had been turned back from Malaysia twice and a fight had broken out onboard between passengers and crew at one point.

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