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BANGLADESH  
UPDATE492  
New cases in 24hrs2,948  
Total cases101  
Deaths85  
RecoveriesGLOBAL  
UPDATE166,256  
Deaths2,424,419  
Total cases

## Medical frontliners suffering the brunt

*At least 170 doctors, 130 other health workers infected so far; percentage is higher than that in some countries badly hit by pandemic*

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY, WASIM BIN HABIB  
and MOUDUD AHMED SUJAN

The novel coronavirus, which has so far infected 2,948 people across the country, is beginning to take a toll on those who are on the frontline of the fight against it: the doctors.

At least 170 doctors of different government, private and specialised hospitals were infected with Covid-19 till 11:00am yesterday, according to Bangladesh Doctors' Foundation (BDF), a platform of around one lakh doctors and medical students.

"Two of them are now in ICU [intensive care unit]," Nirupam Das, chief administrator of the BDF, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Besides, at least 130 nurses and other health staffers have been infected with the virus, he said, adding that some 400 doctors are kept under institutional and home quarantine.

As per the official count of Covid-19 patients in Bangladesh till Sunday, 12.21 percent are doctors and other health workers compared to 11 percent in the US

and 8.7 percent in Italy, the epicentres of the pandemic, Nirupam pointed out.

In India, 6.2 percent of the coronavirus patients are physicians and health workers, he mentioned.

The main reasons behind the high rate of infection among doctors and other health workers in Bangladesh are "poor quality" of personal protective equipment (PPE) provided to doctors, community transmission and patients' concealment of Covid-19 symptoms, he noted.

Many patients are now being deprived of healthcare services as a good number of doctors have been infected and scores others remain in quarantine. Besides, the wards of the hospitals where these doctors worked have been closed.

"If the government does not take immediate steps to protect them, the challenge of containing the spread of the virus would be stiffer."

**"WE ARE WORRIED"**  
The healthcare professionals involved in the fight against Covid-19 are worried about their exposure to the virus.

"We are at risk of being infected any

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



People line up in front of a studio in the capital's Mirpur Bhashantek yesterday to have their photographs taken. Photos are required for their inclusion in the government's ration card facilities. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on April 16 said 50 lakh more people would be brought under the programme to provide them with rice at Tk 10 per kg.

PHOTO:  
ANISUR RAHMAN

## PM warns of global food shortage

*Calls for producing more, keeping sufficient stock*

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged all concerned to produce more food and keep sufficient stock of food grains in the country to face any possible famine in future.

"There will be a shortage of food due to coronavirus. In future, there may be a global famine," she said.

The PM was addressing public representatives and officials of eight districts of Dhaka and Mymensingh divisions on the coronavirus situation. She joined the programme from the Gono Bhavan through videoconferencing.

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## Grim milestone of 100 deaths

*Record 492 new cases in a single day take the total to 2,948*

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country's Covid-19 death toll hit 101 after the authorities reported that 10 more patients died in 24 hours till 2:30pm yesterday.

A record 492 people tested positive for coronavirus over the same period, taking the total number of detected cases to 2,948, shows data from the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

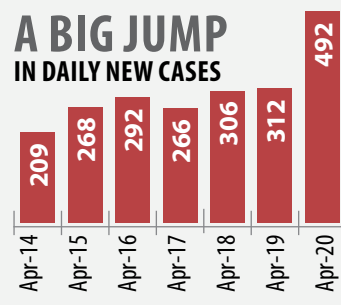
The previous highest number of detected cases for a single day was 312 on Sunday.

A total of 2,779 samples were tested in those 24 hours in 19 labs across the country. The number of tests is 5.5 percent higher than that of the previous day, Prof Nasima Sultana, additional director general (admin) at the DGHS, said at a daily bulletin on the coronavirus situation yesterday.

With it, the total number of Covid-19 tests carried out in the country stood at 26,604.

Meanwhile, 10 more patients recovered in those 24 hours, which brought the total number of cases of recovery to 85, she said.

Prof Nasima said eight of the 10 deceased were males. Five of the 10 were from Dhaka, four from Narayanganj and one from Narsingdi.



SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

## 5 die after showing Covid-19 symptoms

STAR REPORT

At least five people died in different districts from what looked like coronavirus on Sunday night and yesterday.

Two of them travelled from one district to another in recent days with fever and breathing difficulties.

Officials are testing all of them for coronavirus and have placed their homes under lockdown. People who came in contact with them were asked to quarantine themselves.

A 60-year-old man died at Shariatpur Sadar Hospital's isolation unit yesterday morning after suffering from fever and breathing difficulties for a few days, hospital Superintendent Munir Ahmed Khan told The Daily Star.

The man would be buried according to World

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

## Good move amid myriad challenges

*Govt to double Boro paddy procurement amid outbreak but farmers doubt if it will benefit all of them*

PINAKI ROY with ANWAR ALI

The government is taking steps to increase food grain stock and help farmers get fair prices for their produce amid the coronavirus outbreak.

Yet, many fear, this may not benefit all farmers due to the existing procurement process.

This year the government has decided to purchase eight lakh tonnes of Boro paddy at Tk 26 a kg directly from farmers from April 26 onwards and 11.5 lakh tonnes of milled rice --- 10 lakh tonnes parboiled and 1.5 lakh tons sunburnt --- from millers from May 7.

Last year, the procurement was four lakh tonnes of paddy and 14.09 lakh metric tonnes of rice.

The decision to buy more paddy was taken so that farmers do not face loss in their production in this crisis, said Food Minister Sadhan Kumar Majumder.

"We have already issued a circular [last week] for procurement of six lakh tonnes of paddy and 11.5 lakh tonnes of rice in this Boro season," the minister said.



"But the honourable prime minister has directed us to increase it [the purchase quantity] -- to another two lakhs tonnes of Boro paddy," he told The Daily Star on Friday.

**GOOD CROP YIELD**  
This year, the government targeted Boro production in 48.66 lakh hectares of land but actual cultivation occurred in 47.54 lakh hectares. Average yield of Boro rice is four tonnes per hectare, according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

## Bangabandhu killer Moslem 'held in India'

Kolkata media report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former army official Risaldar Moslem Uddin, another convicted killer of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, was reportedly arrested in India, according to reports of some Kolkata-based media.

Moslem, who had long been absconding, was arrested from North 24 Parganas in West Bengal after receiving leads during interrogation of Cpt (sacked) Abdul Majed, another killer of Bangabandhu and who was recently hanged, said the reports, quoting Bangladesh intelligence sources.

However, top officials of Bangladesh Police did not disclose anything officially about the arrest while talking to The Daily Star till filing of this report yesterday evening.

Talking to this correspondent over phone, Mohiul Islam, assistant inspector general of National Central Bureau

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6



A homeless woman with a child is all smiles as she carries food given by a local social worker named Mazharul Islam Sentu in the capital's Dakshin Kamalapur area yesterday. The social worker has been distributing free food among hundreds of such homeless people since March 26 after the coronavirus outbreak hit the country rendering thousands of people jobless.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## COVID-19 TREATMENT

## 'Plasma therapy holds hope'

Pioneer hematologist tells

The Daily Star

PORIMOL PALMA

Convalescent Plasma therapy, which can quickly develop passive immune system of a person against a virus and fight Covid-19, can help save lives from the curse of the novel coronavirus before any vaccine or medicine is developed, a noted hematologist has said.

Medical researches in the US and China as well other studies have found that those who recover from Covid-19 develop neutralising antibody in their blood plasma, said Prof MA Khan of Bone Marrow Transplantation at the Department of Hematology of Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

"This neutralising antibody, if transfused into the body of an infected person, can destroy the virus. As a result, the patient's viral load, fever and inflammation of lung are checked. Thus he can recover early," he told The Daily Star on April 16.

"Transfusion of convalescent plasma which contain neutralising antibody might be used as empirical treatment to develop passive immunity in the patient's body and thus virus cannot affect anymore," said Dr Khan, a pioneering figure of bone marrow transplantation in Bangladesh.

The new therapy, which has undergone successful trials in the US and China, seems holding promise in saving

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1





# Restore mobile data in Rohingya camps

25 rights activists, researchers, dev professionals ask govt

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Twenty five rights activists, researchers and development professionals have urged the government to resume 4G mobile internet inside the Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar to ensure flow of information that could help prevent coronavirus transmission.

The refugees are at high risk of contracting Covid-19 as they live in congested camps, they said, acknowledging that Bangladesh demonstrated humanity by giving shelter to some 1.1 million of them.

The average population density in Bangladesh is 1,116 per square kilometre, but it is 70,000 in the Rohigya camps in Ukhia and Teknaf upazilas, they said in a statement yesterday.

"Though there is a compulsion of maintaining social distance, it is not enforceable properly in the Rohingya camps. Therefore, if somehow there is a Covid-19 outbreak, it will fast spread across the camps as well as the local communities," said the statement.

Despite efforts from government, national and international agencies, there is shortage of water, sanitation and hygiene arrangements in the camps, it added.

It is imperative to cooperate with the aid agencies so they can reach out to the camps both physically and virtually to create awareness on

## Beaten for demanding dues

FROM PAGE 12

the workers under the direction of the factory authorities.

The workers just went to the factory to receive their wages on the day fixed by the authorities, which was yesterday, Billal said, adding that, instead of getting paid, the workers were beaten mercilessly.

"We also filed a written complaint with Dhaka Industrial Police-1 in this regard," he added.

Contacted, Hossen Ali, a member of Savar's Ashulia Union Parishad, denied the allegation of any involvement of his men in the incident.

Razon, manager (Administration) of Elain Appeals Ltd, also denied the allegation made by the workers.

"I do not know who attacked the workers. We informed them [the workers] that the dues will be paid on Tuesday as we did not go to the factory today [yesterday]," he said.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Jan-e-Alam Khan, assistant superintendent of police Dhaka Industrial Police-1, said, "It is unacceptable that outsiders will come and beat up workers. We are looking into the matter."

Meanwhile, at least 1,000 workers of four factories in Savar and Ashulia yesterday demonstrated in front of the factories, demanding their salary for the month of March, according to workers' organisations.

More than 50,000 workers of over 100 garment factories in Chattogram have also not been paid their salaries for March as yet.

Of the 100 factories, 35 are registered with the BGMEA, and 45,000 of the 50,000 workers are employed in those factories.

According to the BGMEA, Industrial Police, Chattogram EPZ and Karnafuli EPZ, more than five lakh workers are working in the 711 garment factories in Chattogram.

At least 100 garments factories have not paid the wages for March till yesterday, despite the labour ministry's order to clear the wages within April 16.

MA Salam, first vice president of the BGMEA, told The Daily Star that a few factories failed to pay salaries because

Covid-19, it said.

The service providers are facing challenges in creating awareness and sharing information because mobile data has been suspended there since September last year, they said.

Some locals have symptoms of Covid-19, but they are not being able to communicate with the officials concerned. Also, it is urgent for the health personnel to learn the information from the Rohingya camps.

"We, therefore, request the Bangladesh government to restore mobile internet service immediately and help prevent the Covid-19 among the Rohingya as well as the local communities."

The rights activists and researchers also expressed concern over the fact that Malaysia and Thailand recently refused to shelter the boats carrying some 500 Rohingyas.

They lauded Bangladesh for rescuing nearly 400 Rohingyas last week after they were refused entry by Malaysian authorities when their boat was in the Malaysian water.

Signatories to the statement include Meghna Guhathakurta, Prof Parveen Hasan, Zafarulla Chowdhury, Manzoor Hasan, Farah Kabir, Shaheen Anam, Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, Mahean Sultan, Rehnuma Ahmed, Swapan Adnan, Noor Khan Liton, Farida Akter and Shireen Huq.

most of the European and American buyers cancelled or postponed their work orders due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Most of the factories will pay the salaries within this week and some may pay at the end of this month, BGMEA officials said, adding the factories that are not members of any organisation are more likely to be late with their payment.

According to the BGMEA, among the 324 of their registered factories in Chattogram, 299 factories have paid the wages for March to their workers by yesterday.

Bin Mesbah, general manager of KEPZ, told The Daily Star that only four factories of the KEPZ area had failed to pay their workers' salary for March until yesterday.

"We contacted the top officials of those factories and they ensured us that they will pay all salaries by April 28," he said.

Md Shahadat Hossain, deputy general manager of CEPZ, said, "We asked 13 factories to pay last month's salaries to their workers within this month. Five of those made the payments today [yesterday]. The rest ensured us that they will pay their workers by April 28."

## Lockdown in 3 Madagascar cities set to ease

AFP, Antananarivo

The coronavirus lockdown imposed in Madagascar's three main cities was to be progressively lifted from yesterday, President Andry Rajoelina said, adding that a Malgache "remedy" for the disease had been successfully tested.

"We are going to progressively re-establish normal life for the people and their means of subsistence," Rajoelina said in a TV address late Sunday.

"We are going to start by doing for it for half a day, in the mornings from 6:00 am to 1:00 pm."

## Plasma therapy

FROM PAGE 1

lives as there is no medicine for Covid-19 available yet, and that the drugs under trial may take months for mass production, the hematologist said.

Presently, only supportive care is given to the Covid-19 patients, and more than 165,903 people have already died worldwide. In Bangladesh, at least a hundred people, including a doctor died with 2,948 confirmed cases found so far.

"The elderly people who are critically ill and health workers could be the priority groups for administration of this plasma therapy, because if doctors and health personnel die due to infection, who will take care of the patients?" said Dr Khan.

It is better to administer the COVID-19 plasma therapy in the initial stage of infection. In that case, its effectiveness level is much higher than that of the critical stage.

"The reason is that initially organism or virus is likely to be much smaller than that of established disease as well check the cytokine storm."

Trials are going on in different states in the US and China to learn of more precision of the plasma therapy.

Plasma therapy was used effectively before the specific treatment was developed for H1N1 influenza (Spanish

virus), Ebola, SARS-1 and MERS virus, he said.

"I have already proposed to the Communicable Disease Control unit of the DG health. If they approve, we need to develop a protocol and then go for administering the therapy as a trial basis initially," he said.

Protocol means the rules of how to collect plasma, its preservation method, how to measure the level of antibody at the donor's plasma, dosing as well as measuring the outcome of the therapy etc.

As there are many patients recovering from Covid-19, it is very much possible to introduce the plasma therapy in Bangladesh, he added.

"What we need to do is to prepare a database of those who recovered from covid-19 and then take their consent for plasma collection. Accordingly, we can collect plasma maintaining the protocol," he said.

There is no legal bar for collecting plasma. It's more or less safe and like the way people donate blood, he said. Any recovered person of 18 to 60 yrs age group with 50kg body weight without diseases like HBV, HCB, HIV, malaria, syphilis can donate plasma.

"People should be inspired to donate plasma. We need to save lives with whatever options available we have," Dr Khan said.



Sitting on a pavement, a group of people waits for a truck of Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) in the capital's Malibagh Raigate area to buy daily essentials at cheaper prices. The truck was scheduled to arrive at 9:30am, but it came 15 minutes after this photo was taken around 12:30pm.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

## Good move amid myriad challenges

FROM PAGE 1

The harvest of Boro, the principal crop of the country, has already begun in haor areas of Mymensingh and Sylhet divisions. In other regions, it will start from early May.

The Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in Sylhet division, the biggest hub of Boro rice cultivation, is expecting 25,83,115 tonnes of yield from the division alone this year.

Farmers harvesting paddy in haor regions are happy with the current yield.

Bidhan Krishna Sarker, a farmer from Khalaijuri upazila in Netrokona cultivated Boro in 20 acres of land.

"I am getting at least 80 to 85 maund (40 kg) of rice per acre. I have not seen such a good production in the last few years," said Bidhan on Friday morning, while cutting paddy in his field.

Mozammel Haque of Mendipur village in the upazila told The Daily Star that he sold one maund of paddy at Tk 780 last week (Tk 19.5 per kg).

"Most farmers in our area have harvested and sold paddy at the rate," he said.

Last year, the price of Boro paddy was below Tk 500 per maund (Tk 12.5 per kg).

**WILL FARMERS BENEFIT?**

The good yield and the government's decision to increase paddy procurement are not reassuring for farmers.

They said the government's procurement process of selecting rice growers through a lottery system often benefits non-farmers such as traders and local political men, instead of small and marginal farmers and sharecroppers.

They alleged that political connection or bribe is often required to make it to the lottery list.

Besides, farmers often cannot bring the moisture content of their freshly cut paddy below 14 percent as required by the government.

Ali Hossain, a farmer in Chalan Beel area, could not sell paddy to the government because of this rule, even though he was selected at the lottery.

He said rice traders, mostly belonging to the ruling party, own facilities where they can dry paddy as per the government criteria.

They buy identity cards from village farmers selected through the lottery, and supply paddy -- bought at a lower price from farmers -- to local depots, mostly located in upazilas headquarters, at the higher rate fixed by the government.

"Last year, the traders bought farmers' cards for Tk 4,000 to Tk 6,000 each," he said, adding that the sales proceeds of the cards are the only profit the farmers get.

When farmers harvest paddy, the grains have a moisture level of 18 percent. After that, even if the paddy is dried several times on farmyards with mud surface, the moisture level does not come down below 16 percent, said an upazila food officer.

"If a farmer does not dry his rice on a concrete surface, it is not possible to reduce the moisture level down to 14 percent. So marginal farmers have to take care of their paddy separately if they want to sell it to a government depot," he said.

"But farmers are often in a hurry to sell their crops. Taking advantage of this, rice mill owners and traders are selling paddy to the government," said a food directorate official, seeking anonymity.

If the moisture content is higher than 14 percent, the paddy weight would fall by at least 1kg per maund (40kg) after a month, he added.

The discrepancy in the purchase weight would then put the official in charge of the local supply depot in trouble, the food official said.

Explaining how the lottery system creates problems in the procurement

process, he said sometimes, the lottery generates names of farmers, who do not have rice to sell or are not willing to sell.

Even then, the farmers are pursued to sell their product because of the system, the food official added.

**POSSIBLE SOLUTION?**

Farmers opine they would benefit if the government buys paddy directly from them by setting up purchasing centres in large paddy haats.

Asked about this, Food Minister Sadhan Chandra Majumder said the government would not be able to buy paddy from a haat at a rate higher than market price.

The government would have to go by the price set by the market if they buy from haats, he said.

"Also, there is the problem of moisture. If we do not maintain the moisture level, the quantity of paddy will reduce after a few days. Also, we have to spend money on transporting rice to the local depot. It is a matter of huge cost," the minister said, questioning who would bear the transportation cost.

Quazi Shahabuddin, former director general of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, welcomed the government's move to increase paddy procurement saying more farmers will benefit from this.

He, however, urged the government to relax the moisture content regulation and accept the loss in weight for the current Boro season.

About buying paddy from haats, Shahabuddin said, it would take some time to eliminate the middlemen involved in the paddy trade.

The government has engaged the International Food Policy Research Institute to come up with the most effective ways of procuring paddy that will benefit farmers, said Akhter Ahmed, country representative of the research organisation.

## the brunt

doctors are from Sir Salimullah Medical College and Mitford Hospital in the capital, and 14 each from Narayanganj Sadar Hospital and

Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib Memorial KPJ Specialized Hospital and Nursing College.

**WHAT AUTHORITIES SAY**

Contacted, Habibur Rahman Khan, additional secretary (admin wing) of the Health Services Division of the health and family welfare ministry, blamed some patients' tendency to hide information about Covid-19 symptoms for the large number of doctors getting infected with the virus.

"This is the reason why the doctors treating patients at general hospitals were affected the most, not the ones working at the hospitals for Covid-19 patients," he told this newspaper.

About the allegation of poor quality of PPEs, he said the PPEs provided by the government are "up to the mark". But taking advantage of the situation, some factories are producing "low quality" PPEs which were provided to doctors by many individuals.

He also mentioned that the health minister had already warned that action would be taken against those factories.

**ENSURE SAFETY: DHE**

Doctors for Health and Environment, an association of doctors, placed a nine-point demand that includes ensuring safety of doctors and other health workers.

In a statement yesterday, the organisation said though the government got enough time to contain the spread of Covid-19, "negligence" and a lack of understanding about the severity of the pandemic are the key reasons behind this "dire situation".

The organisation said it has been giving suggestions to the government from the beginning, but those went unheeded.

It alleged that doctors and other health workers have been deprived of necessary safety gears, resulting in infection among around 200 doctors.

Many people, including doctors, are facing harassment for portraying the real picture of the shortage of safety gears, it mentioned urging the authorities to take steps to stop it.

The platform also demanded that the government take measures to curb corruption in procurement and distribution of medical equipment and relief materials.

## Grim milestone

FROM PAGE 1

Four of the deceased were aged above 60, four between 51 and 60 while two between 41 and 50, she said.

Among the newly-infected patients, 19.5 percent are from Gazipur, 13.5 percent from Kishoreganj and six percent from Narsingdi.

"We see Gazipur as an area with increasing number of cases. Many of the newly infected ones in other districts went there from Dhaka city and Narayanganj," Dr Nasima said.

**ACTION IF MISINFORMATION SPREAD**

In the bulletin, which was aired online, Brig Gen Dr Md Shahidullah, director of the Central Medical Stores Depot, warned of taking action against anyone spreading misinformation on the standard of protective gears the CMSD supplies to hospitals.

"The standard and the prices of all PPEs received by CMSD are fixed by the drug administration. Before those are received, a technical committee of the DGHS examined them. During the distribution, another committee of the CMSD also examines the quality," Shahidullah said.

The CMSD follows the Public Procurement Rule 2008 for this, he said.

He said 70 percent of the protective gowns are produced and supplied by local companies. "These are made as per the DGDA's [Directorate General of Drug Administration] guideline."

Mentioning that there is shortage of N95 masks globally, he said, "No company in Bangladesh can make it. We depend on import and it takes four to seven weeks to reach the country through the sea channel. Via air, it takes 15 days."

"Currently we have one lakh such masks in our stock."

So far, the CMSD has bought protective gears worth Tk 176 core and was distributing gears worth Tk 14.67 lakh every day, he added.

The CMSD, which is under the DGHS, is determined to take legal measures against any person or institution trying to spread rumours regarding its activities and equipment supplied by it, he warned.

## 5 die

FROM PAGE 1

Health Organisation guidelines, he said.

At a tea garden in Moulvibazar's Juri upazila, a 20-year-old man died yesterday morning after suffering from fever, persistent cough and breathing problems for a few days, Upazila Health Officer Samarjit Singha told our correspondent in the district.

Another 20-year-old man died at home in Lakshmipur's Ramgati on Sunday night, our Noakhali correspondent reported quoting Health Officer Abdur Rahman.

He died with fever and breathing problems, Rahman added.

In Kurigram's Ulipur upazila, a 37-year-old man died at home with fever, sore throat, headache and cold on Sunday night.

The man recently travelled to the upazila from Tangail with the symptoms, Civil Surgeon Habibur Rahman of Kurigram told our Lalmonirhat correspondent.

In Dinajpur's Khansama upazila, a 60-year-old brick kiln worker died Sunday evening soon after reaching home from Narsingdi.

He was suffering from fever, cold, cough and breathing problems, UNO Ahmed Mahbub-ul-Islam said, quoting family members.

## Bangabandhu

FROM PAGE 1

of Police Headquarters, said they did not get any information about Moslem's arrest from India yet.

On the other hand, some ruling Awami League leaders on their Facebook posts said Bangabandhu killer Moslem was detained in India.

According to a report of Kolkata-based media, Moslem was living in Thakumagar area of North 24 Parganas. He was running a traditional herbal medicine shop there, identifying himself as Dr Dutta.

Anandabazar, a popular Bangla newspaper in India, reported that Dhaka informed the Indian intelligence that it would be tough for them to take back Moslem to the country after arresting him from India due to the ongoing lockdown.

The Indian intelligence handed over Moslem to the Bangladesh intelligence at an unguarded bordering point after his arrest, it reports, quoting Indian intelligence source.

According to sources, Moslem, along with other Bangabandhu killers, were present on Dhanmondi Road-32 on August 15, 1975, when Bangabandhu and most of his family members were assassinated.

Majed was arrested in the capital's Gabtoli on April 7, claimed Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime Unit of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

He was hanged in Dhaka Central Jail at Keraniganj around 12:01am on April 12.

"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," said Hemayet Uddin Khan, assistant public prosecutor of a Dhaka court.



## 164 stranded Bangladeshis return home

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The first batch of 164 Bangladeshis who were stranded in India for over a month, came home yesterday.

A special charter flight of US-Bangla Airlines carrying them landed at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport at 3:48pm from Chennai, Kamrul Islam, a general manager of the airlines, told The Daily Star.

All were going through health screening at the airport, an official at the airport health desk told this correspondent at 8pm.

US-Bangla is scheduled to operate five more special flights till April 25 from Kolkata and Chennai to bring back other Bangladeshis.

The move came following understanding between the two governments, as several thousand Bangladeshis are stranded in India for over a month. Most of them went there for treatment.



Even though Barisal's International Abdur Rab Serniabat Stadium has remained closed due to the coronavirus outbreak, that didn't stop these boys from finding a way to get in. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

M'SINGH MEDICAL COLLEGE HOSPITAL

## ICU among three units locked down

*Two patients who concealed Covid-19 symptoms test positive*

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

The authorities of Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH) locked down three of its units including the intensive care unit (ICU) on Sunday for a week as two patients tested Covid-19 positive.

Doctors said the patients concealed information about their symptoms.

Hospital sources said a pregnant woman from Jhenigati upazila in Sherpur was admitted to the hospital on Saturday morning and she had caesarean section immediately.

After delivery, the woman started suffering from breathing problems and she was shifted to the lone 10-bed ICU unit of the hospital, the sources said.

Dr Md Saiful Islam, assistant director of MMCH, told The Daily Star yesterday, "In the afternoon, we found out from different sources that there were Covid-19 positive people in her area and we initiated to collect her sample on Saturday afternoon."

"Later on Sunday, the result came from the hospital lab showed that she was infected with coronavirus," said the assistant director.

Against the backdrop, the ICU ward and a unit of labour ward and the operation theatre were locked down, said Dr Saiful Islam, also focal person of Coronavirus Control and Treatment Committee at MMCH.

"The newborn is safe," the doctor said.

Earlier on Friday, a 50-year-old man from Hossainpur

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## First field hospital ready to fight the coronavirus

*The 60-bed centre has 10 ICU beds, 4 ventilators*

MOSTAFA YOUSUF, Ctg

Bangladesh's first field hospital dedicated for Covid-19 patients is set to be inaugurated today in Chattogram's Sitakunda.

Set up at a two-storey building given by Navana Group, the 60-bed hospital in Faujdarhat has 6,500 square feet of space.

A field hospital is a temporary hospital or mobile medical unit that takes care of casualties on-site before they can be safely transported to more permanent facilities.

The site was selected because of its proximity to Bangladesh Institute of Tropical and Infectious Diseases (BITID), the only lab in Chattogram that can test for coronavirus, said Hasan Shahriar Kabir, divisional director of Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Dr Biddut Barua, assistant professor of public health at American International

University Bangladesh, in cooperation with Sajedul Islam, vice chairperson of Navana Group, steered the initiative.

"It's our mission to serve people in a time of crisis. Here, they will be treated not only with medical facilities but also with love and care," said Dr Barua.

The hospital has 10 ICU beds while 10 doctors and 10 nurses will be engaged alongside 25 volunteers.

The volunteers have already received training on how to handle patients and protect themselves, said officials.

The divisional director of DGHS said the hospital was set up ahead of time. "It will start functioning with 60 beds primarily. All staff members are working voluntarily."

Sajid Kabir Saji, one of the volunteers, told The Daily Star he applied at the hospital after learning about the initiative.

COX'S BAZAR

## WFP distributing food to vulnerable families

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

World Food Programme (WFP) has started distributing food to the most vulnerable families in Cox's Bazar impacted by the shutdown due to Covid-19.

Alongside making changes in the food distribution process in the Rohingya camps to mitigate the risk, WFP is working with local government authorities to provide support to the host communities as needed, the UN Food Agency said in a statement yesterday.

"WFP is also supplying food to patients in the government and humanitarian-managed quarantine and isolation facilities in Cox's Bazar," it said.

The supplies include dry food rations for up to 1,500 patients in the isolation facilities and hot meals for up to 3,000 people in the government quarantine centre. These distributions are complementing the ongoing food assistance provided by the government.

"It is great that WFP stands together in solidarity with the people of Cox's Bazar during this critical time," said Deputy Commissioner Md Kamal Hossain.

"The district administration highlights the importance

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

## 160 new isolation beds for Covid-19 patients in Ctg

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Chattogram

With two new hospitals set to start treating covid-19 patients this month, a total of 160 new isolation beds will be added to the existing 150 beds in Chattogram for treating coronavirus positive patients.

Of the two new hospitals, Chattogram Field Hospital -- situated at Faujdarhat of Sitakunda upazila, is all set to go on operation today.

Dr Bidduth Barua, an assistant professor of Department of Public Health at American International University Bangladesh, in assistance with Navana Group steered the initiative.

"We are all set to go for operation on Tuesday. We have got permission from the Ministry of Health," he told this newspaper.

"It will be a 60-bed hospital equipped with five ventilators initially," he said, adding, "Number of beds and accordingly ventilators will be increased in future."

The significance of this hospital is the contribution of common people.

"Many contributed to raise fund... even a rickshaw-puller contributed Tk 20 for the hospital. I salute them all," he said, "It is going to be a common people's hospital."

Meanwhile, Chattogram Private Clinics Owners' Association is going to open another 100-bed hospital in the city for treating covid-19 patients.

Holy Crescent Hospital in Khulshi area is being renovated for this purpose.

A committee has been formed in this regard with mayor of Chattogram City Corporation AJM Nasir Uddin as convener.

Contacted, Dr Liakat Ali, general secretary of Chattogram Private Clinic Owners' Association and member secretary of the committee, said they were expecting to open the hospital on April 25.

"The civil works are almost complete and

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



A mother dog pleadingly stands in front of a shop at Kamalapur, in hope of some food. As the streets of Dhaka remain mostly deserted, animals are going hungry. They can no longer scavenge for food from leftovers, and are more dependent than ever on the kindness of people. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

## Create fund for migrant workers, hard-hit families

*16 organisations appeal to PM*

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sixteen migrant rights bodies and civil society organisations have appealed to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to create a fund for the distressed migrants and their left-behind families affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

In a letter issued yesterday, they called for the government to increase incentives to stop the downward trend in remittance flow, as well as take measures to make sure that migrants are treated with dignity and there is no negative mindset about them.

The letter signed by Dr Tasneem Siddiqui, chair of the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) of Dhaka University, appreciated the government's Tk 72,000-crore stimulus package to support export-oriented industries, Tk 5,000-crore fund for agriculture and Tk 100-crore insurance scheme for the health workers.

"Like all the above groups, migrants working in the Gulf, South-East Asian countries, Europe and America are also your sons and daughters... Migrants are anxiously waiting for your words about them. Us 16 organisations are conveying their plight and expectations to you."

The letter noted that migrants working under 'free visa', undocumented ones, small entrepreneurs, service sector employees in the Middle East as well as a large section of those working in Europe are now mostly jobless and without income.

"Migrants are pleading to you for creating a fund for distressed migrants and their left-behind family members," the letter said.

The government has disbursed funds for assisting migrants both in European as well as in Middle-Eastern countries, while also announcing creation of a Tk 200 crore fund, which is appreciable, it added.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

ASSAULTING JOURNO

## Barishal additional director of DNC, 25 others transferred

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

Twenty-six officials and staffers of Department of Narcotics (DNC) in Barishal division, including its additional director, have been transferred for violation of discipline and administrative practices.

DNC Deputy Director (Administration) Md Mamun signed the transfer order on behalf of DNC's director general on Sunday.

The transfer order, which was published on the department's website, stated that Hafizur Rahman, additional director of DNC in Barishal; three police inspectors, four deputy inspectors, five assistant inspectors, and six constables; one accountant, two office assistants, two drivers, one office support staffer and one wireless operator were to be transferred.

Hafizur, acknowledging the facts, said the order was passed in connection with the incident where a journalist was assaulted on Saturday.

After receiving a complaint, DNC in Barishal temporarily suspended involved staffers, gave them show cause notice, and sent a letter to the head office for taking

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

## AIIB okays \$170m loan to improve sanitation facilities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank has approved a US\$ 170 million loan to improve Bangladesh's sanitation infrastructure, according to a statement.

About 1.5 million residents in Dhaka will benefit from improved sanitation services following the approval of the loan by the AIIB board of directors, says the statement available on Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) website.

The Dhaka Sanitation Improvement project, co-financed with the World Bank, will support government investments in sanitation infrastructure comprising sewerage systems, sewage treatment, and pilot measures for hard-to-reach areas in the Pagla catchment, one of the most densely populated areas of the city.

Children below the age of five and vulnerable households bear the highest burden of poor sanitation through morbidity and the loss of productivity due to water-borne illnesses, it added.

"AIIB is committed to ensuring that its projects improve quality of life for the most vulnerable communities," said AIIB VP (Investment Operations) DJ Pandian.

## Ensure loan support for farmers: rights group

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A consumer rights network yesterday called upon the government to ensure that the country's marginal farmers and pure tenants (those who do not own the land they use) are getting loan support under the stimulus package announced for the agriculture sector to fight the Covid-19 fallout.

On April 12, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina announced the stimulus package of Tk 5,000 crore for small and medium farmers.

As per the government's existing farm loan policy, there is almost no chance for the pure tenants to get loans under the stimulus package. Right to Food Bangladesh (RtFB), a network of different local, national and international NGOs, said in a statement.

Under the farm loan policy, those farmers who do not own arable land will get loan if they can submit an "agreement paper" of their leased land, RtFB said. However, the reality is the country's marginal farmers do not take lease of arable land with making written agreement.

Besides, non-farmer owners of arable land also do not lease out land under written agreement, it added.

The pure tenants are not to blame for this because if owners lease out their arable land under written agreement they have to pay a fee to the government, which the land owners never want, it further said.

RtFB demanded to ensure loan support for marginal farmers and pure tenants under the stimulus package after necessary scrutiny and considering their capacity instead of "written agreement".

Referring to a Bangladesh Bank circular, it said intermediaries in the farm sector will get a comparatively high loan opportunity under the stimulus package, which the rights group termed "unequal and unfair".

Considering the current lockdown situation, it urged the government

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



A family of three goes towards Rampura from Rajarbagh Police Line yesterday, while movement is restricted amid the nationwide shutdown. Not only does the motorbike lack a license plate, but the child is also sitting precariously on her mother's lap, with no face mask on.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



## 160 new

FROM PAGE 3

installation of beds is underway,” he said, adding, “The hospital will be managed in collaboration with the government.”

“A total of 12 ventilators will be set up for treating patients in the hospital,” he said.

Contacted, Dr Faisal Iqbal Chowdhury, general secretary of Bangladesh Medical Association, Chattogram, hailed the initiatives.

“Covid-19 patients should get all sorts of treatment including ICU support in the privately initiated hospitals free of cost,” he said, adding, “I will urge the government to make sure that patients can receive treatment in the hospitals free of cost.”

Dr Bidduth said patients will get treatment in Chattogram Field Hospital free of cost. “We have made a 10-member medical team ready to treat patients,” he said.

Dr Liakat said government would post doctors and health staffers in Holy Crescent Covid Hospital and bear the necessary expenses of maintenance.

Contacted, Dr Hasan Shahriar Kabir, Chattogram divisional director of Directorate General of Health Services, said the patients would be benefited once the two hospitals go on operation.

Meanwhile, a 10-bed ICU is going to open in Chattogram General Hospital by next week.

“A team from Dhaka is now working to set up the ventilators and we expect to open the unit at the end of this week or by next week,” said Dr Asim Kumar Nath, superintendent of the hospital.

Contacted, Chattogram Civil Surgeon Sheikh Fazle Rabbi said trained manpower will be posted in the hospital immediately to run ICU.

## ICU among

FROM PAGE 3

upazila in Kishoreganj was admitted to the hospital for kidney dialysis.

He underwent a dialysis the following day and the doctors found that the patient was suffering from mild fever, said the hospital sources.

Similarly, his sample was collected on that day it and he was tested Covid-19 positive on Sunday, said Dr Saiful Islam.

Later, the lone dialysis unit of the hospital was also locked down, he added.

Both the patients were sent to the nearby Covid-19 isolation ward of SK Hospital under the MMCH, said the physician.

Moreover, around 35 staff members of MMCH and 15 doctors involved in their treatments were asked to be in home quarantine, the doctor added.

## WFP distributing

FROM PAGE 3

of coordination to overcome this crisis. If the lockdown continues, as it is happening throughout the world, the sufferings will multiply soon.

Therefore, the district administration is grateful to WFP for supporting the host community of Cox’s Bazar,” he added.

WFP always believes that a collective effort is the key to dealing with a crisis like the spread of Covid-19, said Richard Ragan, the representative of the UN organisation to Bangladesh.

“Hence, to support people in the host community and in the Rohingya camps we have taken these initiatives alongside the Government of Bangladesh to mitigate the risks and impacts of this virus,” he said.

The distributions began this week and will continue on a monthly basis.

As more funding becomes available, WFP will be able to reach more people with further assistance including unconditional cash transfers, WFP further said in the statement.



**During a time when maintaing distance is essential, commuters are huddled together in rickshaws and three-wheelers, and that too on a road where slow-moving vehicles are illegal. They are just calling in double the trouble. This photo was taken recently from Tongi-Ashulia-Zerabo-EPZ Road.**

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

## Barishal

FROM PAGE 3

departmental action.

Barishal Divisional Commissioner Md Yamin Chowdhury told the Daily Star that the order was passed to maintain official discipline and practices.

On Saturday, defying the lockdown, some staffers of DNC in Barishal drew a crowd of conservancy workers and sold alcohol. At he time, the employees assaulted Kamal Hossain, video journalist of private TV channel Bangla Vision, after he went there to inspect.

## Ensure loan

FROM PAGE 3

to ensure mobility of agro-based labourers from different parts of the country during the Boro season with ensuring their health safety and availability of transportation.

It also demanded that a higher amount of paddy be procured directly from the farmers under government initiative.

It further demanded transparency and accountability in all government and non-government support schemes for farmers including the stimulus package.

The 56-member National Committee of RtFb is chaired by eminent economist and PKSF Chairman Dr Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad.

# Parts of Europe ease virus curbs

FROM PAGE 12

waves of infections, warnings that life will not be back to normal for many months and deep concern over the devastating impact the virus is having on the global economy.

But even the smallest return to normality was welcome.

In the German city of Leipzig, fashion store owner Manuela Fischer said she was “incredibly happy” to be welcoming shoppers again.

In Norway, Silje Skiffell dropped off her boys Isaak and Kasper at a nursery in the north of the capital Oslo.

“He was so excited we had to leave the house early to come here and see the other children,” she said of four-year-old Isaak, her eldest.

“I almost cried, he was so happy to see his friends.”

Governments around the world are mulling how and when to ease lockdowns that have kept more than half of humanity confined to their homes.

The virus has so far infected more than 2.3 million people globally and killed roughly 165,000, with nearly two thirds of the victims in Europe, according to an AFP tally.

Germany, which has been hailed for keeping fatalities low despite a significant number of cases, was allowing smaller shops to reopen in some regions from yesterday.

### HOPEFUL SIGNS

Larger shops and those in major German cities will open later as part of an attempted phased return to a more normal existence that will also see some students go back to school from May 4.

But officials are keeping a watchful eye, with Chancellor Angela Merkel saying yesterday she is “greatly concerned” that virus-fighting discipline among the German public may ebb.

Hard-hit Spain, where a nationwide lockdown has been extended, also said it would ease some restrictions to allow children time outside.

Spain yesterday recorded 399 coronavirus deaths in the last 24 hours, its lowest daily count in weeks, and authorities are starting to shut some makeshift facilities set up to relieve the overburdened health system, including a morgue at a Madrid ice rink.

France, which on Sunday recorded its lowest number of hospital deaths since March 23, also said a nationwide lockdown in force for a month was beginning to bear fruit.

“We are scoring points against the epidemic,” French Prime Minister Edouard Philippe said, adding a strong note of caution.

“To imagine that, because the situation has stopped worsening and is starting to improve, the epidemic is behind us, would be a mistake,” Philippe said.

In Australia, authorities in Sydney reopened three beaches for walking, running, swimming or surfing, while New Zealand announced that it will ease a nationwide lockdown next week, with Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern saying: “We

have stopped a wave of devastation.”

And in the United States -- the country with the highest number of deaths and infections -- the governor of hard-hit New York, Andrew Cuomo, said the outbreak was “on the descent”.

Many governments are anxious to get their countries up and running again, with huge parts of their economies shut down, millions thrown out of work and economists warning of a second Great Depression.

Spain yesterday became the latest country to warn of unprecedented economic hardship, with the Bank of Spain saying the country’s economy could contract by a whopping 13.6 percent this year.

### ANTI-LOCKDOWN PROTESTS

In the United States, which has the more than 759,000 confirmed infections and nearly 41,000 deaths, some are increasingly chafing under stay-at-home orders and are taking to the streets to protest.

Anti-lockdown demonstrations over the weekend drew hundreds of people in several states, including Colorado, Texas, Maryland, New Hampshire and Ohio.

Many waved American flags, and some carried weapons. But others stayed in their cars or wore protective masks.

President Donald Trump fuelled another bout of fury over the weekend by lending support to the protests against the lockdown restrictions -- which medical experts say save countless lives.

In India, absent staff and broken supply chains scuppered efforts by some industries to restart yesterday.

Although the national lockdown has been extended until May 3, officials said certain key sectors could resume operations under strict conditions in a bid to stop the economy from haemorrhaging further.

In Brazil, President Jair Bolsonaro -- who has repeatedly claimed the virus threat is overblown -- joined hundreds of protesters in Brasilia who objected to state governors’ stay-at-home orders.

### A BLEAK RAMADAN

Orthodox Christians meanwhile spent Sunday marking Easter with subdued ceremonies, with churches empty or worshippers forced to stand apart.

Muslims in the Middle East and beyond are also preparing for a bleak Ramadan -- the holiest month in the Islamic calendar -- which begins later this week.

Mosque prayers have been suspended and iftar feasts cancelled in many countries.

Several countries’ religious authorities, including Saudi Arabia’s Grand Mufti Abdulaziz al-Sheikh, have ruled that prayers during Ramadan and Eid be performed at home.

US oil prices dived to 22-year lows at just \$11 yesterday after crashing almost 40 percent in a market flooded with crude and slammed by evaporating demand in the face of the coronavirus pandemic.

Just before 1200 GMT, the US benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude for May delivery tanked to \$11.04 -- the lowest level since 1998.

## Devote

FROM PAGE 12

Pakistan lost 5,400 officers and men in its fight against Mukti Bahini before December 1971 and another 3000 between December 4 and 16 of 1971 in Bangladesh, marking a total of 8,400 killed, according to the Indian Defence Ministry Annual Report. The number of Pakistanis wounded by Mukti Bahini is estimated to be 4,675.

### YAHYA AN USURPER

The Pakistan Supreme Court has ruled that former President Yahya Khan’s assumption of power was an act of “usurpation, illegal and unconstitutional”.

The Court also holds that all legislative and administrative measures except those covered under the doctrine

of necessity taken by Yahya’s unauthorised and unconstitutional regime cannot be upheld on the basis of legitimacy.

### RENEGOTIATION ON BONN-FINANCED

PROJECTS NEEDED

Finance Minister Tajuddin Ahmad today tells the visiting West German economic delegation that renegotiation on the ongoing projects in Bangladesh financed

by West Germany is necessary under the changed circumstances. Renegotiation should be made on common interests

and cooperation, adds the finance minister. The delegation also calls on the Minister for Power and Natural Resources

Dr Mafiz Chowdhury and discusses in detail early re-commissioning and servicing of the West Germany-aided 120MW Ashuganj Power Station

and supply of spare parts for the installation. They also discuss setting up of a training school to train power plant operators and technicians at Ashuganj.

**REGULAR SUPPLY OF CRUDE OIL ENSURED**

To meet the shortage of petroleum products in the country arising out of discontinuance of the contract for supply of crude oil to the Eastern Refinery entered into in

pre-Independence days, the government of Bangladesh earlier arranged one lakh tonnes of crude oil from India as grant-in-aid and now has arranged a further five lakh tonnes through India under normal

trade arrangement, says a government press note.

*SOURCES: April 22, 1972 issues of Bangladesh Observer, Dainik Bangla and Ittefaq*

## First virus death in Nigeria

AFP, Lagos

Nigeria yesterday confirmed its first coronavirus case in the insurgency-hit northeast of the country, a medic with Doctors Without Borders who died from Covid-19.

# 16 murdered, suspect dead

FROM PAGE 12

officers were alerted to shots fired in the town of Portapique, around 100 kilometres (60 miles) from Halifax.

Gun violence in Canada is far less frequent than in the neighbouring United States, and weapons more strictly controlled, but the killings were the country’s worst ever, exceeding the toll in 1989 when a gunman murdered 14 female students at Montreal’s Ecole Polytechnique.

“This is one of the most senseless acts of violence in our province’s history,” said Nova Scotia Premier Stephen McNeil.

Public broadcaster CBC quoted RCMP Commissioner Brenda Lucki as saying police know of at least 16 victims, besides the shooter.

“What has unfolded overnight and into this morning is incomprehensible and many families are experiencing the loss of a loved one,” Nova Scotia RCMP commanding officer, Assistant Commissioner Lee Bergerman, wrote on the force’s local Facebook page.

Bergerman said the dead included Constable Heidi Stevenson, a 23-year veteran of the force.

In addition to Stevenson, a mother of two, a male officer was injured and was in the hospital with non-life threatening injuries, Bergerman said.

The National Post newspaper said another victim was an elementary school teacher, citing a Facebook post from the woman’s sister.

Several victims were discovered both outside and inside a house in Portapique, sparking the manhunt through multiple communities, police said.

# They’re breeding in construction sites

FROM PAGE 12

grounds.

Shahnila also urged everyone to clean their own houses, gardens, roofs and roof gardens to eradicate Aedes mosquitoes, adding that everyone should use mosquito nets while sleeping.

She said they have given instructions to all civil surgeons of districts across the country to also prioritise suspected dengue patients when someone comes to the hospital with a fever.

It does not necessarily mean that a person coming in with fever is infected with Covid-19; the patient could be suffering from dengue as well, she said.

“We have distributed around 44,000 kits to 68 districts to distribute at upazila level in order to diagnose dengue,” she said.

New doctors in upazila hospitals were trained on dengue patient management in January, she added.

According to the DGHS data, 289 dengue-infected patients were hospitalised in different parts of the country since January, of whom 64 were outside Dhaka.

Brig Gen Mominur Rahman Mamun, chief health officer at Dhaka North City Corporation, said they are applying larvicide and adulticide every day.

“The search for the suspect ended this morning when the suspect was located. And I can confirm that he is deceased,” RCMP Chief Superintendent Chris Leather told a press conference.

Leather said that at one point, the suspect appeared to be wearing part of a police uniform and was driving a vehicle made to look like an RCMP cruiser.

### FIRES BURNED

RCMP tweeted several times that he was not an officer and warned he was considered “armed and dangerous.”

“The initial search for the suspect led to multiple sites in the area, including structures that were on fire,” Leather told the news conference.

He said: “There are several locations across the province where persons have been killed.”

Leather said the gunman had exchanged fire with police at one point.

“Our officers were involved in terminating the threat,” he said, adding that the independent Serious Incident Response Team (SIRT), which probes certain incidents involving the province’s police, was now handling that part of the investigation.

SIRT said in a statement that a confrontation had occurred in Enfield, which is near Halifax airport, “resulting in officers discharging their firearms. The suspect was found to be deceased at the scene.”

Police said they had no indication of a motive and that the killer had acted alone.

“We believe it to be one person who’s responsible for all the killings and that he alone moved across the

## Create fund

FROM PAGE 3

Meanwhile, the organisations said some steps undertaken to reduce the spread of coronavirus have unwittingly created a negative mindset against migrants. In cases, they are not allowed to stay in their villages, while some face harassment in accessing medical services.

“Some were attacked or faced extortion. In some localities, burials of deceased migrants were resisted,” the letter said, requesting the PM to issue a compassionate statement and strict directive to the administration to treat migrants with dignity.

They also protested the move by some countries to deport irregular migrants, saying under international law, it is incumbent on the countries to provide protection to all migrants irrespective of status.

The signatories to the letter include RMMRU, WARBE Development Foundation, Bangladesh Ovivashi Mohila Sramik Association, IMA Research Foundation, Manusher Jonno Foundation, Ain O Salish Kendra, Bangladesh Support Group, INAFI, BCWWF, YPSA, BOAF, Bastob, Rights Jessore, Devcom, Film 4 Peace and Change Makers.



## Bandits kill 47 people in north of Nigeria: police

Bandits riding more than 100 motorbikes killed 47 people in coordinated attacks against several farming villages in Katsina State, northern Nigeria, the president's office and local police said Sunday. The mounted raiders carried out "organised and simultaneous attacks" on the villages, Katsina state police spokesman Gambo Isah said in a statement. The predawn raids Saturday targeted villages in the Dutsema, Danmusa and Safana districts, he added. The bandits were thought to be members of criminal gangs specialising in cattle theft and kidnap for ransom in the area. Villagers had put up stiff resistance fighting off an earlier attack, said the police statement. But the gang returned at around 0230 GMT on around 150 motorbikes. They went on a shooting spree in the villages, setting fire to homes, residents had told police.

## Google, Facebook to pay for news content!

Australia will force Google and Facebook to pay media outlets for their content, the government announced yesterday, vowing to lead the world in making the tech giants share lucrative advertising revenues with traditional media. Treasurer Josh Frydenberg said a mandatory code of conduct — to be fully unveiled by July and made law soon after — will require the US-based firms to reimburse Australian media companies for using their news and other content. "It is about holding these tech titans to account, about ensuring genuine competition, (and) it is about delivering a level playing field," Frydenberg said. "It is about keeping jobs in journalism and it is about ensuring a fair outcome for all." Google and Facebook have had a huge impact on Australia's news industry, capturing two-thirds of online advertising spending. In response to falling revenues, Australian news outlets have slashed 20 percent of jobs in the last six years.

## 800 freed Rohingya inmates sent back to Rakhine

Myanmar shipped hundreds of recently released Rohingya inmates back to the country's restive western borderlands yesterday, after fears that its overcrowded prisons could become hotbeds for runaway coronavirus outbreaks. Men, women and children belonging to the stateless and long-persecuted Muslim minority were among nearly 25,000 prisoners freed last week by a presidential pardon to mark the country's April New Year celebrations. A Navy vessel transported the group from Yangon to western Rakhine state, where most Rohingya live under tight movement restrictions and in conditions Amnesty International has condemned as "apartheid". More than 600 disembarked near state capital Sittwe, while another 200 were taken further north to townships on the border with Bangladesh, state immigration department chief Soe Lwin told AFP.



Carola Pessina (foreground) plays tennis with Vittoria Oliveri on the rooftops of their house in Finale Ligure, Liguria Region, northwestern Italy yesterday, during the country's lockdown aimed at stopping the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

PHOTO: AFP

# Dozens killed in fresh wave of Taliban violence

## 23 Afghan troops, 9 civilians among dead

AFP, Kunduz

The Taliban have killed at least 23 Afghan troops and nine civilians, officials said Monday, as a fresh wave of violence grips Afghanistan despite a deal with the US and a worsening coronavirus crisis.

Under the terms of the US-Taliban deal, the Afghan government and the insurgents were by now supposed to have concluded a prisoner exchange and started talks aimed at bringing about a comprehensive ceasefire.

But the stalled prisoner swap has been beset with problems -- with Kabul claiming the Taliban are demanding the release of some of the group's most notorious warriors -- and peace talks seem as elusive ever amid ongoing attacks.

Late Sunday night in Takhar province in northeast Afghanistan, the Taliban struck an Afghan army base, killing 16 soldiers and two policemen, provincial police spokesman Khalil Asir told AFP.

The governor's spokesman, Mohammad Jawad Hejri, confirmed the attack and also blamed the Taliban, putting the death toll at 19.

In the south, the Taliban attacked a police checkpoint near Tarin Kot, the capital of Uruzgan province. "Five Afghan policemen were killed and three others were wounded," Zilgai Ebadi, the provincial governor's spokesman, told AFP.

In the northern province of Balkh, the Taliban killed nine civilians after they resisted when insurgents tried to extort money from them, district governor Sayed Arif Iqbal told AFP.

The violence has mostly been limited to rural areas and small towns. Under the framework of the US-Taliban deal, the insurgents have agreed not to attack cities.

Under the US-Taliban deal, American and other foreign forces are meant to quit Afghanistan by July 2021, provided the Taliban stick to several security guarantees and hold talks with the Afghan government.

Fighting has continued even as coronavirus spreads throughout Afghanistan.

It has so far seen 1,026 cases of coronavirus and 36 deaths, though real numbers are feared to be much higher as the impoverished country has only limited testing capabilities.

## Situation grim in Mumbai, Kolkata

### India reports 1,600 new cases

PTI, NEW DELHI

The Covid-19 situation is "especially serious" in Mumbai, Pune, Indore, Jaipur, Kolkata and a few other places in West Bengal, and violation of lockdown measures risk the spread of the novel coronavirus, the Centre said yesterday.

In a communication to state governments, the home ministry said there have been several incidents of violence against Covid-19 frontline healthcare professionals, complete violation of social distancing norms and movement of vehicles in urban areas. These should be stopped, it said.

The death toll due to Covid-19 rose to 543 and the number of cases climbed to 17,265 in the country yesterday. 1,600 new cases reported in last 24 hours.

The situation is "especially serious" in Indore in Madhya Pradesh, Mumbai and Pune in Maharashtra, Jaipur in Rajasthan, and Kolkata, Howrah, East Medinipur, North 24 Parganas, Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Jalpaiguri in West Bengal, the ministry said.

There are 4,203 confirmed coronavirus cases in Maharashtra of which 223 people lost their lives.

In Madhya Pradesh, out of the 1,407 cases, 70 people have succumbed to the disease. In West Bengal, there are 339 confirmed cases of which 12 people died due to the infection, according to health ministry data.

# Healthcare on verge of collapse

AFP, Tokyo

Japanese medics are warning more must be done to prevent the coronavirus from overwhelming the country's healthcare system as confirmed cases passed 10,000, despite a nationwide state of emergency.

Experts have been alarmed by a recent spike in COVID-19 infections, with hundreds detected daily.

Japan's outbreak remains less severe than in hard-hit European countries, but its caseload is one of Asia's highest after China and India, and is roughly on par with South Korea.

There have been 171 deaths recorded so far in Japan and 10,751 cases, with

the country under a month-long state of emergency, initially covering seven regions but now in place nationwide.

But the measures do not prevent people from going out, and many shops and even restaurants remain open, even as medical associations warn the country's healthcare system is struggling to cope.

"The system is on the verge of collapse in many places in Japan," said Kentaro Iwata, an infectious diseases specialist from Kobe University who has repeatedly criticised the government's response to the crisis.

Speaking at a press briefing yesterday, Iwata said Japan's strategy of limited testing and intensive contact-tracing

worked well in the initial phase of the local outbreak, when numbers were small. But he charged that Japan failed to adapt as the outbreak grew.

Japan's government argues it has adjusted its strategy, boosting testing capacity, changing rules that required all positive cases to remain in hospitals.

But medical experts have called the measures insufficient.

"Beds for novel coronavirus patients continue to be almost full," Haruo Ozaki, president of the Tokyo Medical Association, warned last week.

The health minister has acknowledged that hospitals have in some cases turned away suspected coronavirus patients in ambulances.

## PM warns of global food shortage

FROM PAGE 1

The districts are Manikganj, Gazipur, Tangail and Kishoreganj under Dhaka division and Jamalpur, Sherpur, Netrakona and Mymensingh under Mymensingh division.

Hasina stressed the need for producing and preserving food to face any possible food crisis in the post-coronavirus world. "If we can produce food and preserve it, then we won't fall into that famine. Rather, we will be able to help many others. We have to take those steps from now on."

She said the land of Bangladesh is fertile and its people are laborious. The country is now self-sufficient in food, the PM added.

"Let there not be an inch of land left without farming. We have to keep our eyes on that and that's what I want."

Referring to harvesting paddy, the premier asked the law enforcement agencies to cooperate in this regard.

Speaking to the officials and public representatives from Gazipur, the PM said the government has a plan to allow the reopening of some export-oriented industries on a limited scale if the guidelines on health and safety are properly maintained and protective measures are taken for their workers.

"The month of Ramadan is approaching. We can't keep everything shut down. We will have to reopen some areas gradually," she said.

Hasina, however, expressed doubt whether the factories in Gazipur should be reopened on April 24-25 as coronavirus was spreading in the district.

She said the factory authorities would have to arrange transportation

for the workers to carry them to and from workplaces as they suffered a lot early this month after some factories asked them to join work. "It was a wrong decision."

The PM said the factories have to arrange transportation, accommodation and protection for the workers. A limited number of workers can join the work, she added.

The premier directed the district administration to discuss with those who want to reopen their factories on these conditions.

The government is to keep open some pharmaceutical factories and some other industries which are producing personal protective equipment, she said.

Hasina said the government has taken special measures for the upcoming Ramadan to make sure that there is no crisis of food.

She said harvesting of paddy has started and more food grains would be produced in the coming days.

About the government's procurement of food grains, she said the government would buy 8 lakh tonnes of paddy, 10 lakh tonnes of rice, 2,20,000 tonnes of atap (fine rice) and 80,000 tonnes of wheat.

Hasina said the government has taken the measures to save the country from any possible food crisis and economic recession.

Regarding the use of protective gears, like PPEs by doctors and nurses, the premier said only those who would look after patients would use those. "If all start using these, then how will we provide those to doctors and nurses?"

She said some 14,63,840 PPEs have been imported while 10,80,069

distributed and 3,83,771 are in stock.

She directed the authorities concerned to strengthen monitoring so that genuine masks and PPEs are supplied to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

The PM thanked doctors, nurses, health workers, members of police, and armed forces for their tireless efforts to serve people.

Hasina said the Covid-19 situation is still better in Bangladesh than in many developed countries due to effective steps taken by the government.

She said she has assigned secretaries to look after the relief and health safety at the district level and they would submit reports to her.

"There is nothing to be upset when a crisis comes. This has to be faced with courage... we did it in 1971 with our united efforts and we will also be able to get rid of this calamity very soon."







She asked the authorities concerned of Mymensingh to arrange training for physicians, nurses and other health workers who deal the coronavirus patients to keep them and their families protected.

Hasina called upon the local lawmakers and other public representatives to pay attention to the protection of physicians, nurses and other health workers in their respective areas.

PM's Principal Secretary Ahmad Kaikaus, the programme was also attended by Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam, PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim, PMO Secretary Tofazzel Hossain Miah and other high officials were present.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার	
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চকরিয়া, কক্সবাজার	
chakoria@uhfpo.dghs.gov.bd	
তারিখঃ ১৯-০৪-২০২০	
খোলা দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি	
পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট আইন (২০০৬), পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট বিধিমালা (২০০৮) ও তৎপরবর্তী সংশ্লিষ্ট সংশোধনিসমূহ এবং সংগ্রাহক সংস্থা কর্তৃক আরোপিত শর্তাবলীর আলোকে উপজেলা স্বাস্থ্য ও পঃ পঃ কর্মকর্তার কার্যালয়, চকরিয়া, কক্সবাজার এর নিম্নলিখিত বিজ্ঞপ্তি স্বাস্থ্য প্রতিষ্ঠানের ২০১৯-২০২০ অর্থ বছরের জন্য নিয়মিত সরবরাহ কার্যের এমএসআর সামগ্রী (মেডিকেল এন্ড সার্জিক্যাল রিকুইজিটস) ক্রয়/সংগ্রাহকের নিমিত্ত এমএসআর সামগ্রী সরবরাহের অধিকৃতসম্পন্ন বাংলাদেশের প্রকৃত বাবাসাধী/সরবরাহকারী/প্রস্তুতকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিকট হইতে নিম্নোক্ত ছক মোতাবেক প্রাপ্তিস্বত্বের পৃথকভাবে সীলপালাকৃত বামে দরপত্র আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে।	
১	মন্ত্রণালয়/ভিত্তিশন
২	সংগ্রাহক সংস্থার নাম
৩	দরপত্রের পদ্ধতি
৪	আহ্বানকৃত কাজের ধরণ
৫	বাজেট/তহবিলের উৎস
৬	কার্যসম্পাদন জামানত
৮	দরদাতার যোগ্যতা
৯	প্রাপ্তিস্বত্বের বিবরণ ও দরপত্রের প্রতি সেট এর মূল্য (অফেরতযোগ্য)
১০	দরপত্র
১১	দরপত্র বিক্রয়ের স্থান, ঠিকানা, সময় ও শেষ তারিখ
১২	দরপত্র দাখিলের স্থান, সময় ও শেষ তারিখ
১৩	দরপত্র বাস্তব খোলার স্থান, তারিখ ও সময়
১৪	এমএসআর সামগ্রী ক্রয় সংক্রান্ত তথ্যাবলী
বিশেষ নির্দেশনাঃ	
○ দরপত্রের মূল্য ট্রেজারী চালানের মাধ্যমে কেবল নং ১-২৭১১-০০০০-২০৬৬ সোলারী বাকে লিমিটেড এর চকরিয়া শাখায় জমাদানপূর্বক চালানোর মূলকপি আবেদনপত্রের সহিত দাখিল করিয়া দরপত্র সমগ্র করিতে হইবে। দরপত্রের শর্তাবলী দরপত্র সিডিউলের সহিত সরবরাহ করা হইবে। দরপত্রের জামানতের টাকা উপজেলা স্বাস্থ্য ও পঃ পঃ কর্মকর্তা, চকরিয়া, কক্সবাজার এর অনুকূলে সরকারি তফসীলভুক্ত যে কোন ব্যাংক হতে বিজ্ঞপ্তি প্রকাশের তারিখ হইতে দরপত্র দাখিলের তারিখের মধ্যে স্বাক্ষরিত ব্যাংক ড্রাফট/পে-অর্ডার এর মাধ্যমে দরপত্রের সহিত দাখিল করিতে হইবে। দরপত্রের বিষয়ে যে কোন তথ্যের জন্য উপজেলা স্বাস্থ্য ও পঃ পঃ কর্মকর্তার কার্যালয়, চকরিয়া, কক্সবাজার এর হিসাব শাখা হতে জানা যাবে। দরপত্র মূল্যায়ন কমিটি/কর্তৃপক্ষ কর্তৃক যাচাইকালে ট্রেজারী চালান বা জামানতের ব্যাংক ড্রাফট/পে-অর্ডার ভুল/ত্রুটিগ্রস্ত প্রমাণিত হইলে সাথে সাথে ঐ দরপত্র বাতিল হিসেবে গণ্য হইবে এবং তাহার/তাহাদের বিরুদ্ধে আইনানুগ ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণ করা হইবে।	
○ কর্তৃপক্ষ কোন কারণ দর্শনো ব্যতিরেকে যে কোন অথবা সকল দরপত্র গ্রহণ বা বাতিলের ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন। অনিবার্য কারণবশতঃ অত্র নোটিশে উল্লিখিত দরপত্র বিষয়ে কোন সংশোধনী অত্র দস্তবের নোটিশ বোর্ডের মাধ্যমে জানানো হইবে। দরপত্র বাস্তব খোলার নির্দিষ্ট তারিখে সম্পন্ন না হইলে পরবর্তী কর্মসিবেসে যথাক্রমে দরপত্র খোলার গ্রহণযোগ্য তারিখ বলিয়া বিবেচিত হইবে। তবে সময় ও স্থান অপরিবর্তিত থাকিবে।	
○ স্বাস্থ্য অধিদপ্তর/পাঃ ও পরিবার কল্যাণ মন্ত্রণালয় হইতে ব্যয় মঞ্জুরী সাপেক্ষে বিল পরিশোধ করা হইবে এবং প্রয়োজ্য ক্ষেত্রে নির্ধারিত ভ্যাট ও ট্যাক্স কর্তন করা হইবে।	
○ ঐচ্ছিক সামগ্রী দাল-সবুজ রঙের মোড়কে এবং সকল সামগ্রীতে "সরকারি সম্পত্তি, বিক্রয়ের জন্য নহে" লেখা সহ কোয়ালিটি এন্সুরেন্স সার্টিফিকেট/সার্টিফিকেট অব এ্যানালাইসিস দাখিল করিতে হইবে। সরবরাহকৃত ঐচ্ছিক ও রি-এজেন্টসমূহের মোদার সরবরাহের তারিখ হইতে কমপক্ষে দুই বৎসর থাকিতে হইবে।	
○ ক্রয়কারী চাহিদা অনুসারে কার্যসেবা প্রদান করিবেন এবং চাহিদার অতিরিক্ত কোন প্রকার মাল্যমান (উৎসাহ) ক্রয় করিতে বাধ্য নহেন এবং সকল মাল্যমান একত্রে ক্রয় করিতে বাধ্য নহেন এবং বিজয়ী দরদাতাদ্বয়কে বিভিন্ন মেয়াদে মাল্যমান/ঐচ্ছিক সরবরাহ করার কার্যাদেশ প্রদান করিতে পারিবেন।	
ডাঃ মোহাম্মদ শাহবাজ	
উপজেলা স্বাস্থ্য ও পরিবার পরিকল্পনা কর্মকর্তা	
চকরিয়া, কক্সবাজার	
জিডি-৭৪৭	

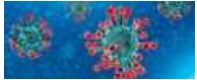


STOCKS		COMMODITIES		ASIAN MARKETS				CURRENCIES			
DSEX	CSCX			MUMBAI	TOKYO	SINGAPORE	SHANGHAI	USD	EUR	GBP	CNY
Closed	Closed	Gold 	Oil 	 0.82%	 1.15%	 0.58%	 0.50%	BUY TK 83.95	90.18	103.90	11.72
		\$1,686.00 (per ounce)	\$27.10 (per barrel)	31,847.27	19,669.12	2,599.40	2,852.55	SELL TK 84.95	93.98	107.70	12.32



# BUSINESS

DHAKA TUESDAY APRIL 21, 2020, BAISHAKH 8, 1427 BS [starbusiness@thedailystar.net](mailto:starbusiness@thedailystar.net)



## TAMING CORONAVIRUS RAMPAGE

# Digitalisation comes to bereft farmers' rescue

MUHAMMAD ZAHIDUL ISLAM

The government is set to initiate a short code to help farmers sell their produce if they can't find buyers locally, much to the relief of growers confronting a broken supply chain.

The decision came at an inter-ministerial meeting of the agriculture and food ministries and the Information

Communication Division yesterday.

The 333#5 short code will link various government agencies and digital commerce platforms with farmers, said Zunaid Ahmed Palak, state minister for ICT, at a virtual press conference.

This would help farmers who have produced a huge amount of food and items but are failing to connect with buyers or not finding buyers offering them a rational price.

Palak also acknowledged that every day the government is coming to know of news through media that farmers are in deep trouble for unsold products.

"The challenge will be mitigated through this process."

The state minister couldn't give the exact date

on when the service would be available. "We have just decided to work on this and it might take a few days to get the network ready."

The latest decision comes after the prime minister on Sunday told parliament that the government would use technology to maintain the supply chain and disburse government assistance.

Digital commerce ventures also can purchase farm produce easily through it, Palak said. "We can use this as an online marketplace."

The government has introduced another short code 333#2 to provide humanitarian assistance and food to the needy during the nationwide shutdown to flatten the spread of coronavirus.

Introduced on April 5, the service delivered food relief to 10,000 families through field-level officers.

At the press conference, Palak also

launched an online tracker using the data of the Directorate General of Health Services.

The tracker can give an idea about the coronavirus situation in Bangladesh as well as the country's situation in comparison with others.

"Gradually, we will give more inputs and citizens will get locality-based information."

The government is dealing with a huge volume of information but has not made individual data public so that people can't identify the callers, Palak added.

Meanwhile, the country's second largest mobile operator Robi yesterday rolled out a real-time, SMS-based coronavirus alert service, which is using machine learning-driven data analytics solutions.

The notification is designed to raise awareness about the highly contagious bug among the people who have to move around the city, it said in a statement.

# BB frees up Tk 3,000cr for farmers, micro enterprises



AKM ZAMIR UDDIN

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Bangladesh Bank yesterday unveiled a financial package of Tk 3,000 crore for underprivileged farmers, professionals and micro enterprises to keep them afloat.

Marginal businesses and farmers with no access to banks and non-bank financial institutions will be allowed to get loans from the revolving fund at 9 per cent interest rate.

Microfinance institutes (MFIs) with certificates from the Microcredit Regulatory Authority can give out the loans.

Under the package, the BB will initially provide the fund to banks at 1 per cent interest, which they will lend to MFIs at 3.5 per cent interest. The MFIs will be allowed to charge a maximum of 9 per cent interest to borrowers.

MFIs now charge about 25 per cent interest on their clients as their operational cost is too much high. But they will have to disburse loans at 9 per cent under the latest package, said a BB official.

Small businesses like roadside tea stalls can get loans, the highest amount of which would be Tk 75,000.

If the small businesses are owned by more than five persons, the loan ceiling would go up to Tk 3 lakh.

The loans must be paid back within a year.

But MFIs will be allowed to disburse loans ranging from Tk 10 lakh to Tk 30 lakh to micro enterprises and their repayment duration would be two years.

Farmers, underprivileged women, low-income people can also get loans. No defaulter will get a loan from the revolving fund.

The duration of the revolving scheme is three years and the volume of the fund will be widened if required, said the BB notice.

In another move, the BB yesterday asked banks to release the required foreign exchange to Bangladeshi nationals stranded abroad for the travel freeze brought on by the global coronavirus pandemic.

The BB also asked banks to take the same measures for those who are getting treatment abroad.

Banks will have to follow the instruction until June 30.

# Out of work and tips, restaurant workers fighting the crisis alone

MAHMUDUL HASAN

Thousands of restaurant workers in Dhaka and across the country are set to get no salaries for April as the shuttered establishments have either laid them off or sent them on leave without pay amid the coronavirus outbreak.

It is one of the first sectors in Bangladesh to get affected badly by the global health crisis, as the presence of customers has started thinning out since late February.

And the countrywide shutdown from March 26 to flatten the spread of coronavirus, whose presence was confirmed in Bangladesh on March 8, simply deflated them.

The correspondent visited the capital's Dhanmondi, Mohammadpur and Jigatola areas on Saturday. The areas are home to about 800 restaurants, according to restaurant owners, and 99 per cent of them were bolted shut.

A handful was open for takeaway through Foodpanda, Uber Eats, Pathao Food and Shohoz Food.

For most of the restaurant staff, the coronavirus outbreak and the ensuing shutdown has been a cruel joke.

"I have no money to run my family. Now I have to rely on relief," said a restaurant worker, who has been laid off recently.

The government has recently unveiled plans to transfer Tk 2,000 in cash each to about 40 lakh families whose breadwinners have lost jobs because of the shutdown. Hotel and restaurant workers are said to be among the would-be beneficiaries.

"I heard that the government will help restaurant workers. But we haven't received

any formal request from the authorities to hand over the list of workers," said Rezaul Karim Sarker Robin, general secretary of the Bangladesh Restaurant Owner's Association.

He urged the government to increase the allocation as well as draw up a list of employees in consultation with restaurant owners so that none is left out.

The number of food service establishment is estimated to be about 60,000, including hotel, restaurant and sweetmeat makers, where more than 15 lakh people are working, according to the association and the sector's insiders.

In Dhaka alone, there are about 10,000 restaurants that employ about 3 lakh

people, 90 per cent of which are now unemployed, according to Robin.

Although the owners are not able to provide salaries, many are buying them essentials like rice, lentil, oil and potato, he said.

Robin urged the government to take immediate steps to provide cash to those workers as Ramadan and Eid are approaching.

Ashfaq Rahman Asif, managing director of Tarka Restaurant, 128 East and Tehari Avenue, sees a grimmer outlook for the restaurant business in the coming months.

"The problem will not be solved very soon as safety concerns would continue to hurt the business," he said, adding that with zero business, one can't pay space



# Another \$1.25b from ADB would be of great help

REJAUl KARIM BYRON and MD FAZLUR RAHMAN

Bangladesh has sought an additional \$1.25 billion from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to ballast the country's purses in its fight against coronavirus and beyond.

The Manila-based development lender has already committed to providing \$602.39 million as budget support as well as to meet the emergency expenditure in the health sector.

"The immediate assistance from the ADB has been of great help for Bangladesh.

But our needs are much higher under the current circumstances," Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal said in a press release yesterday.

The press release was distributed after his telephone call with ADB President Masatsugu Asakawa.

During the discussion, Kamal requested Asakawa to take into account the scale of Bangladesh's coronavirus-induced wreckage.

Kamal sought \$1 billion in budget support for fiscal 2020-21 in addition to the \$500 million to counter the fallout of

coronavirus on Bangladesh's economy.

He also sought \$100 million to provide incentives to up to the 2.5 lakh frontline workers such as health professionals, civil administration, law-enforcement agencies and emergency service providers.

The finance minister urged the ADB to provide another \$150 million, which would be used to create jobs for the migrant workers and locals who have lost jobs because for the pandemic as well as to rehabilitate the micro, cottage, small and medium entrepreneurs.

Kamal requested for waiver of commitment charges on the loans provided from the ADB's Ordinary Capital Resources (OCR) fund.

Regular market-based OCR loans are generally made to developing countries that have attained a higher level of economic development while concessional OCR loans are made to lower-income developing countries.

"We have requested the ADB to continue its continuous support and assistance to help us ride out the crisis," Kamal said.

The two also discussed ADB-financed ongoing projects and the projects in the pipeline and Asakawa asked for measures for faster implementation of the projects.

At present, there are 63 ongoing projects with ADB financing of about \$8.7 billion. The lender has committed another \$9.94 billion for 81 projects that are in pipeline.

The ADB chief has taken into cognisance the help Bangladesh needs and would inform the country on time after assessing

the proposals, the press release said.

A development partner of Bangladesh since 1973, the ADB has extended financial assistance amounting to \$25.14 billion so far to the country.

The ADB was one of the first multilateral organisations that categorically said how much Bangladesh's economy would bear the brunt of the pandemic.

Bangladesh's gross domestic product may contract by as much as 1.1 per cent in the hypothetical worst-case scenario of a significant outbreak of the coronavirus in the country, it said in an analysis in early March.

That means the deadly pathogen could wipe \$3.02 billion off the \$300 billion-plus economy. In such a scenario, 894,930 jobs will be lost, according to the ADB.

The forecast came before Bangladesh reported the maiden cases of coronavirus infections on March 8. Since then, the novel virus has infected 2,948 people and killed 101 in Bangladesh and brought the economy to its knees.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has announced several stimulus packages totalling Tk 95,619 crore, which is about 3.3 per cent of the GDP, to stave off the fallout from the lethal pathogen that has compelled the government to press pause on most economic activities since March 26.

The countrywide shutdown is scheduled to be lifted on April 25, but given the exponential rise in confirmed cases of COVID-19, it is expected to be extended further.



### ADB commits

\$602.39m in budget support, meeting emergency health expenditure

### But Bangladesh seeks

\$1b in additional budget support

\$100m for frontline employees

\$150m for job creation, small industries

Commitment charge waiver on loans

# Garment factories now have until Apr 26 to open workers' MFS accounts

REEFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

The Bangladesh Bank has extended the deadline for opening mobile financial service (MFS) accounts for the employees of export-oriented factories by six days to April 26.

The deadline was extended as a section of workers are now in villages, while another cohort does not have national identity cards or cannot be contacted, said a BB official.

The factories were asked to open the MFS accounts for their workers such that their salaries can be disbursed from the government's Tk 5,000 crore stimulus package declared to help the industries ride out the coronavirus setback.

More than half of the 4.1 million workers in the garment sector, which accounts for about 84 per cent of the country's total exports, do not have MFS or bank accounts.

Some factories are yet to pay the workers' salary of March, which is another reason for the delay, the official said.

As of Saturday, some 970,000 new MFS accounts were opened with bKash, 550,000 with Rocket and 400,000 with Nagad, according to the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA).

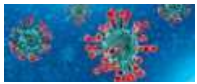
"We are still receiving new instructions from the central bank, which is making it difficult for us to complete the process," the BGMEA said.

On April 12, the BB asked the authorities concerned to declare MFS as an emergency service amid the ongoing shutdown.

The factories that have laid off their workers will not be entitled to the stimulus package, the finance ministry said in a notice on April 19.

A garment factory owner in the Ashulia industrial belt said he has laid off his workers. "We didn't want to do so. We wanted to run the units, but the environment was not congenial," the factory owner said asking not to be named.





**TAMING CORONAVIRUS RAMPAGE**

# Cash transfer is the assistance the poor need right now



ZAHID HUSSAIN

Early data on the poverty impact of the coronavirus-induced coma of the economy, as Nobel laureate economist Paul Krugman characterises it, is rather alarming.

A survey by the Power and Participation Research Centre and BRAC Institute for Governance and Development on 5,471 poor families (including newly poor), presumably most, if not all, from the informal sectors in the urban space and rural areas finds about 80 per cent respondents lost jobs.

And those who still had jobs lost 50-90 per cent of their pre-coronavirus income, and the proportion of those who could afford three square meals a day has declined from 98 per cent to 73 per cent. Incomes of all poor on average plummeted 76 per cent.

And the majority of them have survived by cutting expenditures, drawing down savings and borrowing from families and friends.

The amount of food intake declined 47 per cent in cities and 32 per cent in villages. Their stocks of food are fast running out and the jobs and income losses getting worse.

The newly poor constituted 35.3 per cent of the sample, which appears to be a purposive sample of poor households with an average family size of 4.85.

If this is a representative estimate of the national level impact, it means 14.3 million people have joined the ranks of the 40 million poor before coronavirus.

Only 14 per cent said they received government help, while 5 per cent said they were helped by the non-governmental organisations.

The poor people will not be able to fight the situation for long. The people in villages said they could sustain for 13 more days and in cities eight.

It is a time of existential reckoning for at least 55 million people.

A vast number of them face the spectre of hunger at the end of April. They need assistance. How much and for how long?

The size of the assistance recommended by the study is certainly an under-response. They recommend spending Tk 5,600 crore for one

month to support 38.2 million poor.

Poor families in villages, per their estimates, could run their families for Tk 6,600 a month, while those in cities need Tk 8,800. These are slightly below the lower poverty line national level estimates based on 2016-17 prices.

However, it could be thought of as compensating the increase in poverty gap and hence a lot better than nothing.

Why the other 17 million poor are left out of this assistance programme, which would need another Tk 2,500 crore, is not quite clear. Surely, the Tk 2,500 crore cannot be the reason.

affected by home quarantines, the shutdown of non-essential businesses, and higher prices for food and basic goods.

Different type of thinking also requires forsaking models that do not work for the poor. These include open market sales and the food-based transfer programmes.

The reason is plain and simple. Both the spread risk and the logistical challenges in the delivery of food are just too much to handle, given the scale and likely duration of the problem.

Media reports suggest that the incidents of pilferage in food distribution are much higher

and so on.

These also include support for homeless populations, as planned in Bangladesh, subsidies that let utilities waive fees for basic services, waivers for loans and other financial obligations, and coronavirus-sensitive public works.

Additional assistance to the poorest prevents negative coping strategies, such as reducing food consumption or selling vital assets and help protect human capital.

Time-bound cash transfers to food-insecure households with children under the age of 2 mitigate the effects of higher food prices and

households are registered and access benefits. Post Office cash cards can also be used for the purpose.

The sooner we recognise the merits of cash transfers and the hazards of food-based programmes at such an unprecedented time of distress for the vast number of people, the less time we waste.

Through the coronavirus mitigation efforts, we are trying to buy time at a very high cost to the economy, the poor and the vulnerable in particular. We cannot afford to waste it.

Nothing will better complement the spread of coronavirus than the spread of hunger.



SK ENAMUL HAQ

If the situation worsens, more assistance will be needed, according to Hossain Zillur Rahman.

The traditional relief of the government will not be enough to fight the present situation.

The government claims to have enough food. But, as another Nobel laureate economist Amartya Sen taught us many moons ago, food availability per se does not guarantee access when people are faced with entitlement failures.

Whether the situation at the end of the month will be good or bad depends on the restoration of entitlements lost by the poor.

This requires quick actions based on different types of thinking. Social protection systems in 126 countries have already introduced or adapted existing social protection and labour market policies with 505 measures.

There is a lot to learn from the responses. These measures attempt to ensure that no one is left behind by this unprecedented crisis.

Leaving out 17 million is leaving out too many, falling a little short of different type of thinking.

It is not possible to get through the pandemic leaving behind so many adversely

than officially recognised. Exhortations to maintain social distancing and keep the distribution corruption-free are routinely disregarded.

It is critical to expand social safety nets so that they quickly disburse more or larger assistance to new and existing beneficiaries.

Currently, 1,300 new cash initiatives have been introduced globally.

Delivering cash to the poor directly is not necessarily tougher than delivering food. This is particularly true for Bangladesh where micro-finance programmes and NGO partnership in service delivery have played such a key role in what Wahiduddin Mahmud characterised as the "Bangladesh Development Surprise".

Transactions via mobile financial services have increased phenomenally since 2014.

There is no reason to risk social distancing at such a massive scale every day in many different areas, including hotspots, when the whole country is declared to be at a high risk of coronavirus spread.

Social safety nets need to be extended further to certain at-risk groups, including those in affected employment sectors, such as garments, transport, hotels and restaurants, shops, internal and international migrants

protect children's nutrition.

There is nothing in international data to suggest that cash transfers do not achieve the intended objectives better than food transfers.

In their recent book Economics of Hard Times, Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo lay out the evidence.

What is very clear from various country experiments is that cash transfers raise the share of the poor's total expenses that go to food; improves nutrition and increases expenditure on schooling and health.

And cash transfers generally increase food expenditures as much as food rations.

We need more of what works, not more of what does not work even in normal times. We do not need measures that undermine virus spread mitigation.

Cash transfers have a proven record in Bangladesh.

For instance, the government's cash transfer modernisation project under the ministry of social welfare administers the old age, widow and disability allowance programmes, reaching more than 6 million poor households.

Social distancing is an added advantage that goes naturally with cash transfers.

Operationalising the national household database can ensure all vulnerable and poor

Delivering food against 5 million ration cards to the poor regularly until their livelihood systems are restored is a huge challenge both from targeting and governance points of view.

The intent is laudable, but an equivalent amount of cash transfers will be relatively easier on both counts.

Government stocks are better used to keep food prices at the retail level stable by augmenting the stock of private retailers through sales at wholesale market prices when prices tend to rise.

Enhanced government procurement of paddy from the farmers will hopefully help them get better prices from the millers as well.

Public stocks so acquired is better used to augment the supply of rice in the wholesale market so that the millers and stockers cannot use higher paddy prices as an excuse to gouge wholesale rice prices.

Is the risk of widespread hunger overblown? We all hope it is overblown.

However, what we are observing on the streets these days all over the country is sufficient to warn that we can discount such a risk only at our own peril. This is what I read on the wall. Don't you?

The writer is an economist

## Nothing seems to be helping in easing Ctg port congestion

DWAIPAYAN BARUA, Ctg

The 100 per cent waiver on store rent for import containers to solve the acute container congestion at Chattogram port ended yesterday with virtually no improvement in the space crisis.

On April 5, the Chattogram Port Authority announced the waiver for import containers that arrived within the general holiday believing such a step would encourage the importers to take delivery.

Due to the space crisis since the last 25 days, the country's premier port's container handling operations like loading, unloading and berthing of vessels have been severely hampered.

The number of total import containers lying at the port reached at 49,974 TEUs yesterday, up from the capacity of 49,018 TEUs.

Some 11 container vessels were

seen at the jetties yesterday, while 32 more vessels were waiting at the outer anchorage for getting berths.

Garment factory owners brought in about 40 per cent of the import containers now lying at the port, said Md Zafar Alam, CPA's member of administration and planning.

However, MA Salam, first vice-president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), in a letter on Sunday requested the CPA to extend the waiver by at least 10 days after the government lifts the countrywide shutdown.

Although the countrywide shutdown is scheduled to end on April 25, it is expected that it would be extended further given the exponential rise in cases and deaths.

The CPA though is against extending the timeframe for the waiver.

"The port is not a warehouse where businesses would store their imports for a long period," Alam said.

Salam in his letter argued that the factory owners are failing to take delivery of their imports mainly for transport and workers crisis and other difficulties as most of the garment factories have remained closed now.

BGMEA Director Anjan Shekhar Das blamed the slow delivery of import containers on the hurdles in managing import-related documents as different government and private offices like banks are providing services for shorter periods due to the shutdown.

Spaces in most factories are already occupied with finished cargo and previously brought in raw materials, which are restricting the businesses to take delivery of import goods from the port, he said.

## HSBC supports local community

STAR BUSINESS DESK

HSBC has committed to support 5,000 vulnerable families by supplying them with emergency food and hygiene packs in partnership with local business group City Group and SAJIDA Foundation.

The bank has also partnered with WaterAid to provide personal protective equipment and KN95 masks to medical staff in Chattogram and Dhaka, it said in a statement recently.

"We are proud to be able to make a difference by supporting vulnerable communities and frontline healthcare workers," said Md Mahbub ur Rahman, chief executive officer of HSBC Bangladesh.

## POSTPONEMENT OF 21<sup>ST</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF BANK ASIA LIMITED

This is for information of all concerned that, due to unavoidable circumstances arising from Coronavirus spread in the country and government holidays from 26<sup>th</sup> March to 25<sup>th</sup> April 2020, the Board of Directors of Bank Asia Limited has decided that the 21<sup>st</sup> Annual General Meeting (AGM) scheduled to be held on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2020, Wednesday, is hereby postponed.

The new date, time and venue of the 21<sup>st</sup> AGM will be notified in due course after evaluating the Coronavirus situation.

Dated: Dhaka  
April 20, 2020

SD/-  
Company Secretary

Corporate Office  
Rangs Tower (2<sup>nd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> floor)  
68, Purana Paltan, Dhaka-1000





The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR  
LATE S. M. ALI

DHAKA TUESDAY APRIL 21, 2020, BAISHAKH 8, 1427 BS

## Timely harvesting for food security

*Govt's interventions may save the crops*

FARMERS in Sylhet's haor region are deeply worried that they may lose their crops to flash floods due to heavy rains that have been forecasted for later this week. These lowlands produce a major supply of the rice that feeds the country. Therefore, loss of these crops will have a huge impact on food security of the nation, apart from bringing financial ruin to these farmers. Helping these farmers to save their crops must be done at all costs. The government is trying to address this emergency in the wake of the coronavirus crisis, which makes the job all the more daunting.

The forecasts by experts say that at least 11 rivers of the region may overflow—water levels have already risen dangerously. In fact, all four districts of the Sylhet region may experience flash floods and so far, only 10 percent of the harvesting has been done, according to the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in Sylhet. Travel restrictions and a nationwide shutdown to contain the coronavirus spread have resulted in drastic shortages of labour to help harvest the crops. Farmers are finding it very difficult to save their crops on time because of this.

It is therefore a reassuring development that the government is trying its best to address this crisis of manpower by mobilising workers from different parts of the country, especially from the northern region, and sending them to the haor areas to harvest the paddy. According to an official of the DAE, labourers of sand-lifting and stone-lifting sectors, as well as tea garden workers, have been engaged to harvest the crops.

No doubt it is a challenge to transport workers to the haors during a nationwide shutdown while ensuring their safety. Thus, it is laudable that the government is making special arrangements to transport workers safely, as well as taking other measures such as strengthening embankments to keep the water out and giving farming tools to the labourers. We hope that these measures are done expeditiously so that the paddy can be harvested on time and the farmers get a fair price for their crops. One of the biggest concerns of the shutdown, which is necessary, is the possibility of food shortages. Government interventions like this are crucial to ensure food security and survival of those who ensure it—the farmers.

## Govt should involve NGOs during Covid-19 crisis

*Their hands-on experience can be invaluable*

AT a time when the government is engaged in the multifarious activities involved in crisis management during the ongoing pandemic, it is encouraging to learn that the non-government organisations (NGOs) are emphasising their eagerness to share their expertise and experience with the government to help in tackling the crisis too. Various alliances of NGOs have expressed this at a virtual press conference recently.

There is no doubt that these organisations can significantly help the government in its fight against Covid-19. With their widespread presence at the grassroots level, NGOs have been working alongside the government during times of disaster for decades. And such collaborative measures have proven successful in various aspects. Moreover, the presence of the surging cases of dengue, along with the approaching flood season, will surely weigh heavy on the crisis and make matters more challenging in the days to come. Thus, a collaborative means of preparedness between the government and NGOs will help ease some of the suffering during such times.

With hands-on experience in dealing with vulnerable groups and disaster management, among others, NGOs can be involved in various spheres of operations—from helping farmers save their crops to the distribution of relief and much more. Furthermore, with government assistance, micro-finance NGOs can also operate to help boost rural economic activities as the moderately poor are entering the bracket of the ultra-poor. NGOs can also assist in implementing the activities at the core level under the government stimulus package declared to tackle Covid-19 impacts. The possibilities are many and will prove promising once the collaborative efforts are put into practice.

It is to be noted that people's lives and health are at stake here, not to mention the adverse economic impact on the entire nation. The government should therefore take advantage of this opportunity to involve NGOs and their human resources to tackle the Herculean task that looms. Needless to say, during these challenging times, people's wellbeing in terms of health and the economic situation should be kept above all other considerations. The government should take all the help it can get.

### CORRIGENDUM

In our Editorial titled "Novel innovation to protect against novel coronavirus" in yesterday's paper, the name of Dr Md Arifur Rahim was misspelt as Dr Arifur Rahman. We would also like to clarify that Dr Rahim is a chemical engineer, not a medical doctor. We sincerely regret the error.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

### Prevent gatherings at all cost

I recently had the bitter experience of going to the Palli Bidyut Zonal Office, Mirzapur, Tangail to pay the electricity bill for an irrigation pump. There were two long queues of mostly farmers from different villages who have little knowledge of social distancing, and who had to face great troubles to get there as there is hardly any transportation. No proper guidelines have been given about postponing or waiving the fine on late payment of bills for irrigation pump owners. The authorities should deal with this immediately, or more lives will be put at risk for this simple task.

Mir Mohammad Minhan, Tangail

BLACK, WHITE AND GREY



ALI RIAZ

PRESIDENT Donald Trump's decision to halt funding to the World Health Organization (WHO) in the midst of a global pandemic is not only reckless and irresponsible, but

will also exacerbate the threat to global public health. In the single stroke of a pen, President Trump has put millions of lives around the world at risk and jeopardised global human security and US national interests. The decision will have catastrophic consequences and will add to the ongoing global humanitarian crisis. It is meant to placate the supporters of Trump in an election year and during an economic crisis, which may become a make or break issue in his re-election in November. It is a testament to Trump's myopia about global politics, which has been the marker of his foreign policy from day one of his presidency.

Domestic considerations, precisely his focus on his support base, as the driver of his policies—domestic and foreign, have brought disastrous consequences for the United States in the past years. That he and his supporters seem to have very little regard for data, science and diplomacy is on display here, once again. The decision, surprising as it may be, is consistent

*The WHO cannot be the means to hold China accountable. The timing is wrong. Global support is necessary for such an endeavour, which this step will not engender. Defunding the WHO serves no purpose.*

with Trump's previous actions and his contempt for multilateral institutions. The so-called "America First" policy, which has essentially become the "America Alone" policy, is behind the decision and will further isolate the US from its allies and engender aversion of many towards the US.

President Trump, whose negligence can be described as a contributory factor in the deaths of thousands of US citizens from Covid-19, was facing

Yet the President downplayed the risk, continued to send misleading messages, and tried to blame the Democrats for the "hoax". All of these led to the mounting numbers of deaths. As reported by the New York Times on April 11, "The chaotic culture of the Trump White House contributed to the crisis. A lack of planning and a failure to execute, combined with the president's focus on the news cycle and his preference for following his gut rather than the data

that. Instead, he has used it as an excuse for posturing rather than pressing for more transparency from China. If he had been interested in transparency of the Chinese authorities, he could have raised it with President Xi during his telephone call on February 7. Undoubtedly, the lack of transparency of the Chinese authorities, particularly in the early stages of the spreading of the virus in Wuhan, warrants scrutiny. But President Trump has not demonstrated any such desire. The WHO cannot be the means to hold China accountable. The timing is wrong. Global support is necessary for such an endeavour, which this step will not engender. Defunding the WHO serves no purpose. Additionally, his decision of halting US funding for the WHO, which makes up 22 percent of its budget, will help China's efforts to expand its influence within this and other multilateral organisations.

In the past years, the global standing of the United States has eroded and its influence waned, thanks to the changing global political landscape, the rise of China and Russia, the abject failure of leadership of the Trump administration on global issues, the distance with allies through unilateral foreign policy, and withdrawals from various multilateral arrangements. The failure to contain Covid-19 has revealed a serious weakness, not just in public health infrastructure, but in the entire political system of the US. On the contrary China, on the heel of its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), has been engaged in an aggressive diplomacy since the epidemic began, taking active measures to rewrite the narrative—absolving its responsibilities in the spread of the virus and remaking its image as a "friend in need."

The decision to defund the WHO shows the absence of empathy and a disregard for the people of the world—none of which helps the United States. The ongoing global pandemic and the imminent global economic crisis will require global effort and cooperation among countries. The global leadership position will not remain vacant. This myopic policy of the Trump administration sends the message that the US is abdicating its claim to the leadership.

Ali Riaz is a distinguished professor of political science at Illinois State University, and a nonresident senior fellow of the Atlantic Council, USA.

# Have faith in our researchers



HASEEB MD IRFANULLAH

OUR current understanding and response to the ongoing "corona crisis" are results of extensive, fast-track research. The possible transfer of the new coronavirus from

wild animals to human; its symptoms, spread patterns, and treatments; the need for social or physical distancing, for example, were all discovered by researchers. The new knowledge was then quickly picked up by the World Health Organization (WHO) and countless government and private agencies in order to widely broadcast to the public.

Besides fighting and surviving Covid-19, we do benefit from research at every point of our lives. Sometimes these are so deeply ingrained in our lifestyle—ballpoint pens, pen-drives, mobile apps or antibiotics—that we do not even remember these are products of experiments and research. But what is research anyway? One of the most amazing answers to this question was given by Hungarian biochemist Dr Albert Szent-Gyorgyi—"Research is to see what everybody else has seen, and think what nobody has thought."

The quote from Dr Szent-Gyorgyi, who received a Nobel Prize in 1937 for his research on Vitamin C, essentially separates researchers from the rest of us. In addition to thinking differently, researchers tell the world of something "new" that nobody knew before. In the ongoing pandemic, we are seeing such creation of new knowledge in real time on TV, newspapers and social media.

Further to adding new knowledge, researchers are also part of a "knowledge legacy". If we have been building a path called "knowledge", our individual pieces of research are the stones we lay on it. Our pieces would not fit or mean anything if previous stones had not already been laid out. For example, knowledge of past epidemics and pandemics (Spanish flu, SARS, Ebola) is helping us to face the current crisis. This connection across time makes researchers, and their work, timeless. They all travel towards the "horizon of the unknown" by appearing at different points of time.

Needless to say, researchers belong to diverse groups—they are divided by their countries, academic disciplines and the institutions they work in, as well as the philosophical points of view they hold. But as they do research, they all follow some basic standards and practices that

bind them together. Researchers identify a problem to be solved, a question to be answered, or a situation to be explored. They choose appropriate methods to collect data or conduct experiments. They analyse the information, collate the results, and tell us what the new knowledge—be it a solution, an answer, or an insight—means to us.

Although their main task is research, it is only part of a much larger arrangement called "research system", made up of four interconnected components. Before a researcher takes up a research project, she must look at the past research—this is called "accessing research", the first component of a research system—to learn the current knowledge we have on a particular research topic and what knowledge gaps we need to fill in. Then comes designing the research and actually conducting it to find new knowledge—the second part of a research

components of a research system is quite obvious in the corona crisis. Once a research, for example, on Covid-19 patient management in China, is published, it becomes part of the global research pool or "knowledge legacy" of coronavirus, and guides actions and new investigations in this discipline. Similarly, as the research findings from China are used, say in Spain, the Spanish experience can further help the doctors and researchers in Bangladesh, for example, to improve the critical care management in its ICUs for Covid-19 and other infectious diseases. In this way, researchers of a discipline, despite being spread out all over the world, essentially work together in making our knowledge more useful and impactful.

Unfortunately, we often ignore what researchers say. Our indifference towards scientific information produced by researchers often has nothing to do with



Coronavirus test samples in a lab in China.

PHOTO: THOMAS KIENZLE/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

system.

Once the work is done, a researcher has to share the newly gathered knowledge through research reports, academic journal articles, conference presentations, press conferences or other media—the third part of the research system, called "communicating research". This leads us to the final part of a research system—"utilising research". The new knowledge now needs to be used to improve our environment, society and systems of knowledge. Only by using the research outputs can we have an impact—the ultimate goal of any research.

The relationships among the

our education, our position in society, or the country we live in. Our sheer arrogance, negligence, and drive for economic profits are to be blamed. That is why, we have seen many oil companies and heads of governments undermine climate change research; last summer, we saw the Bangladeshi dairy industry and related ministry challenging research on pasteurised milk adulteration; and, more recently, national governments downplayed the warnings from scientists of the possible coronavirus pandemic.

As I write this, the total number of confirmed Covid-19 case has passed 2.4 million in 210 countries and territories, with over 165,000 deaths. As a third

of the world's population is now on lockdown, countless brave scientists, technicians, nurses, doctors and other professionals are restlessly working around the world and around the clock to test for the virus, to treat patients, and to lay to rest the lives that have been lost. But we should not forget numerous researchers all over the globe who are working in the background to improve the treatment and to find a cure for the deadliest infectious disease of our lifetime.

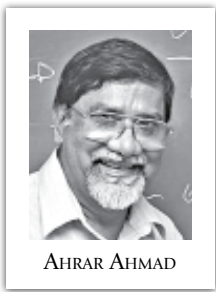
The media is now flooded with assumptions and predictions of what the world would look like after the pandemic is over—a new world with new global leadership, new economic structures, novel development models, and perhaps, a contactless lifestyle? As the pandemic is far from over, only time will tell what changes it will really bring in to this world, if any.

However, I really want to believe that our all-consuming efforts in this chaotic and panic-laden emergency will rejuvenate our trust in research and researchers. This will help us to realise why we must show patience and invest in research continuously to overcome numerous societal challenges, not only of human health, but also in different arenas of sustainable development, including social justice, economic development, and environmental sustainability. I want to believe that this crisis will lead us to create and practice a worldwide culture where policy decisions are made based upon research and evidence, and are not influenced by prejudice, ego and selfishness.

Dr Haseeb Md Irfanullah is an independent consultant working on environment, climate change, and research systems. His Twitter handle is @hmfrfanullah.



# Bern baby Bern: The struggles goes on



**AHRIR AHMAD**

a political opponent, his “real trooper” credentials, his visceral dislike of President Trump (calling him “the most dangerous President in the modern history of the country”), and the dramatically changed circumstances induced by the corona pandemic, he endorsed Joe Biden within five days, in a very pleasant environment. Even though the Sanders campaign ended on an apparently cordial note, the events that preceded the suspension of his campaign tell a sad and sordid tale.

What happened clearly demonstrated that, faced with the spectre of a challenge to the interests of the corporate elite who dominate the Democratic party (as it does the Republican), it would panic, close

about slavery reparations by saying, “I will be damned if I feel responsible for what happened 300 years back”. During the Democratic debate on February 17, responding to a question about the legacy of slavery, his meandering answer appeared to suggest that the problems in the Black community were caused by “bad parenting”. Even his endorsement of Barack Obama in 2007, was in language that was patronising if not demeaning, referring to him as “the first mainstream African-American who was articulate, bright and *clean*” (emphasis added).

In contrast, Sanders was an early and eager supporter of racial justice. In the 1960s, at the University of Chicago, he was one of the organisers of the Congress for Racial Equality. He had marched with Dr King. In 1988, he had endorsed Jesse Jackson for the Presidency (not Joe Biden, also a candidate that year). He had supported the idea of reparations. Moreover, the majority of the Black population below the age of 35 support him. And specific proposals (e.g. Medicare for All) are embraced by Black voters by huge majorities.

It should also be pointed out that

and more to do with his acceptance among Jews themselves. This was because of his bold, principled and persistent disapproval of Israel’s policies towards Palestinians (particularly pursued by right-wing governments, like the current one), and his position that a mindless and uncritical support for Israel is inconsistent with America’s own values, and unhelpful to the cause of a just and durable peace in the region.

There is no denying the fact that the conservative American Israeli Political Action Committee (AIPAC), fiercely dedicated to advancing Israel’s interests, is one of the most powerful lobbying groups in the US. Sanders had refused to speak at its events. Thus, he may have an AIPAC problem. As a Reform Jew (the largest Jewish group in the US), he may also have a problem with the Haredim—the ultra- orthodox Jewish groups. But AIPAC does not define the US Jewish community, and the ultra-orthodox are less than 10 percent of US Jews. To reduce the richly textured politics of the US Jewish population to simply these two unrepresentative groups would be misleading. Among other things, it would entail ignoring the inspiring and robust history of Jewish engagement with progressive causes in the US, especially on matters relating to racial equality and social justice, the tradition that Sanders himself embodies.

None of this means that Sanders was not struggling with other “issues”. For example, he was considered an “outsider” by the Democratic party because he had always registered as an Independent, and only caucused with the Party in the Senate. His biggest support demographic (the 18-30 year olds) have a notorious tendency to go to rallies, but not vote. Instead of charming “fellow traveler” Liz Warren, he alienated her, and his public spat with her about whether he had said in 2018 that a woman cannot be the President of the US, was unnecessary and unfortunate.

Similarly, his legislative accomplishments were relatively slight. He suffered a heart attack last year. His campaign had initially fumbled with the Black Lives Matter movement. And he could never quite clarify, particularly to an electorate unfamiliar with this language and analysis, why “identity politics” should not be used to undercut “class politics”.

The purpose of this article is not to defend or glorify Sanders, but merely to demonstrate that the “electability” argument was a cleverly manufactured ploy to justify and sell Biden. It is clear that Biden carries enormous baggage as a candidate, being a quintessential Washington insider, a professional politician elected to the Senate in 1972

when he was only 30 (the youngest age permitted) and epitomising the “swamp dweller” that Trump loves to mock. He bears the burden of several scandals (including Ukraine), bad votes (favouring all wars) and rhetorical gaffes (which may suggest some cognitive decline), that leaves him most vulnerable, particularly to an obnoxious person and unethical campaigner like Trump.

Biden is obviously not a better candidate than Sanders, but he is certainly “safer” because he would dutifully safeguard the status quo that benefits the economic elite. Some of Sanders’ policy proposals (abolishing capital punishment, elimination of private prisons, a New Green Deal, legalising marijuana, getting rid of the Electoral College, and so on) ruffle some feathers, but are not considered dangerous to their interests.

However, some proposals, and the ones that resonated most with the public, were considered to challenge their economic well-being. Thus, Medicare for all, free college tuition, a minimum wage of USD 15, paid leave for workers, elimination of offshore tax breaks, and most importantly, imposing a wealth tax on 0.1 percent of the population with a 1 percent tax on people with a net worth of USD 32 million, gradually increasing to 8 percent for those over USD 10 billion, were anathema to this group.

Hence, Sanders was perceived to be a threat. He had to be sacrificed. The only alternative available was Biden, however weak and flawed he was as a candidate. This was one of the most shameful manifestations of political cynicism in the service of corporate protection. Instead of a real and meaningful choice between Sanders and Trump in November, the electorate will have to choose between Tweedledee and Tweedledum, essentially two sides of the same coin or, more appropriately, the same dollar.

Undoubtedly, Biden is a far more amiable person, and a hugely welcome alternative to Trump. However, unlike a Sanders victory, a Biden White House would entail major changes in atmospherics and cosmetics, and very minor changes in substance.

The achievements of Sanders were considerable. He demystified the idea of socialism and removed the stigma caused by years of relentless red-baiting propaganda in the US. He breached the “insider-outsider” dichotomy afflicting progressive politics, and was able, as Astra Taylor has pointed out, to graft the energy and radicalism of the streets onto the political process. He brought back the notion of civility, moral authority and “principled seriousness” to a political campaign, focusing on ideas, human welfare and individual dignity rather than personalities, dirty tricks, or facile cliché mongering. He demonstrated that it is possible to resist the seductions and entrapments of the moneyed classes by neither seeking, nor accepting, any donations from them, and repudiating glittering fundraisers in favour of “crowd sourced” small donors. In America, “money talks”. Sanders chose not to listen.

Most importantly, he encouraged hundreds of thousands, probably millions, of young men and women to become political, awakened them to the fundamental and structural injustices in US society and the world, provoked them to think through the prism of a different narrative, and instilled in them a belief in, and a commitment to, collective action.

As Ted Kennedy indicated in his concession speech in August, 1980, “... the work goes on, the cause endures, the hope still lives, and the dream shall never die”. Neither will the legacy of Bernie Sanders. As he said in his own concession speech, “the campaign has come to an end, our movement has not... The struggle continues”.

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PHOTO: REUTERS/ANDREW KELLY

ranks, and look for desperate solutions. Not since the days of the famous Daley machine, which ran Cook County (Chicago) with absolute authority and discipline in the 1950s and 60s, have we seen the party act with such cohesion. It was even willing to sacrifice the next election in order to stop the “menace” of a message and a movement from its own Left. Through this, the party establishment exposed its political hypocrisies, its moral vacuities and its class anxieties. Some context may perhaps be relevant.

On February 3, Sanders won Iowa, the first caucus state, with 26 percent of the vote, while Biden received 14 percent. On February 11, Sanders won New Hampshire, the first primary state, with 26 percent of the vote, and Biden only eight percent. According to the Marist/NPR/PBS poll of nationwide Democratic voters, published on February 18, Sanders had the support of 31 percent, Biden 15 percent, and Elizabeth Warren 12 percent, with none of the other contenders in double figures. On February 22, Sanders won Nevada, with 40 percent of the vote, with Biden at 19 percent.

It was too early to talk about

joke to a juggernaut”.

The entire anti-Sanders mantra hinged on one word—electability. This was hardly a tenable argument given the fact that Sanders was defeating Trump in almost all national polls with numbers that equaled or bettered Biden’s own, he was garnering more votes than the other Democratic candidates, he was collecting substantially more in campaign contributions (mostly from small donors), and his rallies continued to draw large and enthusiastic crowds.

The reality was obviously at variance with the party “talking points” about his electability. Therefore, given the American obsession with “compartmentalisation” of the electorate, this argument was presented, and must be understood, from the perspective of Sanders’ supposed “problem” with this or that group.

The biggest was presumably his “Black” problem. There is no doubt that Biden was much more popular in the African-American community. This, in spite of the fact that his record on race was spotty at best. He had opposed Court mandated school busing. In the 1970s, he had dismissed the question

his alleged “Black problem” was not a “minority problem”. His support among Hispanic voters was broad and deep (clearly demonstrated in Nevada, Colorado and California), his campaign co-Chair is Representative Ro Khanna (of Indian origin), and both the Muslim women in Congress (Ilhan Omar and Rashida Tlaib) have endorsed him.

This raises the issue of his supposed “woman problem”. Again, it is true that a slight majority of White suburban women prefer Biden over Sanders. But it is equally clear that among young women below the age of 35, and on specific proposals, his support is overwhelming. Also, it is Sanders who has a squeaky clean image, while Biden has been accused by at least seven women of inappropriate touching, and at least two have referred to his creepy habit of trying to smell their hair (Biden “explained” that he is, after all, a “tactile politician”).

Sanders’ most complex “problem” with groups involves Jews. This has less to do with the discomfort his Jewishness would provoke in some, given the long and problematic tradition of anti-Semitism in America,

*He demonstrated that it is possible to resist the seductions and entrapments of the moneyed classes by neither seeking, nor accepting, any donations from them, and repudiating glittering fundraisers in favour of “crowd sourced” small donors. In America, “money talks”. Sanders chose not to listen.*

**LOUISA MAY ALCOTT**  
(1832-1888)  
American author.

*The power of finding beauty in the humblest things makes home happy and life lovely.*

**CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH**

**ACROSS**

1 Plucked instruments

6 Jazz variety

11 Poor sport's cry

12 Nebraska city

13 Football runs

15 Used a chair

16 In the style of

17 Negating word

18 Tigger's creator

20 Jeweler's unit

23 Conference site of 1945

27 Wildly eager

28 Make progress

29 Bar mixer

31 Puzzled

32 Barber- shop sight

34 Fireplace bit

37 Series- ending abbr.

38 Debt reminder

41 Library features

44 Hymn singers

45 Chilled

46 Sentimental person

47 Valentine's gift

**DOWN**

1 Hula swayers

2 Blue hue

3 Litter's littlest

4 Deep hole

5 Narrow passage

6 Florist's field

7 Running bird

8 Loft setting

9 Cry of distress

10 Days gone by

14 Building wing

18 Wizardry

19 Gung-ho

20 Manx, for one

21 In the past

22 Friend of Harry and Hermione

24 Indulgent

25 Make a bow in

26 Linking word

30 Sundae topper

31 Winner

33 Snacked

34 Basics

35 Manhattan area

36 Cow's foot

38 Eye part

39 In the past

40 Purposes

42 Model buy

43 One, for Juan

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YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

P	M	A	G	S		D	E	E	M
P	A	B	L	O		O	P	R	A
A	D	I	E	U		T	A	M	P
C	E	D	A	R	S		I	L	L
E	D	E	N		P	L	A	N	E
R	O	D		A	R	I	S	E	S
		A	P	I	E	C	E		G
T	S	E	T	S	E		S	O	S
A	P	P			S	U	M	A	C
P	E	T	I	T		R	I	D	E
S	N	I	D	E		A	L	O	N
S	C	A	N			L	E	N	T

**BEETLE BAILEY**

BY MORT WALKER

**BABY BLUES**

BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT





Members of a Mro family in remote Langkom Mro Para under Lama upazila of Bandarban take rice with only wild spinach as the remote area sees serious food shortage during the ongoing lockdown aimed at checking the spread of Covid-19. *Below, many people like the ones in picture will face starvation if relief is not sent on an urgent basis in remote areas of Bandarban.*

PHOTO: STAR

LOCKDOWN AMID COVID-19

# Food crisis grips communities in remote Bandarban

SANJOY KUMAR BARIUA, *Bandarban*

In Chong Mro, a Jhum farmer of remote Langkom Mro Para under Lama upazila of Bandarban, is worried about arranging food for his family as their earning virtually stopped during the ongoing lockdown imposed to check the spread of novel coronavirus.

"I got only 150 kg of rice from my field in last August which lasted till November. From then on, I managed daily meals for my family by selling banana and other fruits of my garden," said In Chong, father of two children, aged eight and ten.

"But we are eating only wild spinach with rice for the last one month as we couldn't go outside due to corona disease," he added.

Menrao Mro and Chong Rao Mro of the area are also in the same boat.

"I don't know from where I will get food for my five-member family including three children," Menrao said.

"I am worried as I don't know how I will feed my family as the food at my home will barely last a



day," said Chong Rao Mro.

"Ten of the fifteen families living in Langkom Mro Para are facing serious food shortage," said Langkom Mro, karbari (chief) of the Para.

"We locked our Para (neighbourhood) with khasur (bamboo-made barrier) when we heard about the outbreak of

corona disease in our country. But we didn't get any relief from government or non-government organization while villagers are badly suffering due to food shortage," he said.

Reng Yian Mro, karbari of Dekichhara Natun Para, said most of the families of our Para are suffering from food shortage as

the neighbourhood is closed with khasur.

"After putting the khasur, no one goes outside from the Para and nobody is allowed to enter inside the para, said Sing Young Mro, leader of the Mro community.

Contacted, Nur-E-Jannat, upazila nirbahi officer of Lama, said, "I have directed the local public representatives to give priority to remote Mro people while distributing relief as they are facing serious crisis."

Faridul Alom, chairman of Sarai union parishad of Lama upazila, said, "We are distributing food to the remote areas but it is not possible to give food to everyone as we didn't get enough relief. I will tell the ward member to collect information about the most needy ones."

Jamal Uddin, ward member of the area, said, "Around 1300 families live in my ward while I got relief only for 142 families."

Similar situations are prevailing in many remote areas of Alikadom, Thanchi, Ruma, Rowangchhari and Naikhongchhari upazilas of Bandarban.

## Graves of Liberation War martyrs lie in neglect

*Mass killing in Pakshey railway colony yet to be recognized*

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, *Pabna*

Visitors of Pakshey railway office in Pabna's Ishwardi upazila are often surprised to see the awful condition of five graves of Liberation War martyrs near the Pakshey divisional railway office, often try to read the nearly deleted plaques.

The graves carry the mortal remains of a doctor, his three sons and a relative who sacrificed their lives while trying to save others of the railway colony.

Besides, there are graves of 15 to 20 martyrs in the area but no step has been taken to preserve their memory during the 49 years after independence.

Pakistani occupation army along with their local collaborators attacked Pakshey railway colony and the divisional headquarters of the railway West Zone on the night of April 12 in 1971 and killed 15 to 20 people, mostly railway employees, at Juktitola, Babu Bazar, Merinpara and Pakshey Bazar para area.

When they advanced to the railway officers quarters, resident medical officer of Pakshey railway hospital Dr Rafik Ahmed along with three sons and a relative tried to prevent them.

But the brutal force killed Dr Ahmed Rafik, his three sons Zia Uddin Dulal, Saifuddin Mamun and Raich Uddin Shamim and relative Aminul Haque in front of the hospital's residence. While Rafik's wife and daughter somehow saved themselves by hiding in a corner.

The occupation army dumped the five bodies near the water tank of the railway.

The next day, the residents of the rail colony buried them beside Amtola Road near Pakshey divisional railway office.

After the Liberation War, freedom fighters made concrete walls and coverings on the graves and set nameplates of the

martyrs but those are decaying due to the lack of maintenance.

"Dr Rafik Ahmed and his family provided food, shelter and treatment to the freedom fighters during the early stage of the Liberation War, defying life risk. At one stage he embraced martyrdom," prof Abul Kalam Azad, a freedom fighter, told The Daily Star.



Five graves of Liberation War martyrs near Pakshey divisional railway office show all signs of neglect.

PHOTO: STAR

"Steps should be taken to keep the memory of Dr Rafiq and other martyrs in the area alive for the future generation," he said.

"Next year we are going to observe the 50th anniversary of our independence. But it is unfortunate that we do not keep the memories of many martyrs like the doctor and his family members in Liberation War," said Md Amirul Islam, a primary teacher of Pakshey.

Contacted, Md Asadul Haque, Pakshey divisional railway manager, said, "Now we are trying to identify all the mass killing spots and mass graves of martyrs in the railway colony area. We have a plan to preserve the mass graves and build a monument in the railway colony area for the sake of keeping memory of the Liberation War."

COVID-19 LOCKDOWN IN INDIA

# 61 Indian truckers stranded at Burimari land port for weeks

S DILIP ROY, *Lalmonirhat*

It has been more than two weeks when they came to Bangladesh's Burimari land port in Patgram with their trucks carrying jute seeds imported from India. But 61 drivers of the vehicles from that country are still stranded there.

The Indian citizens could not return to their homeland as the Indian authorities have been reluctant to allow them back amid the ongoing lockdown enforced in India to contain the Covid-19 pandemic.

Before entering Burimari land port on April 4, the truckers had to remain in quarantine for 14 days at Changrabandha land port in West Bengal of India -- a decision that was enforced by the authorities of both Bangladesh and India.

"We are stranded in Bangladesh as the Changrabandha land port authorities are not allowing us back in India... Our families are worried," said trucker Ramesh Das.

"We've been facing immense difficulties. Since all hotels and restaurants are closed due to the Coronavirus shutdown, we are sleeping in the trucks and cooking our food for ourselves. Even we haven't been able to get in touch with our families at all," he also said.

In the meantime, several talks between the Changrabandha port authorities and clearing and forwarding (C&F) agents as well as export-import dealers of the two countries produced no result.

This correspondent spoke over cell phone about the situation with Uttam Kumar Sarkar, general secretary of C&F agents' association at India's Changrabandha land port.

Uttam said the situation has arisen as the Indian authorities have barred the entry of vehicles through the port due to the ongoing Covid-19 lockdown in the country.

They were trying to get the permission from the Indian authorities for re-entry of the Indian drivers soon, he added.

Alamgir Mia, owner of Rafiq Enterprise, a



PHOTO: COLLECTED

The Indian trucks that remain parked at Burimari land port in Patgram of Lalmonirhat. The drivers and their assistants have been stranded since they arrived there on April 4.

Dhaka-based business that imports jute seeds from India through the Burimari land port, said the Indian government has already earned foreign currency through the export of the jute seeds to Bangladesh.

And now they are dilly-dallying the process of taking their trucks back -- a move that goes against the rules of international business. "I request the embassies and foreign ministries of both the countries to address the situation at the soonest."

Contacted, Somen Kumar Chakma, assistant commissioner (AC) of customs services at Burimari Land Port, said they have been in constant communication with the higher authorities and their Indian counterparts and

that he hoped for a resolution to the situation any moment.

Burimari land port Deputy Director Mahfuzul Islam said the drivers are now staying in their trucks parked inside the premises of the port and C&F agents and importers have been providing food assistance to them.

He also said he informed the local lawmaker, deputy commissioner and police superintendent of the matter already.

Lalmonirhat Deputy Commissioner Abu Zafar said the Indian high commission and the district magistrate of India's Cooch Behar district in West Bengal state have been informed of the situation, but they were still awaiting a resolution to the matter.

# Curiosity leads to business

*Moulvibazar youth finds success in cultured pearl*

MINTU DESHWARA, *Moulvibazar*

Once unproductive and full of water hyacinth, a five-decimal pond at Moulvibazar's Nuna village has become the centre of attention in the region, as a youth successfully farmed pearls in the waterbody.

The owner of the pond, Sultan Ahmed Rony, who works as a computer operator at the police department in Sylhet, often pondered about using the pond to supplement his paltry income.

In 2018, he heard about pearl farming and watched a number of Youtube videos on the topic.

"I have often seen mussels in the ponds and rivers of our area, but never believed that it is possible to culture pearls from these creatures," he said, adding that the Youtube videos changed his perspective and he wanted to experiment with the idea.

He contacted Ruhul Amin Liton, renowned pearl farmer from Lalmonirhat, and took training on pearl culture from him for Tk 5000.

Towards the beginning of last year (2019), he collected 2000 mussels, cleaned his pond and tested its water quality for pearl farming.

When this correspondent visited his farm, Sultan described the technique he followed.

In nature, pearls are formed when a particle, often called an irritant, enters a mollusk such as an oyster or a mussel. As a defense mechanism, the mollusk secretes a fluid called nacre and coats the particle over two to four years forming the pearl. The particle becomes the nucleus of the pearl.

Cultured pearls are formed using the same principle, explained Sultan.

He said, first a mantle (the organ that forms the shell) tissue and a nucleus is implanted inside a mussel.

A dice made from candle, oyster dust or dental powder is used as the nucleus. An image is imprinted on the dice so that the nacre coatings take the shape of the designed dice producing an image pearl, he said.

Sultan showed some of the flat image pearls he harvested from the mussels farmed last year. Each designed pearl, attached to the inner shell of a mussel, came in a variety of shapes including a

flower, a butterfly, a leaf and even a Hindu deity.

After implantation, the mussels are suspended in the pond from net bags 1.5 feet to 2 feet below the surface of the water. The image pearls are formed within 10 to 12 months, he described.

He said he invested a total of Tk 15000 for collecting mussels, buying implantation equipment, suspending the mollusks in the pond and finally harvesting the pearl.

Till date, Sultan collected 320 image pearls embedded in mussel shells and sold each shell for an average of Tk 300 to local jewellers and other individuals.

He plans to harvest the rest of the about 1600 mussels at stages, said the 27-year-old young entrepreneur.

Bidhan Chandra Mallik, owner of Mausumi Jewelers shop in Kulaura upazila told this correspondent, pearl, known as 'jarwa' or 'naoraton' in Bangla, is very costly. Traditionally, the gemstone was only set with gold along with various coloured stones.

"If it is farmed locally, we will be able to buy it at a lower price compared to the ones sold in Dhaka," he said.

Senior Fisheries Officer Mohammad Azharul Alam of Kulaura told The Daily Star that as far as he knows Sultan Ahmed Rony's venture at pearl farming is the first in Sylhet Division.

He said Bangladesh Fisheries Research Institute carried out research on pearl culture and interested people can take training from their Mymensingh training centre.

"The abundance of mussels in haors can create a lot of opportunities for pearl farming in this area," he said.

Jaglal Haider, upazila agriculture officer of Kulaura, said, the soil and weather conditions of the region are suitable for pearl farming. Freshwater pearl can be grown here within eight to 10 months.

He said Sultan's success in pearl farming has attracted the attention of others in the area.

Upazila Nirbahi Officer ATM Farhad Chowdhury of Kulaura said, pearl farming can create a source of income for unemployed youths.

He said the upazila fisheries department can arrange for loans if anyone wishes to start the business.



Sultan Ahmed Rony of Nuna village in Moulvibazar's Kulaura upazila shows his cultured pearls and describes the technique he followed.

PHOTO: STAR





(L) Bangladesh cricketers celebrate their victory against India at the Bangabandhu National Stadium in Dhaka on December 26, 2004. (R) The Tigers celebrate after their first-ever Test victory against Zimbabwe at the M. A. Aziz Stadium in Chattogram on January 10, 2005.

# Bashar picks his best memories

BISHWAJIT ROY

It could be said that the ‘fearless’ version of the Tigers first appeared when Habibul Bashar led Bangladesh to a five-wicket win over India at the Queen’s Park Oval in Trinidad in the 2007 World Cup. Bangladesh had turned into a force to be reckoned with after that historic win, which had knocked India out in the group stage. That was followed by a victory over the mighty South Africa in the Super Eight.

So, it was no surprise that Bangladesh’s most successful ODI skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza often put Bashar’s achievements ahead of his own. We could recall what Mashrafe said after overtaking Bashar as the most successful ODI captain for Bangladesh.

“If you look at Sumon [Bashar] bhai’s wins, those should be considered as double. Because winning was very tough for us then,” said Mashrafe.

Like Mashrafe, Bashar did not hesitate to put his predecessors’ achievements ahead of his own, especially the 1997 ICC Trophy, which the former national skipper marked ahead of every milestone in Bangladesh cricket.

But still, whenever your mind goes down memory lane, it always finds some of your own sweet memories. “No, if you consider the time we have been passing due to the fear of the coronavirus

BASHAR’S TOP 10	
<b>ICC Trophy, 1997:</b> Bangladesh became champions by defeating Kenya in the final. The match was affected by rain and was played over two days. The Bangladesh target was set at 166 from 25 overs by the Duckworth–Lewis method. The Tigers reached the target off the last ball of the match with two wickets in hand.	101 balls, kept the Tigers on course throughout.
<b>Multan Test, 2003:</b> Bangladesh came very close to their maiden Test win, only to be foiled by Inzamam-ul-Haq.	<b>First Test Win, 2005:</b> On home soil, Bangladesh won the two-match series against Zimbabwe 1-0 with one Test drawn. This was the first time in their history, when Bangladesh had won both a Test match and a Test series.
<b>Harare ODI, 2004:</b> Bangladesh won their first international fixture since achieving Test status in 2000 by a thrilling eight-run margin. With 13 runs to defend in the final over, Tareq Aziz bowled Stuart Matsikenyeri and Douglas Hondo off consecutive deliveries to prompt scenes of unfettered joy in the Bangladeshi dressing-room.	<b>Fatullah Test, 2006:</b> Bangladesh nearly caused a massive upset in the first Test of the series, only to be denied by Australian captain Ricky Ponting, who scored an unbeaten 118 in the second innings as the visiting team won by 3 wickets.
<b>Dhaka ODI, 2004:</b> Bangladesh pulled off a historic first ODI victory at home and also their first-ever win against India at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.	<b>Bulawayo ODI, 2009:</b> Charles Coventry made an unbeaten 194 but his effort was overshadowed by Tamim Iqbal, who scored a match-winning 154.
<b>Cardiff ODI, 2005:</b> In Sophia Gardens, Bangladesh earned the respect of the cricketing world, beating the mighty Australia by five wickets. Mohammad Ashraful’s brilliantly paced 100, from	<b>Asia Cup Final, 2012:</b> Pakistan stunned Bangladesh in a last-ball thriller to win by 2 runs at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium.
	<b>World Cup 2015:</b> In Adelaide, England were knocked out of the tournament as Bangladesh claimed a stunning 15-run win to book a place in the quarterfinals of the World Cup for the first time in their history.

pandemic, I would not want to be bored. I never enjoy watching those matches [the 2007 World Cup wins] because both were one-sided affairs,” Bashar said.

“If you are talking about historic importance then it’s a different issue and I will make a list that will

not go with what I make for this moment, as I want to memorise those matches that give me immense pleasure because of their competitiveness,” he added.

Bashar was not ready to consider the final outcome of the matches when he requested to make a top-

10 list of Bangladesh’s international matches.

“We lost the Multan Test in 2003 but I can still remember every moment and every twist of the match. It is a match you would never get bored of watching. Same for the Fatullah Test against Australia in 2006, we lost but it was a match to remember for us.

“Still, I can see the match we won in Harare in 2000, which was our first international fixture since achieving Test status, and what a thrilling finish it was. The first-ever win against India in 2004 at the Bangabandhu National Stadium was something special in my mind, especially the crowd was amazing. The 2012 Asia Cup final, the Cardiff victory against Australia, the first Test win against Zimbabwe in 2005, the win against England in Adelaide in the 2015 World Cup are the matches with the qualities that make a good cricket match. We may not often mention the ODI victory in Bulawayo in August, 2009 but I must say Tamim Iqbal was amazing in that match,” he continued.

“But the 1997 ICC Trophy is above everything. You cannot compare any match with it. Nothing could have been more pleasant than watching those historic matches. Actually, I cannot explain my emotion when I think about that time,” Bashar said.

“I believe our young stars will benefit by watching the matches I mentioned here during this unwanted break,” Bashar, who is also a national selector, suggested.

## Son starts 3-week military training

AFP, Seoul

Tottenham Hotspur’s South Korean striker Son Heung-min began his three-week military training at a marines boot camp on Monday, a report said, with the Premier League on hold over the coronavirus pandemic.

All able-bodied South Korean men are obliged to serve in the military for nearly two years, making up the bulk of Seoul’s 600,000-strong forces.

But Son was among the South Korean footballers who earned an exemption by winning gold at the 2018 Asian Games in Indonesia.

The 27-year-old’s Premier League season ended even before the coronavirus outbreak spread to Europe when he broke his arm against Aston Villa on February 16, and Spurs said he returned to South Korea for “personal reasons”.

Son reported to a marines camp on the southern island of Jeju for his three-week basic training. Yonhap news agency reported.

A Yonhap photo showed Son walking past a military truck and



South Korean striker Son Heung-min (2nd R, black cap) arrives at a marines boot camp on the southern island of Jeju on Monday for his three-week military basic training.

PHOTO: AFP

soldiers, wearing a green sweatshirt, a black cap and a face mask.

“South Korean football star Son Heung-min enters the training facility of the 91st Battalion of the 9th Brigade of the Marine Corps,” the caption read.

Son’s agency had earlier urged fans to refrain from attending the venue over virus concerns.

“Son Heung-min is up for basic military training in April,” his agency said in his official Facebook account this month.

## Roma players to forego four months’ salary

REUTERS, Rome

The players and coaching staff at Serie A side AS Roma have agreed to go without four months’ salary to help the club through the crisis caused by the COVID-19 outbreak.

Serie A has been suspended since March 9 and it is not known if or when the season will be able to re-start. Roma said in a statement on Sunday that the players would forego the wages they were due to receive between March and the scheduled end of the season in June.

Roma said the players would also top up the wages of other club employees who were placed on the Italian government’s social safety net scheme to ensure they received their regular monthly income.

The club management will also give up a percentage of their earnings.

“We always talk about unity at Roma and in volunteering to cut their salaries for the rest of the season, the players, the coach, and his staff, have all proved that we really are in this together,” said chief executive Guido Fienga.

“(Club captain) Edin Dzeko, all the players and (coach) Paulo Fonseca have demonstrated they understand what this club stands for and we also thank them all for their superb gesture towards the employees at this club.”

Players at Juventus, Parma and Cagliari have also agreed to wage reductions.

## ‘Chinese Super League to start by July’



Guangzhou R&F’s head coach Giovanni van Bronckhorst (C) attends a training session in Guangdong province on Monday. The club’s chairman Huang Shenghua said that he expects the Chinese Super League season to start in late June or early July.

PHOTO: AFP

AFP, Shanghai

The coronavirus-delayed Chinese Super League (CSL) season is scheduled to begin in late June or early July, a club chairman says.

Suspended leagues across the world, including in Europe, will be watching the CSL with interest as an indicator of the challenges they face in relaunching their own competitions.

The campaign was supposed to start on February 22 but was indefinitely postponed by the pandemic, which emerged in China in December before spreading worldwide.

“Based on the assessment of the current situation, the new season will start at the end of June or beginning of July,” said Guangzhou R&F chairman Huang Shenghua, according to state media.

Huang said that the season will be able to take place in full with each team playing the allotted 30 matches.

The media reports did not indicate whether a formal announcement was expected from the Chinese Football Association.

## ‘Leagues ready to play behind closed doors’

AFP, Milan

UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin said Monday that leagues across Europe were ready to return to action behind closed doors in a bid to limit the damage caused by coronavirus.

Football leagues have been suspended since mid-March due to the pandemic which has claimed more than 100,000 lives throughout the continent. But the head of European football believes that playing would be an important step towards a return to normal life and avoid heavy financial losses for leagues.

“I believe there are options that can allow us to restart cup championships and to complete them,” Ceferin said in an interview with Italian daily Corriere della Sera.

“We may have to resume without spectators, but the most important thing, I think, is playing games. It is early to say that we cannot complete the season. The impact would be terrible for clubs and leagues. Better to play behind closed doors than not at all.

“In such hard times it would bring happiness to people and a certain sense of normality even if the games can only be seen on TV. All activities are being organised to start again, everyone needs to find their lives. If safety measures are respected and if the authorities give the green light, the training could resume like the rest. Further consent will be needed for matches.”

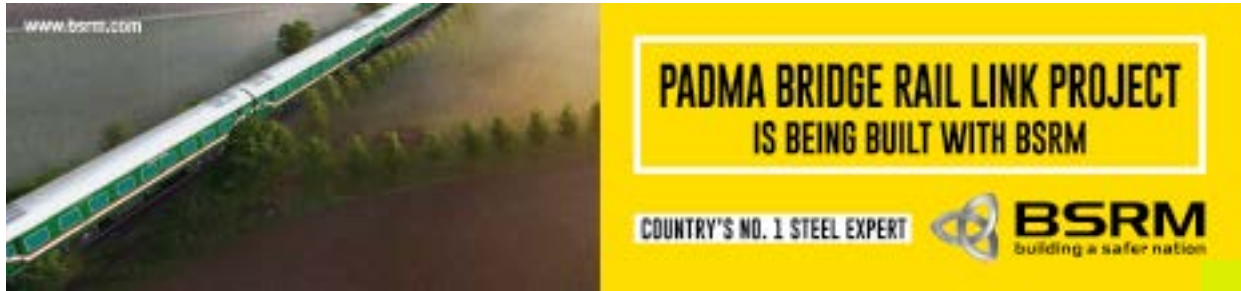


With so much time to concentrate on things in life other than sports, New Zealand cricket team’s captain Kane Williamson was pictured attending to his dogs while Real Madrid and Spain star Sergio Ramos was busy relocating stuff at home, pausing to take a picture in front of one of his favourite paintings.

PHOTO: INSTAGRAM







## Aedes Mosquitos They're breeding in construction sites

Finds DGHS survey

HELEMUL ALAM

Clear and stagnant water at construction sites are the most hospitable breeding ground for Aedes mosquitoes and steps should be taken immediately to address the problem, experts said.

According to the survey of the Communicable Disease Control division of Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), flooded basements, plastic barrels and water tanks at construction sites are the prime breeding grounds for Aedes.

Among breeding sources, flooded floor basement has accounted for 11.69 percent of Aedes breeding, plastic drum 22.08 percent, plastic bucket 10.39 percent, water tank 9.09 percent, hole for water metre 9.09 percent, elevator shaft 5.19 percent, mineral water jar 3.90 percent, clay pot 2.60 percent, paint pot 2.60 percent, others 15.58 percent, according to the findings.

The 10-day survey was conducted between March 5 and March 14 in 2,996 houses in 100 neighbourhoods of 98 wards of the two city corporations in Dhaka.

Shahnaila Ferdousi, line director of Centre for Disease Control at DGHS, said 72 houses out of 2,996 were found Aedes positive.

She said they have provided the findings to the city corporations and other authorities concerned to take necessary steps to destroy the breeding

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Rickshaws and other vehicles in their numbers on the Rampura DIT Road in the capital yesterday amid the ongoing nationwide shutdown imposed to curb the spread of coronavirus. The city had gone quiet after the shutdown was enforced on March 26.

PHOTO:  
SK ENAMUL HAQ

STAY HOME,  
STAY WELL

Time to reinvent oneself

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

The ongoing coronavirus pandemic has been affecting virtually the whole world as both casualties and the number of infected are on the rise.

Bangladesh is no exception. There is a shutdown across the country to contain the spread of the highly contagious Covid-19, but the numbers are going up regardless.

In such a situation, Prof ABM Abdullah, personal physician of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, urged the people to stay at home at any cost.

"We know it is tough to stay home for a long time but these are very unusual times and we all have to accept it," he told The Daily Star.

"We are at a very crucial stage and to overcome this pandemic,

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## Three held for stealing rice meant for poor

STAR REPORT

Police and local administration officials recovered over 4 tonnes of rice, provided under the government's "rice at Tk 10 per kilogram" programme meant for the poor, in three districts since Sunday.

Three people, including a government-appointed dealer to distribute the rice, were arrested in this connection.

In a wake of widespread allegations over irregularities in distributing rice meant for the destitute, law enforcers and the civil administration have been continuing drives to find whoever is involved in the irregularities.

Since March 30, over 314 tonnes of rice, five tonnes sugar, 8,048 litres of edible oil and 25 sacks of chickpeas have been recovered from the drives. Besides, 56 people were arrested in different districts in this connection, according to media reports

Our correspondents from different districts reported on the drives.

In Lalmonirhat, the local administration recovered 3 tonnes rice from a warehouse in Hatibandha upazila on Sunday night.

A motorized vehicle came near the warehouse to transport the rice around 11:00pm. Alerted, locals cordoned off the warehouse and informed the local

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FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH  
BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

'Devote yourselves to alleviating human suffering'



Bangabandhu meets a cross section of people on April 21, 1972 at Gono Bhaban and asks about their problems.

April 21, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

BANGABANDHU'S MESSAGE TO DOCTORS

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman calls upon doctors to devote themselves to alleviate human suffering. "Let the humanitarian ideals inspire you more than what your professional obligations can preoccupy you." In a message sent to the organisers of the first conference of Bangladesh Medical Association, Bangabandhu says doctors can play a revolutionary role in carrying the fruits of independence that Bangladesh achieved at the cost of the blood of lakhs of martyrs. He wishes the conference all success.

MUKTI BAHINI KILLED 8,400 PAK ARMY PERSONNEL

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This 60-bed hospital for Covid-19 patients -- an initiative of Navana Group -- opens in Chattogram's Faujdarhat today. In this photo taken yesterday, hospital employees are seen busy with last-minute preparations.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

## Parts of Europe ease virus curbs

Germany reopens some shops as Norway restarts nurseries; NY passes 'high point'

AFP, Berlin

Germany and other parts of Europe took tentative steps to ease lockdown measures yesterday but officials warned the battle against the coronavirus pandemic was far from over.

Some shops reopened in Germany and parents dropped their children off at nurseries in Norway as tight restrictions in

place for weeks were lifted in parts of the continent.

After being hit hard by the virus that first emerged in China late last year, Europe has seen encouraging signs in recent days, with death rates dropping in Italy, Spain, France and Britain.

The hope is tempered by fears of new

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GUN RAMPAGE

## 16 murdered, suspect dead in Canada

AFP, Montreal

A gunman who drove a mock-up police car killed at least 16 people including a female constable in a shooting rampage across Nova Scotia, Canadian federal police said Sunday, the worst case of its kind in the country's history.

The shooter, identified as Gabriel Wortman, 51, was shot dead by officers after a 12-hour manhunt across the eastern province ended Sunday morning.

Among the victims was a veteran female constable with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, which also handles municipal and provincial law enforcement in the province.

Police said the suspect had been on the run since Saturday night, when

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PRAYER TIMING APRIL 21

Fajr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha  
AZAN 4:25 12:45 4:45 6:27 8:00  
JAMAAT 5:00 1:15 5:00 6:31 8:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

## Beaten for demanding dues

10 RMG workers injured in Ashulia

STAR REPORT

Garment workers were beaten up allegedly by a local union parishad member's men when they gathered in front of a factory for their dues in Savar's Ashulia yesterday.

During the attack, at least 10 workers suffered injuries.

The injured workers said they worked at Elaine Apparels Ltd in Ashulia's Charabagh area.

They had to leave their jobs due to constant pressure from the factory authorities. Four months later, despite being given many dates, they are yet to be paid their wages, they said.

Around 25 workers went to the factory gate around 10:00am, as instructed by the authorities, to take their dues, they said.

Soon, around 20 men, all loyal to local union parishad member Hossen Ali, attacked the workers with

bamboo and wooden sticks and asked them vacate the factory area.

"After the attack, we tried many times to contact the factory authorities but they did not receive the phone calls," said one of the workers.

Billal Sheakh, organising secretary of Garment Sramik Sanghati (Ashulia Thana Committee), who was present during the attack, told The Daily Star that the UP member's gang attacked

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# গণবিজ্ঞপ্তি

## কোভিড-১৯ থেকে বাঁচতে হলে ঘরেই থাকি, সুস্থ থাকি

- করোনায় সারা বিশ্ব আজ বিপর্যস্ত।
- মানুষ বাসা-বাড়ি থেকে বের না হলে সংক্রমণের ঝুঁকি বহুলাংশে কমে যায়।
- মনে রাখবেন, অসাবধানতায় যে কেউ যে কোন সময় করোনা ভাইরাসে আক্রান্ত হতে পারে।

### কাজেই ঘরেই থাকুন সুস্থ থাকুন

- একান্ত প্রয়োজনে বাইরে গেলে অবশ্যই মাস্ক পড়ুন।
- স্বাস্থ্য অধিদপ্তর কর্তৃক প্রদত্ত সব স্বাস্থ্যবিধি অবশ্যই মেনে চলুন।
- বারবার সাবান পানি দিয়ে কমপক্ষে ২০ সেকেন্ড হাত ধোবেন। অপরিচ্ছন্ন হাত দিয়ে মুখ, নাক ও চোখ ছোবেন না।
- নিয়মিত কুসুম গরম পানি, আদা চা এবং গরম স্যুপ পান করুন। লবণ মিশ্রিত কুসুম গরম পানি দিয়ে দিনে ৩-৪ বার গড়গড়া করুন, নাকে মুখে গরম পানির ভাপ নিন।
- জ্বর, সর্দি, কাশি, গলা ব্যথা হলে বাড়িতেই আলাদা থেকে চিকিৎসা নিন। প্রয়োজনে করোনা বিষয়ক হটলাইনগুলোতে ফোন করুন: ১৬২৬৩৩; ৩৩৩; ১০৬৫৫; ০১৯৪৪৩৩৩২২২ অথবা নিকটস্থ স্বাস্থ্যকর্মী বা হাসপাতালে যোগাযোগ করুন।

### মনে রাখবেন আপনার সুরক্ষা আপনারই হাতে

## স্বাস্থ্য অধিদপ্তর

### স্বাস্থ্য ও পরিবার কল্যাণ মন্ত্রণালয়