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Your Right to Know

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**BANGLADESH
UPDATE**

312
New cases in 24hrs

2,456
Total cases

91
Deaths

75
Recoveries

**GLOBAL
UPDATE**

162,032
Deaths

2,355,676
Total cases

WORRIES OVER BORO HARVEST

Flash floods may deal a double blow

RASHIDUL HASAN and TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Farmers in the haor region of Sylhet may have to count losses due to damages by flash floods, forecast for later this week, right at the beginning of boro harvest.

The vast lowlands in the regions are a major source of rice for the entire country, and the damages could affect the national supply, experts fear.

The rice growers have already suffered a blow because of coronavirus restrictions.

Flood Forecasting and Warning Center (FFWC) on Friday said the northeastern region and many areas of India's Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura states may witness moderate and heavy rains between April 17 and 24.

As a result, water levels in four of the local rivers may cross the danger level and cause flash floods in parts of Sylhet, Sunamganj, Moulvibazar and Habiganj districts, it warned. At least 11 rivers in the region may swell.

FFWC in a bulletin yesterday said water levels at 30 of 39 points being monitored have been on the rise.

Meanwhile, only about 10 percent of the harvesting was done until yesterday, said Srinibas Debnath, additional director at Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in Sylhet division.

Paddy was cultivated on 4,74,195 hectares of land in the region this year, he said, adding that the boro harvest season had begun last week and would probably continue until the first week of next month, he told The Daily Star yesterday.

The farmers have already been complaining of shortages of workers due

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As the sun shines after two days of rain, farmers in Putamara haor area of Sylhet Sadar rush to harvest paddy. Boro is the only harvested crop in the area and if the farmers fail to save their produce from flood, they face huge losses. *Inset*, a farmer carrying his crops on a boat.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

B'BARIA GATHERING
Health minister blasts the local administration

ASP, 2 other cops withdrawn; people in 8 villages asked to stay home

STAR REPORT

Health Minister Zahid Maleque yesterday slammed the Brahmanbaria administration over the failure to stop the gathering of thousands of people at the namaz-e-janaza of an Islamic party leader ignoring the shutdown.

"We observed the mass gathering in Brahmanbaria where thousands of people assembled at the funeral. At this time, holding such a gathering is very damaging; we fear many people might have contracted [coronavirus]."

"Such an irresponsible incident should not have happened. Here, the administration failed to control the situation," the minister said while briefing the media online over Covid-19 situation.

Ignoring the government orders to maintain social distancing and self-

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Dhaka remains worst-hit region

76pc of total cases are in this division; 312 new infections recorded, 7 die in last 24 hours

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country yesterday recorded 312 confirmed cases of Covid-19 with seven deaths due to the disease.

The total number of infected patients rose to 2,456 while the death toll reached 91, health minister Zahid Maleque said in a bulletin from his residence.

Later, Prof Nasima Sultana, additional director of the directorate general of health services, shared her analysis on the new deaths and cases.

The capital has been the country's worst affected region with 44 percent new cases being reported here, followed by Narayanganj with 31 percent, she said.

Till now, 1,869 confirmed cases, which is 76 percent of the total infected population, have been reported in Dhaka division.

Three of the seven deaths were reported in Dhaka, while four in Narayanganj, she said yesterday during the daily bulletin on the coronavirus situation.

Five of the deceased were male and two were female. Age distribution of the deceased, however, was not disclosed in the briefing.

Of the new cases, 66 percent are male and 34 percent female.

Nasima said people aged between 31 and 40 were the worst affected by the outbreak followed by those aged

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REPORTS ON OMS
Case against two editors

Doc served show cause notice over FB post

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Editors of two online news portals have been sued under the controversial Digital Security Act (DSA) after the media outlets ran reports on misappropriation of OMS rice in Thakurgaon's Baliadangi upazila recently.

Mominul Islam Bhasani, president of the upazila unit of Swachhasebak League, filed the case on Friday night against Toufique Imrose Khalidi, editor-in-chief of bdnews24.com, and Mohiuddin Sarker, acting editor of Jagonews24.com, for "deliberately publishing false and defamatory news".

Two Facebook users named Shawan Amin and Rahim Shuvo were also accused in the case filed with Baliadangi Police Station.

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Incentives for those on the front line

Govt to announce 2 months' basic salary, up to Tk 10 lakh insurance for health workers; admin, police staff too to get insurance coverage

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The government will provide two months' basic salary as incentive for doctors and other health workers who are on the front line in the war against Covid-19 pandemic.

The health professionals will also get an insurance coverage of up to Tk 10 lakh.

Government officials and law enforcers, who too are putting their lives at risk to make the ongoing shutdown effective and curb the spread of coronavirus, will get insurance coverage, said a finance ministry proposal.

According to the proposal, if anyone catches the infection, there would be a health insurance coverage of Tk 5 lakh, Tk 7 lakh or Tk 10 lakh depending on ranks, position and grade, said finance ministry officials.

If anyone dies, the amount of the health insurance coverage will be five times higher, said the proposal sent on Saturday to the Prime Minister's Office for Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's approval, the officials added.

They also said that since the government ordered the closure of all offices since March 25 till April 25, doctors, nurses and other health workers, who are working amid this shutdown, will get an incentive worth two months' basic salary.

"We will make an official order soon after we receive the prime minister's approval," a top finance ministry official told The Daily Star.

They estimated that around 50,000 to 55,000 doctors, nurses and other health workers are now fighting against the deadly disease at government hospitals.

In a televised address to the nation, Hasina, on April 13, ahead of Pahela Baishakh, said that doctors, nurses and other health workers are continuing to provide treatment to Covid-19 patients from the front line, ignoring the constraints of resources and the risk of death.

"Yours is a challenging profession," she said.

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The Republic of Korea is a shining example of how to effectively deal with the outbreak of the highly contagious virus Covid-19. In an interview last week, the Korean Republic ambassador to Bangladesh, Hu Kang-il, talks with The Daily Star's Mohammad Al-Masum Molla about how his country has successfully managed the situation so far and how it can extend its support to Bangladesh in this critical juncture.

The 'secret' of South Korea

TDS: What is the current situation in South Korea?

Hu Kang-il: The Covid-19 epidemic in Korea has been largely concentrated in a specific region of the country and within a specific religious group. By quickly identifying those infected through exhaustive testing and aggressively tracking down their contacts to prevent further spread of the virus, the situation in Korea has been much stabilised.

The number of newly confirmed cases per day has shown a sharp decline since hitting a peak at 909 on February 29. Recently, newly confirmed cases per day dropped to around 30, over 50 percent of which were infections from abroad. As of April 13, the cumulative number of Covid-19 patients in Korea recorded is 10,537, with 7,447 recovered and 217 deaths.

We continue to remain vigilant as there are still sporadic infections in some parts of the country as well as confirmed cases coming from overseas.

TDS: What is the secret to the success of effectively containing the spread of the virus?

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Beware of fake news

Impersonators of The Daily Star spreading rumours

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

For the past four months, the global coronavirus pandemic has affected institutions, challenged conventions and presented an ever growing array of problems that need decisive solutions.

In these trying times, The Daily Star's credibility, authenticity and authority as a source of legitimate, verified news are being challenged by rumours and impersonators publishing fake news.

Recently, a page on Facebook titled "Bangladesh Sangbadik Samity" ran rumours about one of our reporters being "Covid-19 positive" and "escaping quarantine".

We urge our readers as well as our esteemed colleagues in the news industry to be watchful of such rumours and keep their trust in us.

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A physician, wearing personal protective equipment (PPE), collecting sample at the Fever Clinic in capital's Shahbagh for coronavirus testing. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

ROW OVER COVID-19 ORIGIN

Wuhan lab denies link

Trump warns China of consequences; Europe virus toll tops 100,000

AFP, Beijing

A laboratory in the Chinese city at ground zero of the global coronavirus outbreak has rejected as "impossible" US theories it is the cradle of the pandemic, as President Donald Trump warned Beijing of consequences if it was "knowingly responsible".

The denial came as the world's top musicians -- from the Rolling Stones to Taylor Swift, Stevie Wonder and teen superstar Billie Eilish -- joined forces for a virtual mega-concert, hoping to spread cheer to billions under lockdown.

The six-hour online event aimed to cultivate a sense of community during a pandemic that has ravaged the global economy and killed at least 157,000 people worldwide, with nearly 2.3 million confirmed infections.

"Was it a mistake that got out of control or was it done deliberately?" Trump said at a White House briefing Saturday, questioning the origins of the disease, which first emerged in the city of Wuhan in December.

"If they were knowingly responsible, yeah, then there should be consequences," he said when asked if China should face repercussions for the pandemic.

The highly contagious disease was likely first transmitted to humans at a market where exotic animals were slaughtered, according to Chinese scientists.

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