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Losses when profit was to be made

Batik businesses hit hard amid coronavirus outbreak



MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR back from Narayanganj

Six months ago, Abul Bashar invested around Tk 1.5 lakh in setting up two new 40-yard tables at his home-cum-factory. He was targeting bumper demand of batik clothes ahead of Pahela Baishakh and Eid-ul-Fitr.

He is now resigned to the fact that he will have to write it off as a bad investment, with no chance of getting a return on it, at least in this year.

Bashar already had two other tables of the same length for laying out the fabric for printing. "This is usually our peak season for business. We get a lot of orders and have to finish these amid a tight schedule," said Bashar, who had dark circles under his eyes.

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Woman day labourers, who have not been able to find work in over two weeks, sitting on a footpath in the capital's Badda yesterday, hoping that something would turn up and they would be able to make ends meet.

PHOTO:
ANISUR RAHMAN

Trump plans to ease lockdown

Says virus cases 'passed peak'; WHO warns Europe remains 'in the eye of the storm'

AFP, Washington

President Donald Trump has vowed to unveil plans to reopen the world's top economy, following cautious moves in Europe, claiming the US had "passed the peak" of the coronavirus crisis despite a record daily death toll.

Since emerging in China late last year, the pandemic has turned the world upside down, forcing half of humanity indoors and catapulting the global economy towards a second Great Depression.

The death toll has topped 138,101 with more than two million infected, according to an AFP tally -- with nearly 2,600 dying in the past 24 hours in the US alone.

But a bullish Trump on Wednesday told reporters his "aggressive strategy" against the virus was working and that "the data suggests that nationwide we have passed the peak on new cases".

He promised swift "guidelines" on reopening parts of the country, suggesting less-affected states could ease restrictions before May 1.

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FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

'Bangladesh will always stand by the oppressed people of Vietnam'



A Bhutanese government delegation led by the Bhutanese Foreign Minister Dawa Tsering calls on Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at his official residence.

April 17, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

BHUTANESE DELEGATION CALLS ON BANGABANDHU

A Bhutanese government delegation led by Bhutanese Foreign Minister Dawa Tsering calls on Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman today at his official residence. They present Bangabandhu some traditional handicrafts of their country. Tsering also hands over a letter from the Bhutanese King to Bangabandhu, inviting him to visit Bhutan.



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Coronavirus could cause upheaval across ME
Says Red Cross

REUTERS, GENEVA

Coronavirus outbreaks across the Middle East threaten to shatter the lives of millions of already destitute people in conflict zones, and could fuel socio-economic upheaval, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said yesterday.

Curfews and lockdowns imposed as public health measures to stem spread of the virus are already making it difficult or impossible for many to provide for their families, it said.

The Geneva-based agency called for authorities in the volatile region to prepare for a "potentially devastating aftermath" and a "socio-economic earthquake".

"The Middle East is

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STAY HOME, STAY WELL

Keep your body, mind fresh

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

In the days of shutdown and social distancing, many people are finding it difficult to stay calm and keep anxiety at bay, but proper meditation and practical exercise can be helpful, said a physical education expert.

People should exercise and eat a healthy and balanced diet to keep fit as a strong immune system is an added advantage in the fight against Covid-19, said Jashim Uddin Ahmad, principal of Government College of Physical Education, Dhaka.

He also said people can take brisk exercise, stop smoking, maintain good nutrition and mental health to reduce their chances of becoming severely ill from the virus.

"Any activity is better than none, and more activity provides more physical and mental health benefits," he said.

Jashim suggested that, as many people are working from home, one should take short breaks after 30 minutes working in front of the computer.

"Stair climbing is a very time-efficient way to maintain fitness. So, people can do it," he advised.

The physical education expert suggested that people can do jumping jacks, high knees, butt kicks, for 15 seconds each, then repeat the circuit five to 10 times, depending on individual stamina.

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Workers forced to dismantle ships amid shutdown

MOSTAFA YOUSUF, Chattogram

Dozens of ship-breaking yards in Sitakunda upazila of Chattogram have started operations since yesterday amid the nationwide shutdown that has been imposed by the government to contain coronavirus.

The owners of the yards directed their workers to be at work at a time when the workers were in fear of being affected by coronavirus as one of their co-workers died on 25 February with Covid-19 symptoms in Khagrachhari district.

Mohammad Abu Taher, president of Bangladesh Ship Breakers and Recyclers Association (BSBA), in letter issued on Wednesday asked the yard owners to begin their operations and make sure workers follow health advisory to contain the spread of Covid-19.

Although the government ordered them to shut down their operations following coronavirus outbreak earlier, the ministry of industry gave them go-ahead with ship-breaking operations in a meeting held on Sunday.

The Daily Star obtained a copy of the letter that instructed the association members to follow three health guidelines including health advisory issued by the government, wearing PPE (personal protective equipment), and maintaining social distancing and keep their yards open.

Around five thousand shipbreaking workers got stranded at labor camps in Sitakunda since 24 March when government declared general shutdown.

One of the workers at Jiri Subedar area in Sitakunda upazila preferring anonymity told The Daily Star that there were around

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PRAYER TIMING APRIL 17

Faz Juma Asr Magrib Esha
AZAN 4-35 12:30 4-45 6-24 7-45
JAMAAT 5-10 1-15 5-00 6-28 8-15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Indian hospital segregates patients

AL JAZEERA ONLINE

In what many are calling a case of "apartheid" during a global pandemic, a government-run hospital in Ahmedabad, the main city in the western Indian state of Gujarat, has segregated coronavirus patients based on their religion, claiming the order came from the government.

"Generally, there are separate wards for male and female patients. But here, we have made separate wards for Hindu and Muslim patients. It is a decision of the government and you can ask them," Dr Gunvant H Rathod, the medical superintendent of Ahmedabad Civil Hospital, told The Indian Express newspaper in its report on Wednesday.

The Gujarat state is governed by the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which also governs the country. Narendra Modi was the state's chief minister for



An Indian Paradise, perched on the branch of a mango tree, flexing its wings as if it's rediscovering its confidence, as the humans have been staying inside their homes. The photo was taken last week at Chakzora village in Bogura's Shahjahanpur upazila.

PHOTO: MOSTAFA SHABUJ

More relief rice recovered

Five held in 4 districts

STAR REPORT

In the wake of widespread allegations over theft of rice meant for the poor, law enforcers continue drives to recover such rice.

At least five people were arrested in this connection and 326 sacks of rice were recovered from four districts since Wednesday morning.

In most cases, local Awami League leaders are involved with stealing rice. But for the first time, a BNP man was arrested in Bogura on Wednesday for storing OMS rice at his house.

Since March 30, law enforcers have recovered over 297 tonnes of rice (5,959 sacks containing 50kg each) and arrested 49 people in 46 upazilas in these connections. They also seized 6,480 litres of soya bean oil, 18 sacks of sugar, and 25 sacks of chickpea.

Amid the allegations of relief rice embezzlement, the government has postponed the open market sale and taken an initiative to issue cards for people of lower-income groups across the country to sell them rice at Tk 10.

Our district correspondents report on the drives and the rice recovery.

In Barishal, a Rab team seized 184 sacks of rice from the house of Noor-e-Alam, AL-backed chairman of Kedarpur union in Babuganj upazila, early yesterday.

Jakir Hossain and Rokonuzzaman, two UP members, were sentenced to a month's imprisonment for their involvement with the embezzlement, said Babuganj UNO Suzil Halder, who went to the spot with Rab team as an executive magistrate.

He added that the chairman, along with two brothers, and an OMS dealer went into hiding after the incident.

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