



The Daily Star



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BANGLADESH UPDATE 688 New cases in 24hrs | 10,143 Total cases | 182 Deaths | 1,209 Recoveries | **GLOBAL UPDATE** 250,047 Deaths | 3,603,517 Total cases

Businesses to reopen May 10

Govt allows malls, shops, other businesses to run till 4:00pm; shutdown of govt offices, edn institutions, transports extended till May 16

- Nobody will leave their location during the Eid-ul-Fitr holidays
- Cash assistance for jobless before Eid
- All types of public transport to be suspended till May 16
- Factory can be opened ensuring safety measures
- No educational inst will open during shutdown



STAR REPORT

The government has decided to reopen shopping malls, all types of shops and other businesses from May 10 on a limited scale ahead of the Eid-ul-Fitr. Those would remain open from 10:00am to 4:00pm every day, a gazette of the Cabinet Division said yesterday. It said people should stay at their present locations during the Eid holidays and that they should be barred from travelling to their homes in other districts and upazilas. The directives came hours after the Cabinet Division issued another gazette, extending the ongoing general holidays from May 7 to May 16, reports UNB.

The circular said the government has decided to allow keeping shopping malls, all types of shops and other businesses open maintaining health guidelines during the general holidays considering Ramadan and Eid-ul-Fitr. "Shops will be allowed to remain open to do business on a limited scale. But all have to maintain distancing and follow health guidelines during buying and selling. Large shopping malls will have to make arrangements for washing hands at their entrances and disinfecting vehicles entering the malls," it added. The two circulars were published hours after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said



This elderly man has been suffering from fever, cold and breathing problems for over a week. Yesterday, he tried to get admitted to at least three hospitals, but all of them turned him away, suspecting him to be a Covid-19 patient. At one point, he felt severely ill and sat in chair on a pavement on Old Dhaka's Johnson Road. His son was seen comforting him when a medical representative in a PPE suit, who was passing the area, fanned him.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Padma Bridge Deadline may be pushed back by at least 6 months

Current one is June 2021; cost too may increase due to the pandemic, say officials

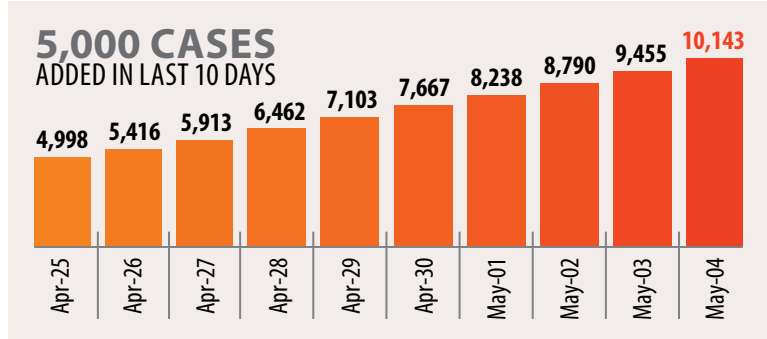
TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The much-hyped Padma Bridge project is likely to miss its current deadline of June 2021 which may increase its cost again, officials said. Coronavirus outbreak has slowed down the construction work. "The government has not extended the deadline yet. But it would be required. At least six more months would be needed. If the Covid-19 situation does not improve, it may take more time," Bridge Division Secretary Belayet Hossain told The Daily Star yesterday. The pace of work is not as fast as it used to be earlier, because night-shift work remained suspended, he said. Asked whether the cost of the project could go up for this reason, the secretary said, "Costs may increase little. Because the contractor(s) will claim more money if the time is extended." The current and fourth deadline of

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No clue when the outbreak may peak

Experts say it is very difficult to predict amid inadequate testing; virus cases cross 10,000



WASIM BIN HABIB and MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

While health officials still do not know when the coronavirus outbreak will peak and then plateau, confirmed coronavirus cases crossed the 10,000 mark with the announcement of a record 688 new cases yesterday. Fifty-six days after the first cases were reported, detected cases now stand at 10,143 and the number of people testing positive is still rising almost every day. After March 7, when the first cases were disclosed, the number grew slowly for a period. But now the country is experiencing an explosion of cases and a fluctuating number of deaths on a daily basis.

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Minimum Fitra Tk 70, maximum Tk 2,200

UNB, Dhaka

This year's minimum Fitra has been fixed at Tk 70 per person. The maximum Fitra has been set at Tk 2,200 per head, according to the National Fitra Fixing Committee. Yesterday, the Islamic Foundation fixed the amounts at a meeting chaired by Hafez Maulana Mohammad Mizanur Rahman, senior pesh imam of Baitul Mukarram national mosque and also the president of the National Fitra Fixing Committee, said a press release issued by the foundation. The amounts have been fixed considering the market prices of flour, dates and other essential items. Fitra is paid to the poor people before the Eid Jamaat.

COMMENTARY

Rule of law for Kajol indeed

A journalist in handcuffs on World Press Freedom Day

MAHFUZ ANAM

A journalist, Shafiqul Islam Kajol, disappears on March 10 following the filing of a case under Digital Security Act (DSA) by Saifuzzaman Shikhor. Video footage shows evidence of some people surrounding his motorbike as he is about to leave his office in Hatirpool in the evening. Two police stations - Chawk Bazar where he lives and New Market where his office is - refuse the family's plea to file a case of disappearance. On instructions from high-ups, Chawk Bazar Police Station finally accepts it. He stays untraced for 53 days during which police do nothing except saying that they are looking into the case. A citizen of the country, a journalist, a family man, a father, a husband, a taxpayer - nothing moved the police to investigate what became of him. Then much to our relief and elation of the family, through a sudden early morning



phone call, at 2:48am on Sunday, May 3, courtesy the Benapole Police station, Kajol told his son, Monorom Polok, that he is alive and that Polok should come to Benapole to bring him home. Kajol was "discovered" by a BGB patrol very near the India-Bangladesh border who, after initial questioning, handed him over to the police. The Benapole police identified

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Another doc dies from Covid-19

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Another physician has died of Covid-19 in the country. Hematologist Prof Col (ret) Md Moniruzzaman breathed his last at Dhaka Combined Military Hospital (CMH) on Sunday evening. He is the second coronavirus positive physician to die in the country, Nirupam Das, chief administrator of Bangladesh Doctors' Foundation, said yesterday. Kawser Ahmed, cousin of the deceased, said he was suffering from fever for the last two days, but he did not have any other visible symptoms of the novel coronavirus. "On Sunday, he felt chest pain and thought maybe it was a cardiac issue. He was then taken to CMH where he died," he added. On Sunday night, the hospital authorities confirmed that he was Covid-19 positive, Kawser told The Daily Star, adding that the other family

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'NO ONE HELPED THEM TO SAVE HIM'

Staring at her 11-month-old son lying dead on a gurney, Bristy wails at the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital as her sister tries to comfort her in vain yesterday. Siam died after showing flu-like symptoms for the previous three days. His father Selim said they took him to a hospital in Dhaka's Matuail on Sunday night after the child developed breathing problems in the evening. Turned away by doctors there, the family, which lives in Narayanganj, brought him to the DMCH burn unit, which has recently been converted into a Covid-19 treatment facility, around 1:00am yesterday. He died around 6:00am, without receiving any treatment, claimed his family. The body lied on this gurney till 2:00pm when this photographer visited the place.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

STUNG BY COVID-19 Police struggle to enforce curbs

Halve manpower on the roads after 953 test positive, 5 die

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

While the government has extended the ongoing shutdown to May 16 to ensure social distancing, many continue to crowd roads amid the growing number of Covid-19 cases in the country. Apart from shopping, thin presence of law enforcers is one of the main reasons behind it, sources said. Police have been playing a vital role in ensuring social distancing, which is crucial to contain the spread of the coronavirus, but they are having to pay a price: at least 953 of their members have already contracted the disease and five died. Against this backdrop, the force has brought changes to its plan to deploy manpower, believing it would help avoid coronavirus transmission. Only half its members are out at the field at a time for a week. The other group is deployed the next week. Lack of PPE, however, continues to remain a cause of concern. Visiting different areas of the capital, including Kalabagan, Panthapath, Jhigatola, Dhanmondi, Eskaton, Moghbazar, Malibag and Jatrabari, The Daily Star correspondents saw people crowding before groceries, stationery and roadside shops for buying different commodities in the last couple of days. "About a week ago, the road used to be empty, but now it is filled with rickshaws and vans," said Abdul Halim, a resident of Shahid Faruk Road in Jatrabari, considered a

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3 die after showing Covid-19 symptoms

STAR REPORT

At least three persons have died with Covid-19-like symptoms in Faridpur and Noakhali since Sunday night.

In different areas of Faridpur's Sadar upazila, two of the victims, who were suffering from fever and diarrhoea, died yesterday.

A 35-year-old man of Alipur area in the district headquarters was suffering from diarrhoea for a couple of days. Later, he was taken to Faridpur Medical College Hospital around 9:00 am where on-duty doctors declared him dead, said Siddiqur Rahman, civil surgeon of the district.

Another 45-year-old man died at his house in Riazuddin Matbor Dangi village early in the morning yesterday. He was suffering from fever for the last seven days, the civil surgeon added.

Samples of both bodies have been collected to be tested for coronavirus. The bodies were buried as per the guidelines set by the World Health Organization, he added.

In Noakhali, a 34-year-old man died with Covid-19-like symptoms at Noakhali General Hospital on Sunday night.

The victim, from Hazipur area of Chowmuhani municipality under Begumganj upazila, was admitted to the hospital at around 3:00pm on Sunday with cough, fever and respiratory problems, said Syed Mohiuddin Abdul Azim, resident medical officer (RMO) of the hospital.

As his physical condition kept deteriorating, doctors referred him to Kurmitola General Hospital in Dhaka. But his family members did not take him to Dhaka.

The patient breathed his last around 10:00pm. His sample has been collected for Covid-19 test, the doctor added.

Businesses

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the government directed the authorities to open markets and shops so that people did not face any problem to have iftar and sehri and they could buy goods ahead of the Eid.

Addressing public representatives and officials from eight districts of Rangpur division through videoconferencing from the Gono Bhaban, she said the government would provide cash assistance before the Eid to those who lost their jobs amid the coronavirus outbreak to ease their sufferings, reports BSS.

The Cabinet Division in the first gazette said all educational institutions would remain closed during the extended public holidays.

The ministries and divisions can open their offices as per their necessity and no one will be allowed to leave their workplace during the Eid holidays, it mentioned.

All factory authorities, including medicine industry and production and export-oriented industries, could keep their factories open ensuring safety and healthcare services for the workers, said the notification.

It also said services of all inter-district transport would remain suspended during the holidays.

On March 23, the government declared general holidays from March 26 to April 4 to slow the spread of coronavirus in the country. Later, the holidays were extended five times until May 5.

Shopping malls across the country also remained closed since March 25.

Speaking to public representatives and officials from Rangpur division, the prime minister yesterday said many people have taken loans from banks.

"But realising their loan interest has been suspended for two months as they [people] had no work and business in the last two months due to the pandemic."

Hasina said the government would take the next steps in this regard considering who have taken what amount of loan and for which sector.

The PM said the leaders and activists of Awami League, Krishak League and Chhatra League stood beside framers and helped them harvest their paddy.

"They are also engaged in the distribution of relief among the distressed people and I thank them sincerely for doing this."

She also thanked the health workers, including doctors and nurses, officials of the administration, members of the armed forces and law enforcement agencies, saying that they have been working round the clock to contain the spread of the disease, putting their lives at risk.

Pointing out that a number of media persons have already been infected with Covid-19, the PM requested them to perform their duties by protecting themselves.

Referring to transportation of goods, she directed the railways minister, who joined the video conference from Panchagarh, to take effective measures for transportation of all types of goods and food grains, particularly the perishable items, by trains.

About seasonal monga (a famine-like situation), which was once a common phenomenon in Rangpur region, the premier asked the authorities to take special measures so that the monga does not return.

PM's Principal Secretary Ahmad Kaikaus moderated the views-exchange meeting which was joined by the secretaries concerned.



Clad in PPE, a health worker administers a vaccine on a child at Barishal General Hospital. A programme for vaccinating children against measles and rubella is currently underway at the hospital.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

Rule of law for Kajol indeed

FROM PAGE 1

him, contacted his family and charged him with illegally entering Bangladesh under the Passport Act, a crime punishable by a Tk 500 fine or three months in jail.

The news of his sudden appearance went viral on the social and online media as journalists and concerned citizens followed developments every step of the way, anxiously waiting for Kajol to be released and reunited with the family. What remained, everyone thought, was the simple formality of a court appearance and obtaining a routine bail.

Much to the shock and disbelief of all concerned, Kajol was brought to the court, his hands tied behind his back with handcuffs. No regard was paid to his dignity of person. Police had no reason to enchain him in handcuffs which are usually used while handling terrorists or people accused of crimes like murder, rape, criminal assault or some such violent crimes. None of this applies in the case of Kajol who has been missing for 53 days.

The story does not end there. Suffering the humiliation of being handcuffed, Kajol appears in court and obtains bail and is all set to be reunited with his son when the police arrest him again under section 54 of CrPC because there are some cases against him in Dhaka under the draconian and controversial Digital Security Act.

Kajol's nightmare started when the well-known daily Manab Zamin published a story on March 2, on the expelled Jubo Mahila League leader Shamima Nur Papi, saying that she has disclosed, under interrogation, many names of people who have helped her or benefitted from her notorious activities, without mentioning any names. But many people, including Kajol, shared this story on their Facebook pages inserting names of some people, including that of the ruling party MP, Saifuzzaman Shikhor, who, on

March 9, filed cases under the Digital Security Act (DSA) against the editor and reporter of Manab Zamin and 30 others. Of the 30, Kajol's name was the first. Hours after the filing of the case, Kajol disappeared.

So what does immediate future hold for Kajol? According to Jashore Kotwali Police Station OC, Moniruzzaman, "He has been arrested under section 54 because he has three cases under DSA and he is being held in prison so that the relevant courts can process arrest warrants against him and take him to Dhaka. He has been sent to Jashore Central jail where he will be under quarantine for 14 days." It is clear from the above that section 54 was used to detain him while other arrest warrants were being prepared. This is in clear violation of the 14-year old ruling of the High Court Division, subsequently upheld by the Appellate Division in 2016, which lays down clear guideline under which section 54 is to be used, if at all. The way the Jashore Kotwali Police Station used section 54 was a clear violation of this Appellate Division guideline. And now, according to family sources, he is unable to file his bail petition because the court is closed for the pandemic.

Such is our rule of law that a photojournalist disappears for 53 days and not a finger is lifted to find him. Now that he has surfaced, suddenly our law enforcement bodies are on an overdrive to keep him in prison under different laws and denying him his fundamental rights. When the court grants him bail under one law, he is immediately detained under another. Not only that he is kept confined and denied freedom, he is humiliated in public with handcuffs and treated like a common criminal and under the guise of quarantine denied family visitation.

In addition to the duplicity of the law enforcers, Kajol is being made a victim of the complexity of our legal system. As the court is closed, he cannot avail of any immediate step to

get legal relief.

So does dispensation of justice stay on hold when courts are closed? We vigorously assert that as long as the Constitution exists so does all the fundamental rights guaranteed by it. So what happens to protection of fundamental rights for individuals when courts are not functioning? Usually when violation of fundamental rights occur a citizen can and does go to higher courts to seek justice. Even during normal recess there are vacation benches to take care of urgent matters.

So, is Kajol to be denied his constitutional rights and rot in the jail just because courts are closed due to a virus? If we are to believe in that age old dictum that "justice delayed is justice denied" then whatever delay is caused by courts being closed amounts to "denial of justice" for those affected, like Kajol.

We appeal to the higher judiciary to kindly consider the case of fundamental rights guaranteed by the constitution. The notion of "complete justice" under Article 104 may be considered to find a way out in this situation. Here we would like to suggest that if courts are unable to function physically, newer methods of accessibility to courts and dispensation of justice may be considered. In this regard, the idea of virtual courts may be thought of as has been done in India. And why not, when the whole society is going digital so should the courts. In fact, when physical constraints are removed it may lead to a justice system closer to the people.

While the general issue is being considered we appeal to the office of the Chief Justice as to whether the case of Kajol can be brought to its cognisance and he be ensured his constitutionally guaranteed fundamental rights.

A parting note. Kajol, a photojournalist, was humiliated in public with handcuffs on the World Press Freedom Day. How ironic.

Deadline may be pushed back

FROM PAGE 1

the project is June 2021 and costs of the project rose to Tk 30,193 crore following several revisions. Once completed, the 6.15km bridge will connect the capital with 21 southern districts and is expected to boost Bangladesh's gross domestic product by 1.2 percent.

When work of most development projects remained suspended due to Covid-19 fallout, Padma Multipurpose Bridge Project work continues.

But it faces obstacles for lack of workers -- both Chinese and locals -- and supply of construction materials, officials involved with the project said.

When the overall progress of the project was 76.5 percent as of December last year, it reached 79 percent in the last four months, they said.

The physical progress of the main bridge and river training were 85.5 percent and 66 percent respectively as of December last year. It rose to 87 percent and 71 percent respectively until April this year, they said.

Meanwhile, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader, on several occasions early this year, said all 41 spans of the bridge would be installed by July this year if everything remains okay. Twenty-nine spans have so far been installed.

The problem began in January when a good number of Chinese nationals working in the project went home on leave to celebrate the Chinese New Year and could not return timely due to Covid-19 outbreak in China.

The headquarters of the Chinese company building the bridge, China Major Bridge Engineering Co Ltd, is in Wuhan city, the first epicenter of the coronavirus outbreak.

Although 39 out of 41 spans reached Bangladesh from China before the outbreak, the company in China constructing the remaining two spans remained closed.

When the situation in Chana became normal, almost all of the Chinese nationals returned to Bangladesh and joined work after staying in 14 days' quarantine. Covid-19 hit Bangladesh.

Around 60 percent local workers left the project in March and the

authorities continue the work with the limited workers for around a fortnight, officials said.

"Actually, we lagged behind around four months from our deadline due to coronavirus outbreak," said a project engineer, wishing anonymity.

SITUATION IMPROVES LITTLE Now, all the Chinese engineers and workers are working and the number of local workers has also increased, Dewan Md Abdul Kader, project manager (main bridge), told The Daily Star. "Almost 70 percent local workers are now working," he added.

About the two spans, he said most parts of the spans already reached Mongla Sea Port and are expected to reach Mawa construction yard within a week.

The remaining parts are expected to reach Bangladesh within the first week of June, he added.

"We are expecting to install at least two spans every month. In that case, it may take November to install all the spans," he added.

Siltation during the rainy season caused problems in the channel between 17 and 38 piers on the Janjira end and so they would try to install two spans between 25 and 27 piers within June, he added.

He said the 29th span of the bridge linking the 19th and 20th piers was installed around 10:45am yesterday at the Mawa end, bringing into view 4.350 kilometres of the structure.

BACKGROUND A feasibility study on the project was conducted with the assistance from Japan International Cooperation Agency (Jica) from 2003 to 2005. The original cost was estimated in 2007 on the basis of the study.

Then the cost was Tk 10,161 crore. However, it did not include the cost of railway lines on the bridge.

With financing from the Asian Development Bank, the work on a detailed design of the bridge had started in 2009.

The cost almost doubled to Tk 20,507 crore when the first revision was done in 2011, including the cost of the railway lines.

According to the first revision, the

project was scheduled to be completed in 2015.

The authorities in 2015 revised the project cost by 40 percent, raising the estimated cost to Tk 28,793 crore. The deadline for completion of the project was extended to 2018.

In 2018, the deadline was extended to December 2019, and the cost shot up to 30,193 crore to acquire additional land. Last year, the deadline was extended to June 2021.

The World Bank withdrew its \$1.2 billion loan in 2012 over the allegations of corruption conspiracies, which the government always strongly rejected.

The country then moved to build the bridge with its own funds.

Another doc

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members "were sick and in isolation at home".

Prof Moniruzzaman, in his 60s, worked at Anwar Khan Modern Medical College Hospital and was also involved in three other private hospitals in the capital, said Prof Md Eklasar Rahman, principal of the medical college.

The physician came to Anwar Khan Modern Medical College Hospital (in the morning) and had saline after he felt ill, he added.

After he felt better, he returned home following a visit to another hospital he was engaged with, the doctor said.

He was taken to the CMH when his condition worsened. He died around 6:00pm on Sunday, Eklasar added.

Moniruzzaman was buried at Banani Graveyard yesterday in presence of two of his close family members, said cousin Kawser.

Bangladesh reported the first death of a physician, Moyeen Uddin, an assistant professor of medicine at the Sylhet Osmani Medical College Hospital, on April 15.

According to Bangladesh Doctor's Foundation data updated until May 2, 540 doctors have so far been infected with the coronavirus.

Brazil lockdown destroying jobs

Says President Bolsonaro

AFP, BRASÍLIA

Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro railed against the country's lockdown Sunday in a speech to thousands of anti-confinement demonstrators as the number of confirmed Covid-19 infections passed 100,000, with more than 7,000 deaths.

Bolsonaro blamed state governors for continuing the lockdown in a speech outside his presidential palace in Brasilia.

"The destruction of jobs by some governors is irresponsible and unacceptable. We will pay a high price in the future," the head of state said in a speech broadcast live on Facebook.

Bolsonaro has repeatedly clashed with state governors, insisting that strict containment measures they are imposing are an overreaction, and damaging to the economy.

The country registered 101,147 confirmed cases of the virus by Sunday, according to figures released by the Brazilian health ministry, with 275 deaths from Covid-19 within the previous 24 hours.

Experts believe the overall number of Covid-19 cases could be 12 to 15 times higher, due to a large number of undetected cases given the lack of testing availability across the country's 210 million population.

No clue when the outbreak

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At the daily briefing yesterday, officials said five Covid-19 patients died, taking the total toll to 182.

Judging the curve and the latest extension of the shutdown, health officials and experts say, it is difficult to predict the course of the pandemic.

Health officials earlier predicted that by the end of this month, the number of infected cases might be between 50,000 and 100,000. But they are now saying that the extension of the shutdown by nearly two weeks will slow down the spread.

"The virus is on course to reach the peak slowly. However, we cannot say exactly when it will peak," said Mushtaq Hossain, epidemiologist and consultant at the Institute of Epidemiology Disease Control And Research (IEDCR).

"If we do not allow people on the streets and relax social distancing orders, the virus will take longer to spread, and we will get the time to take preparations. But any wrong decision will cause a tsunami-like situation," he told The Daily Star.

Experts maintain that the actual number of infected people could be much higher in Bangladesh. Unless many more cases are detected through widespread testing, community transmission will continue and the situation will be out of hand.

"The situation is very complex. Community transmission is going on and the numbers are rising, while the rate of detection is still low. We have to increase the number of tests by a lot to fathom the situation," Benazir Ahmed, former director (disease control) of the DGHS, told The Daily Star.

He said if the shutdown is not properly enforced, the peak will come soon.

"Due to the shutdown, we have managed to slow the spread, but if we could identify all the cases, it would be easier for us to tackle the situation," he said.

During a meeting last month, health ministry officials expressed fear that the pandemic would worsen in May with up to 50,000 cases and 1,000 deaths.

Police struggle to enforce

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Covid-19 hotspot.

It's hard to believe a nationwide shutdown is in place, he said.

Robin Hasan, a private jobholder, went to an ATM booth in Moghbazar from his Eskaton home to withdraw money yesterday noon.

Talking to the correspondent later, he said, "I travelled on my motorcycle. For the first time since the shutdown began on March 26, I had to honk to get through people."

DANGER LURKS

In the battle against the outbreak, police is one of the few government organisations that have witnessed a surge in infection numbers. Of the 953 infected, 449 work under the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP).

Another 181 showed Covid-19 symptoms and currently are in isolation, while 1,162 others, who were in close contact with the infected patients, are in quarantine, according to data from the police headquarters (PHQ).

Talking to The Daily Star, an additional deputy police commissioner working in specialised branches like the anti-terrorism unit, the counterterrorism unit and the Detective Branch were also getting infected, though they were not engaged in "corona duty".

"Most of those infected live at barracks or police lines. As their living places are overcrowded, they get the infection from their colleagues," he said.

The authorities have taken initiatives and tried to make some space in those barracks and police lines by making arrangements for some officials to sleep at hotels, school compounds, but some officials said it was already too late.

"The virus is spreading among our officials and other personnel," said an official, wishing not to be named.

To reduce chances of police members being exposed to the coronavirus, police have brought changes to its manpower deployment.

An officer-in-charge of a police station in the DMP area, requesting anonymity, said they divided the station's manpower into two groups. Each group works at the field for a

In another inter-ministerial meeting chaired by Health Minister Zahid Maleque on April 21, Prof Abul Kalam Azad, DG of the Directorate General of Health Services, said there could be 100,000 positive cases by the end of May.

The number of testing facilities have increased but many more are needed, experts say.

"The numbers we confirm every day do not represent the reality, because people from all regions don't have access to testing. A lot more cases remain undetected," said Prof Muzaherul Huq, former adviser to the World Health Organization's South Asia region.

"Until testing is accessible and available for all, it would not be possible to predict when the transmission will peak," he said.

COVID-19 SITUATION

At yesterday's briefing, Prof Nasima Sultana, additional director general (administration) at DGHS, said 6,315 samples were collected the previous day.

Of those, 6,260 were tested in 33 laboratories across the country, bringing the total tests conducted so far to 87,694.

The sample collection and tests have been increased in a day by 21.11 percent and 16.61 percent, she said.

Prof Nasima said the five people who died were men. Three of them were from Dhaka and one each from Sylhet and Mymensingh.

Three of them were aged above 60 while one was between 50 and 60 and the other was between 31 and 40, she said.

With 147 latest recoveries, the number of total recoveries is now 1,209, she said.

Officials sent 90 individuals suspected of having Covid-19 into isolation, bringing the total to 1,636. The country is capable of accommodating 3,635 people at 601 isolation facilities, she added.

Currently, 41,933 people are quarantined across the country and at least 153,401 have left after completing the mandatory quarantine period.

week and stay in quarantine for the next week when the other group discharges duties.

Asked about PPE, the OC said they received some safety equipment but they were "totally inadequate".

"We are trying to distribute that equipment among our officials and collect some safety gear like masks, hand gloves locally on our own," he said.

Though police as a whole is exhibiting bravery in this crisis period, some of its field level officers, reportedly, were trying to avoid duty at crowded places, said sources.

Two more OCs of the DMP made similar statements.

Meanwhile, different units of Bangladesh Police have filed around 3,356 cases between March 26 and April 29 against 1,366 people and owners of 108 vehicles and 177 shops for not maintaining social distancing. During the same period, they collected a fine of Tk 49.12 lakh from them, shows PHQ data.

CROWD ON ROAD

Replying to a query, A DMP deputy commissioner said a huge number of people were coming out of their home to earn their livelihood, while some others were doing the same simply because they get bored with staying indoors for over a month, frustrating the very objective of the government-announced shutdown.

He also said police were working in a weekly roster system and that's why the presence of the law enforcers was thin on road.

The law enforcers, however, continue ensuring action against those who were not following social distancing through eight mobile courts in DMP areas.

Sohel Rana, assistant inspector general at the PHQ, said the operations of mobile courts went in line with the magnitude of the corona situation in the country.

Replying to a question, he said they were trying to retain their mental strength by ensuring a safe place for accommodation and providing security equipment to their field level officers.

The state and the force would always stand beside those officials and their families, said the AIG.

Japan extends Tk 24m grant to three NGOs

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Japan has extended a grant amounting to approximately Tk 24 million to three Bangladeshi NGOs -- Thengamara Mohila Sabuj Sangha (TMSS), Prism Bangladesh Foundation (PRISM) and Trust for the Rehabilitation of the Paralyzed (TRP).

TMSS has been awarded approximately Tk 7 million to enhance coronary and trauma services at TMSS Medical College and Rafatullah Community Hospital in Bogura. At least 1,600 patients will be benefited from C-Arm and ETT machines annually, while 360 people will be annually trained with the trauma manikin, said a statement of Japan embassy in Dhaka.

PRISM has been awarded approximately Tk 7 million for "The Project for Installation of the Equipment for Medical Waste Management in Rajshahi District".

Under this project, PRISM will install an autoclave, a boiler and organise two collection vehicles in their medical waste management plant. Rajshahi City Corporation signed an MoU with PRISM to support this project.

TRP has been awarded approximately Tk 10 million for "The Project for Construction of the Rehabilitation Centre for Persons with Disabilities in Moulvibazar District". Through this project, TRP will construct the ground floor of a new rehabilitation centre for poor people with disabilities in Moulvibazar.



An N95 respirator left in the sun on the roof of Bangladesh Institute of Tropical and Infectious Diseases (BITID) -- the only lab for coronavirus testing in Chattogram. According to Mamunur Rashid, an assistant professor at BITID, these respirators are expensive and scarce, and can be reused in a cycle after drying them out for a certain period after each use. The photo was taken on Saturday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Crisis or not, Atiq looks to stand by Dhaka residents

MATHEWS CHIRAN

Mayor-elect Atiqul Islam of Dhaka North City Corporation hasn't taken over office yet, and the city is already undergoing a huge challenge in the form of a coronavirus outbreak. The Daily Star spoke to Atiqul recently about his work during the Covid-19 crisis, as well as plans for the city.

Reports say you've begun relief work for those in need on your own. How did you start this initiative?

Atiq: While DNCC is doing its part as an organisation, I thought I should also come forward individually. I called my 11 siblings and asked them to collaborate with me on the initiative.

Just the family's initiative would not be enough. Many individuals and organisations came forward to help us out. BDClean helped us package and distribute relief materials while maintaining social distancing and hygiene directives.

How many people have you reached so far?

Atiq: To start the work, I contacted people who were previously involved with ride-sharing apps. They are using their bikes to deliver relief.

We are distributing 5kg rice, 1kg lentil, two bars of soap, and 2kg potato. I am planning to distribute among 40,000 extreme poor people.

Our volunteers are reaching people in slums and other urban poor communities. There is an overwhelming demand for more relief goods. Until yesterday we delivered to 40,000 families in need, and this endeavor will continue as long as we have the resources available.

We have distributed relief among the Hijra community. Most recently we handed over 250 relief packages to Garo families in Dhaka.

How are you preparing the list of beneficiaries?

Atiq: BDClean along with some volunteers are preparing the list. Besides, we are getting requests for relief through Facebook, email and phone as well.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Finding new livelihood in these difficult times

Low-income women in Barishal slums make paper bags to make up for lost jobs

SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barishal

The economic hardships due to the countrywide shutdown are pushing many towards extreme poverty. As unemployment mounts, many are being forced to innovate to find a way to sustain their lives.

Layli Begum (42) is such an example. A resident of Barishal city's Alekanda Refugee slum area, Layli used to work as a domestic help. Her husband died two years ago, and all she has left now is Poly, her 16-year-old daughter. During the lockdown, both of them lost their jobs.

Unable to cover the family's daily expenditures they thought they could pass the days on relief aid. However, they didn't receive any.

The duo have now resorted to making paper bags or "thongas" to try to live through the crisis.

"After my employer fired me I was pushed into great trouble. I looked for jobs everywhere, but the neighbourhood, including shops, markets, and factories had shut down, so there was no way to get any work," she told this correspondent.

"At this point, we started collecting old paper -- khata (notebooks), books, discarded newspaper -- and started

making thongas," she continued.

"We are able to make around 40 kg of thongas per week. We sell them to wholesalers for Tk 34 per kg."

Kanchan Howlader, a wholesaler of old paper packets at Bazar road area of the city said he is buying one mound of the produce per day during the lockdown period. However, this is only half of what he bought during regular times.

Atahar Ali Howlader, another wholesaler, said as number of jobless people increase, many are now trying to get into the trade. Over five hundred people are now making thongas out of discarded paper, he said.

While it's great that Layli and Poly are finding a way to navigate the crisis through this vocation, it's clear from the traders' statement that this isn't sustainable in the long term, and that relief aid must reach the poor as soon as possible.

Contacted, Md Moazzem Hossain, administration officer of Barishal City Corporation, said they have already distributed 45 thousand packets of relief material for the 45 thousand poor people who live across 19 slums of the city. If any one is yet to receive their package, they will get it soon, he added.



Out of job and out of luck, Layli Begum and her daughter Poly have found an alternative avenue to earn some cash, by selling paper "thongas" for Tk 34 a kg.

SCBA to give loans to 3,000 members

Lawyers in need to get up to Tk 75,000 interest-free for 3yrs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) will provide Tk 30,000 to maximum Tk 75,000 as loans without any interest for three years to its lawyers in need, in order to tackle the ongoing crisis due to the coronavirus outbreak.

Around SCBA 3,000 members who have applied for the loans will be given the money through their bank accounts by this week, said SCBA President Advocate AM Amin Uddin.

The lawyers who have become SCBA members before 2000 will be given Tk 75,000 each; those between 2000-2007 will be given Tk 50,000 each; and those between 2008 and 2013 will be given Tk 40,000 each, the SCBA president further said.

He said lawyers who will be given the loan have been asked to refund the money to SCBA fund in five installments by December 2022.

Otherwise, they will have to refund the money with interest, he said.

Drug peddlers active in Ctg amid shutdown

They use pretence of delivering essentials, say law enforcers

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN, Ctg

While the entire country works to contain the spread of coronavirus, drug peddlers are finding ways to dodge law enforcers to continue their business in the port city, even during the lockdown.

In the last three weeks, members of Chattogram Metropolitan Police (CMP), Rapid Action Battalion (Rab-7) and Department of Narcotics Control (DNC) arrested seven alleged drug peddlers with yaba pills, Phensedyl and hemp.

As traffic movement remains suspended to ensure the lockdown, peddlers are using pickups and covered vans in the name of emergency delivery services to keep up their trade, police and Rab officials said.

On April 27, Rab arrested a man with 93 bottles of Phensedyl and 2.9kg of hemp at Sitakunda upazila. He was coming to the city from Cumilla on a covered van and hid the contraband under the driving seat.

Mahmulul Hasan, assistant director of Rab-7 media wing, said the driver told officials that he was going to Chattogram from Cumilla carrying essential goods. However, after challenging his

suspicious behaviour, Rab recovered the drugs and arrested him.

The arrestee runs an aluminum shop, which acted as a cover for his drug trade, the official said.

Police said special check posts have been set up at five entry points across the city to ensure lockdown. Only vehicles and personnel carrying emergency goods, such as food and medicine, are allowed to enter or exit the city. This is why drug traders are active under the guise of carrying emergency goods.

Members of Rab-7 also arrested a man with 40,000 yaba pills from Mirzapur area under Panchlaish Police Station on April 27.

Two days prior, Rab arrested two others from Feni with 10kg of hemp. The same month, members of the Department of Narcotics Control (DNC) arrested a man with 7000 yaba pills from the city's Lalkhan Bazar area.

On April 22, a pickup van was seized and 10,000 yaba pills were recovered. On April 8, two youths were arrested with 6,000 yaba pills from Kazir Dewri area by Kotwali police. The duo told police they were out to buy medicine.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

TELEVISED CLASSES FOR SCHOOLGOERS

One month on, a lot left unfulfilled

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Over one month after the introduction of televised classroom lectures for school students, guardians are still not happy about the quality of the lessons.

Many said although it is a positive step for continuation of education under the circumstances, they are still finding problems to find old lectures due to the lack of organised archiving, while there was at least one incident of a silly mistake in a lecture.

Gendaria Girls Government Primary School teacher Deeba Saha appeared to have a slip of mind while writing an addition equation on a live TV class, aired at Sangsad Bangladesh Television in mid-April, a clip of which drew some flak on social media.

Contacted, Gendaria Girls Government Primary School headteacher Rina Rani Saha failed to

provide the phone number of Deeba Saha, and said it was human error. "She has good track record as teacher," Rina said.

Directorate of Primary Education Director General Md Fasiullah said they were aware of the incident. "We are looking into the matter and will talk with the content validator and teacher," he added.

The government on March 29 started TV education through Sangsad TV for secondary students, on April 7 for primary students and on April 19 for technical and madrasa students, so that students can make up for some of the losses due to closure of schools.

All educational institutions have been closed since March 17, and the government has now extended the closure till May 16, in a bid to stem the further spread of Covid-19.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina

on April 27 said all educational institutions may remain closed till September if the situation caused by the coronavirus outbreak does not improve.

Selim Reza, parent of a schoolgoer from Sirajganj, said people of their locality cannot see the Sangsad TV clearly due to some technical problems. "Class activities were not interactive," he further alleged.

A guardian from the capital's Dhanmondi said the videos of classes are not uploaded in an organised way. He said he looked for over an hour to find a lecture that were aired earlier.

He looked for the lecture on the Facebook pages of a2i, and "Amar ghore amar school", and the Youtube channels of Robi 10-min School and other places where they were uploaded in a scattered manner.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Hasan Foez reappointed BJSC chairman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

President

Md Abdul

Hamid has

reappointed

Justice

Hasan Foez

Siddique,

a sitting judge of the

Appellate Division,

as the chairman of

Bangladesh Judicial Service

Commission (BJSC). The

law ministry issued a gazette

to this effect on Sunday.

The BJSC is tasked with

selecting candidates for the

posts of lower court judges

through holding necessary

tastes and examinations.

Hasan Foez Siddique was

appointed BJSC chairman

first on April 30, 2015.



Ensure that tuition fees are not collected for period of closure

Rights body urges govt to take steps in seven days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A rights organisation yesterday sent an application to the government requesting it to take necessary steps so that the academic institutions don't collect the monthly tuition fees from the students for the period of closure caused due to ongoing coronavirus outbreak.

Barrister Humayun Kabir Pallab and Barrister Mohammad Kawser forwarded the application on behalf of the "Law and Life Foundation" to the principal secretary at the Prime Minister's Office and the education secretary through emails.

In the application, the rights body urged the two government high officials to take necessary measures in seven days in this regard.

It said in the application that the teaching and classes are now remaining halted and the guardians of most of the students are facing financial crisis due to the coronavirus outbreak.

The organisation also said in the applications that the academic institutions of several countries of the world have already waived the tuition fees of students during the coronavirus spread.

Cop found dead in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A policeman -- who recently tested negative for Covid-19 -- was found dead in front of his house in the capital's Khilgaon yesterday.

The body of Tofazzal Hosen (40), a constable at Special Branch of police, was recovered from Tilpa Para at 8:30am, said Aniruddha Roy, an SI of Khilgaon Police Station.

His stomach was upset for a few days, following which he got tested for Covid-19, said Nurul Amin, additional deputy commissioner of Khilgaon.

Tofazzal's test report came negative on April 28, but he was anxious about his health and did not trust the result, the ADC claimed.

The body was sent to Dhaka Medical College morgue for autopsy, SI Aniruddha Roy said, adding that the reason behind his death will be known after autopsy.



One of the joys of young imagination is the ability to turn any object into a tool for adventure. In this photo, a merry band of youth swim, play, and jump around a tree submerged under Barishal's Kalabadar river. The photo was taken from Barishal Sadar's Tungibari area on Wednesday.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

Edge organises online charity art exhibition

CITY DESK

Edge, The Foundation, a platform for creative talent, is holding an online charity art exhibition, which started on May 1 and will continue till May 15.

Proceeds from the initiative will be donated to fund young artists, charities and the homeless.

Contributing artists for the exhibition include Anisuzzaman, Anukul Chandra Mojumder, Hamiduzzaman Khan, Ivy Zaman, Jamal Ahmed, Kanak Chanpa Chakma, Maksuda Iqbal Nipa, Mohammad Eunus, Mohammad Iqbal, Ranjit Das, Rokeya Sultana, Shahid Kabir, Tajuddin Ahmed and Tejosh Halder Josh.

The artworks can be viewed on EDGE's website: edgefoundation.com and fb.com/EdgeTheFoundation/.

Crisis or not

FROM PAGE 3

You have given a 38-point manifesto. Do you think you will be able to implement everything on there, or will work get delayed due to the Covid-19 outbreak?

Atiq: A lot of it depends on how the current situation plays out. I haven't promised anything impractical in my manifesto. I talked about setting up lights, solving water and sanitation problems, developing newly added wards and so on.

But if there is a crisis of fund, it will be difficult to implement. No one knows what the state of the world will be even in a month, let alone the country. We will have to wait and see.

There have been complaints about mosquito infestation from multiple wards. How are you planning to tackle this amid the Covid-19 crisis?

Atiq: Before the coronavirus outbreak, we divided each ward into 10 sections and conducted anti-mosquito drives. Now there are mostly Culex mosquitoes in the city, but we always have to be cautious.

Institutions like Wasa and Rajuk also have to work hand in hand with DNCC. We have to keep in mind that we don't harm the environment while getting rid of mosquitoes.

The season of Aedes mosquito is coming. I urge people to keep their houses and nearby areas clean. Solving the mosquito problem is indeed a big challenge, because workers who will give their time and effort into anti-mosquito drives are also in fear of infection during this outbreak. But still they are doing their job. We are monitoring the situation closely.

You are a former BGMEA president and a garments owner. What would you say on RMG factory owners not paying workers on time, as well as workers returning to Dhaka amid the shutdown to rejoin factories?

Atiq: After the coronavirus outbreak, I stopped all operations at my factory, and paid workers' dues. Workers give their labour for owners' business, and now it's time for owners to benefit their workers during the crisis. Only workers cannot be put at risk while owners stay within the safety of their homes.

BLAST AT CTG POLICE BOX

Three 'Neo-JMB men' held

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN, Ctg

Militants who allegedly carried out a bomb blast at a traffic police box of Chattogram Metropolitan Police (CMP) in February learned bomb-making online, said Counter Terrorism unit of CMP yesterday.

They made the claim after arresting three suspected operatives of Neo-JMB -- an ultra-radical offshoot of banned outfit Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) -- from the port city's Bakalia area on Sunday night.

The arrestees are Md Enran (25), Md Saifullah (24) and Md Abu Saleh (25). Enran is a student of Chittagong University, while Saleh studied at National Polytechnic College. Saifullah worked as computer operator in the city's Chawkbazar area, the law enforcers said.

"With the help of LIC unit of Police Headquarters, CT officers traced the

militants and arrested them from a flat in Bakalia-DC road," Deputy Commissioner of CT unit Hasan Md Showkat Ali told The Daily Star.

"They are self-motivated militants, and carried out the attack on police as their first operation," added the DC.

Seeking anonymity, a CT official told this newspaper that the miscreants used remote key of motorbike as a remote-control device to set off the explosive.

Sgt Arafat, Assistant Sub-Inspector Ataudin and three pedestrians were injured when the bomb went off in the city's Sholohahar area on the night of February 28. According to SITE Intelligence Group which tracks online activities of jihadist, IS claimed the responsibility of the police box attack similar to Dhaka and Khulna.

However, police ruled out the IS link.

Police station locked down as cop tests Covid-19 positive

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Kotwali Police Station in Rangpur city was put under lockdown yesterday after one of its officers tested positive for Covid-19.

All staff members have been shifted to another building, said an official. The administration is taking measures to send those who came in contact with the police official to quarantine, said Civil Surgeon Hirambo Kumar Roy. He said 11 people tested Covid-19 positive in the district on Sunday, including doctors, nurses and the

official.

Altaf Hossain, additional assistant police commissioner and media officer of Rangpur Metropolitan Police, said six policemen were asked to stay in home quarantine while samples of all police personnel at the station were collected yesterday for testing.

So far, at least 62 persons have been tested positive in the district since March 10. Of them, 14 are being treated at hospitals while the rest are receiving treatment at home. Four persons, including an 80-year-old man, have recovered so far.



Prof Abu Zafar passes away

CITY DESK

Prof Abu Zafar, an eminent cardiologist and former director of National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases passed away at a local hospital on Sunday afternoon.

He was 81 and suffering from various old-age complications for the last few months.

His namaz-e-janaza was held at Baridhara mosque, and he was buried at Banani graveyard.

Prof Zafar played a significant role to improve the overall standard of higher education on cardiovascular diseases and its treatment in Bangladesh. In his long bright career, he also served as head of cardiovascular disease at then PG Hospital.

He left behind his wife, daughter, son and innumerable well-wishers to mourn his death.

One month

FROM PAGE 3

"These [class lecture] videos are uploaded so haphazardly across the internet that no one can find a lecture that they want with a sane mind, let alone the presentation and consistency. This is all a massive sham," he said.

KM Enamul Hoque, deputy director of the Campaign for Popular Education, said education through TV is a positive initiative. "It is releasing stress of students living at home. It is also continuing their learning habit in the emergency situation", he said.

He however said it is only partially fulfilling the objective, as about a half of the country's people -- many of them underprivileged, do not have access to TV sets. Most of them are from poor quantile, ethnic minorities, remote areas.

The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2019 of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics shows that 50 percent households of the country do not have television sets.

Enamul said on one hand, many teachers praised the TV education, and on the other hand many complained that the classroom environment is absent in TV education lecture. In many cases, even the whiteboards were not clearly visible.

Asked about it, Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education Director General Prof Syed Md Golam Faruk said they would address the issues.

"We have received allegations of unclear picture and are working on the issue. We are uploading all lectures at different Facebook pages including Kishore Batyan; we will make it more organised," he added.

Drug peddlers

FROM PAGE 3

Mohammed Mohsin, officer-in-charge of Kotwali Police Station, told The Daily Star, "Drug peddlers are looking for opportunities as law enforcers are busy with ensuring lockdown and distributing relief and more. However, we are alert against their activities."

Contacted, Additional Commissioner (Traffic) of CMP Mostak Ahmed said "In every check post, police are instructed to check suspicious vehicles, maintaining proper safety and security."

He said traffic police have joined forces with regular police personnel at entry and exit points of the city.

Ensure uninterrupted production

FROM PAGE 12

He shares that the government's initiatives to waive tax and loans and, at the same time, to increase the salary of low-income workers and employees have created huge pressure on the national exchequer. Unless overall production in the country is increased these support schemes cannot be continued for a long period, adds Bangabandhu.

The prime minister also asks workers to beware of conspirators who are trying to destabilise the country. He calls upon them to maintain peace to ensure uninterrupted production in industries.

DISTRIBUTION OF FREE TEXTBOOKS BEGINS

The government today starts the distribution of free textbooks among students from class 1 to class 5 across the country. However, the number of distributed books falls short of the requirement as the number of school-going students turns out to be higher than the government's estimate. The government advises students to share books with their peers.

KARNAPHULI CLEARED OF MINES

The Soviet salvage team has successfully removed mines from the Karnaphuli River and made it accessible for incoming ships. They have also salvaged three sunken ships from the area. The Chittagong Port Authority informs that there are 18 more wrecks to be removed to fully activate the port.

HOUSING SCHEME FOR LOW-INCOME PEOPLE

The government has taken up a plan to provide housing facilities to low-income people. These flats will be distributed at an affordable price and the payment can be made in instalments over a long period. In the first phase, Tk 15 crore has been sanctioned to build several multi-storied buildings in Dhaka, Chittagong, and Khulna to accommodate 7000 families. In the second phase, accommodation facilities for 50,000 families will be created across the country under this scheme.

SOURCES: May 6, 1972 issues of *Ittefaq*, *The Bangladesh Observer*, *Azad*, *Morning News*, *Dainik Bangla* and *Purbodesh*.

'Child killer'

FROM PAGE 12

Konabari area around 1:30am to arrest Jewel, he said.

Sensing presence of the law enforcers, Jewel opened fire on them, forcing them to retaliate, which eventually triggered a "gunfight", Mamun said.

Jewel caught in the line of fire and died on the spot while two Rab men also received injuries, he added.

The body was sent to Gazipur Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Medical College morgue for an autopsy while the injured Rab men took primary treatment from the same hospital, said the official.

A firearm and some ammunition were recovered from the spot.

Jewel, Sagar and another youth, who is currently on the run, used to live in a rented house in Konabari owned by Alif's father Md Farhad and worked at different garment factories in the area, said Mamun.

Farhad slapped Jewel and Sagar about a week ago for teasing female garment workers in the area, he added.

They then planned to abduct the child and ask for a ransom to teach Farhad a lesson, the Rab personnel said.

On Wednesday evening, they took Alif to the rooftop of their building and strangled him, he said.

They then dumped the body in the warehouse housed in the next building and fled the house the next morning, he added.

Later, they demanded Tk 20 lakh over as ransom from the victim's father.

Rab men arrested Sagar on Saturday from Pubail area by tracing his mobile phone following a complaint filed by the family, Mamun said.

Mummies

FROM PAGE 12

posted on the ministry's Facebook page earlier this month.

Also excavated from the shaft were an incredible array of small artifacts, including 365 faience ushabti figurines, some inscribed with hieroglyphics. Ushabti are objects, usually small statues, that were buried in Egyptian graves to aid the body in its afterlife.

Inside the burial shaft, there was also a small wooden obelisk about 40 centimetres tall, painted with scenes featuring the Egyptian goddesses Isis, associated with rebirth, and Nephthys, associated with death, and the god Horus, one of the most renowned ancient Egyptian deities.

These small artifacts were removed from the shaft for restoration purposes. The sarcophagi and wooden coffins are being restored inside the shaft, says the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities.

Bananas rotting in orchards

FROM PAGE 12

January last year, were able to sell their produce before the crisis hit the market, he said.

"Livelihood of over 50,000 locals involved in the cultivation, marketing and transportation of the fruit have been badly affected due to the decline in the banana market," he added.

Bananas produced in the upazila are sold both directly from the plantations and also from a large market situated at Jalchhatra area in Madhupur.

Amir Ali, convener of Truck Drivers Union in Jalchhatra, said normally on

Fridays around 100 to 150 trucks from the area carry bananas to different parts of the country. Now, only four to five are going to adjacent districts with bananas.

According to the agriculture department in Madhupur, different varieties of banana including sobri and sagar were cultivated on 10,000 acres of lands in around 40 villages in the upazila this season.

Mahmudul Hasan, upazila agriculture officer, pointed out that the fruit cannot be preserved in cold stores. In developed countries, they make

banana paste and use it in food processing industries. But, such businesses have not developed here, he said.

Bananas, grown in the country, are also not exported to the European and American markets as qualities at cultivation stage cannot be ensured, he added.

Mahmudul observed that the demand for bananas in the cities decreased because the fruit's main consumers -- students and factory workers, living in hostels and lodgings -- left for their villages after the shutdown.

Ensure six months' salary

FROM PAGE 12

We must address the issue globally. Migrant-receiving countries cannot avoid responsibility," he said.

Bangladesh raised the issue at a time when some of the labour-receiving countries, mostly Middle Eastern ones, are putting pressure on labour-sending countries, mostly in South Asia, to repatriate migrants whose jobs have been terminated in the fallout of the Covid-19 pandemic.

For example, the United Arab Emirates said it would review labour relations with countries that do not repatriate jobless migrants terminated by the private sector due to the pandemic.

Kuwait, Qatar, Oman and Bahrain also said they want the undocumented migrants and those in deportation centres and jails to be repatriated. Kuwait even declared amnesty for undocumented migrants so they could be repatriated.

Apart from that, drop in oil prices and shutdowns have caused a slowdown of economic activities in all of the countries in the Middle East and Southeast Asia, home to some eight million Bangladeshi migrants. Construction projects, as well as other industries, may go for partial layoffs if the pandemic lingers, officials said.

A large portion of the migrants, except for those involved in emergency services like cleaning, healthcare, transport, agriculture, groceries, are now jobless. If the pandemic persists, many more may lose jobs, officials

in the Middle East and Southeast Asia have said.

It has become an issue of concern for Bangladesh, which received \$18 billion in remittance in 2019. The World Bank said Bangladesh's remittance from migrants could decline by 22 percent in 2020.

Foreign Minister Momen said return of migrants in large numbers will also create further concerns about how to create jobs for them domestically.

"We will surely see how we can domestically manage the returning migrants. But before that we need to protect the rights of our migrants while they are abroad. We cannot see them being terminated abruptly and returned home," he said.

Bangladesh ambassadors too are working to help migrants, including providing them food assistance, he noted. Expatriates' welfare ministry has allocated Tk 10 crore for 30 Bangladeshi missions abroad to ensure food assistance to migrants in distress.

Nahida Sobhan, Bangladesh ambassador to Jordan, said she has already held meetings with the garment factories employing some 50,000 Bangladeshis.

"We have asked the factory owners not to terminate the workers as long as their contracts do not expire," she told The Daily Star yesterday.

"We will continue our efforts to ensure the best for our migrants," Nahida said.

Bangladesh Land Port Authority
T.C.B Bhawan (5th Floor)
Kawran Bazar, Dhaka-1215
www.bsbk.gov.bd

Memo No. 18.15.0000.023.07.132.18-485 Dated: 04.05.2020

e-Tender Notice

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.
To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.
The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents of following package from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank's branches.

Sl No.	Name of work	Tender ID	Last date & time of submission documents	Tender/ proposal opening date & time
1.	Refilling of Fire Extinguishers Chemical ABC & E type dry-powder Co2 type and Foam type of Different Sheds Yards and Office at Benapole, Bhomra, Buriman, Akhaura, Nakugaon, Tamabil and Sonahat Land Port under Bangladesh Land Port Authority.	457490	31-May-2020 14:00	31-May-2020 14:30

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Md. Hasan Ali
Superintending Engineer
Phone: 55013830

GD-792

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Executive Engineer, RHD
Road Division, Sunamganj
E-mail: eesun@rhd.gov.bd
☎: 0871-63457

Date: 26/04/2020

e-Tender Notice

Tender/Proposal ID No. & Package No.	Name of work	Tender document last selling / downloading date & time	Tender closing date & time	Tender opening date & time
454003 e-GP/18/EE/SRD/2019-2020	Traffic Sign, Sign Post & Sign Signal of Jamalganj-Sunamganj Road (R-370) from Ch-0000 km to Ch-18300km under Road Division, Sunamganj during the year 2019-2020.	11/05/2020 16.00	12/05/2020 13.00	12/05/2020 13.00
454765 e-GP/19/EE/SRD/2019-2020	Sub-Soil Investigation for different bridge and Topographical survey preparation of land Acquisition Plan along the road alignment from 42nd km of Madanpur-Diral-Shalla-Jalshukha-Azmiriganj-Habiganj Road (Z-2807) under Road Division, Sunamganj during the year 2019-2020.	11/05/2020 12.00	11/05/2020 13.30	11/05/2020 13.30
454773 e-GP/20/EE/SRD/2019-2020	Supplying of DBS-Wearing Coarse materials for different Bituminous maintenance work of different Roads under Road Division, Sunamganj during the year 2019-2020.	11/05/2020 12.00	11/05/2020 14.00	11/05/2020 14.00

The above e-Tenders are published in the National e-GP System Portal <http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>
All information and guidelines are available in the e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Zahirul Islam
ID No- 602150
Executive Engineer, RHD
Road Division, Sunamganj

GD-789

Taliban kill 5 Afghan troops

The Taliban yesterday claimed responsibility for a truck bomb in southern Helmand province that killed at least five Afghan security force members, an Afghan official said, adding to weeks of rising violence in the country.

Venezuela foils incursion

Venezuela's leftist government said Sunday it foiled an incursion from the sea, killing eight members of a group of alleged mercenaries bent on "terrorist acts" aimed at overthrowing President Nicolas Maduro.

Top US diplomat for South Asia retires



The acting top US diplomat for South Asia announced her retirement Sunday, as President Donald Trump looks increasingly likely to go a full term without a Senate-confirmed State Department official focused on the subcontinent.

SOURCE: AFP



Traditional Thai dancers wearing protective face shields perform at the Erawan Shrine, which was reopened after the Thai government relaxed measures to combat the spread of the COVID-19 novel coronavirus in Bangkok, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC LATEST UPDATES

MORE THAN 3.5 MILLION CASES

More than 3.5 million cases of the novel coronavirus have been recorded in the world since the epidemic surfaced in China in December, according to an AFP tally at 1100 GMT.

JAPAN EXTENDS EMERGENCY

Japan's prime minister Shinzo Abe extends a nationwide state of emergency over the pandemic until May 31.

VACCINE DISAGREEMENT

Germany's health minister Jens Spahn says developing a vaccine for the coronavirus could take "years", after US President Donald Trump predicted it could be achieved by the end of 2020.

EQUITIES TUMBLE

Asian markets suffered steep losses, tracking a selloff in New York after Trump sparked fears of a renewed trade war with China over its role in the coronavirus pandemic.

ZERO CASES IN NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand reported no new cases of the coronavirus yesterday, marking the first time the country recorded zero cases since its outbreak took hold in mid-March.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

Europe stirs back to life

AFP, Rome

Millions of Europeans emerged with relief from coronavirus confinement yesterday, with hard-hit Italy leading the way out of the world's longest lockdown.

At least 3.5 million people are now known to have been infected, but US President Donald Trump offered hope for an end to the pandemic, saying he believed there would be a vaccine by year's end.

Around 248,000 people have died since the coronavirus emerged in China late last year and swept across the globe, given wings by the network of air routes that in normal times keep the modern world ticking.

Lockdowns imposed on half of the planet have derailed economies, and politicians are now grappling with how to get the wheels turning again without sparking a second wave of infections.

Italy -- second only to the United States in

its COVID-19 death toll and the first to impose a national lockdown -- was gingerly emerging into the spring sunshine on Monday, with construction sites and factories resuming work.

Restaurants reopened for takeaway orders, but bars and ice cream parlours will remain shut. The use of public transport is being discouraged and everyone will have to wear masks in indoor public spaces.

"We are feeling a mix of joy and fear," 40-year-old Stefano Milano said in Rome.

Italy reported its lowest death toll on Sunday since the first day of the lockdown on March 9 with 174 fatalities, compared with 969 at the peak. In all, 28,884 people have died in Italy.

Many other European countries are also relaxing lockdowns, even as they continue to advocate social distancing, masks and more testing to try to track infections.

Spain made face masks mandatory on public transport starting yesterday, two days after finally

allowing people out to exercise freely after a 48-day lockdown.

Neighbouring Portugal allowed small shops, hair salons and car dealers to resume business from Monday, but ordered face masks to be worn in stores and on public transport.

Slovenia, Poland and Hungary joined Germany in allowing public spaces and businesses to partially reopen.

Meanwhile, Germany's health minister yesterday poured cold water on that optimism, saying vaccines can "take years".

Many parts of Asia have, however, begun to inch towards a post-pandemic life, with schools in the Vietnamese capital Hanoi reopening yesterday after two weeks without new infections anywhere in the country.

Malaysians headed back to work, while Australia and New Zealand discussed creating a "trans-Tasman bubble" that would allow travel between the two countries.



The Christ the Redeemer statue is seen illuminated Sunday wearing a face mask in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The number of confirmed COVID-19 infections in Brazil passed 100,000, including 7,000 deaths.

PHOTO: AFP

US-China crisis deepens

Sanctions, other punitive measures on the cards as report says Beijing concealed severity of coronavirus

AGENCIES

The Chinese government intentionally concealed the severity of the coronavirus from the international community while it stockpiled imports and decreased exports, a Department of Homeland Security report found, according to an administration official familiar with the report.

"China likely cut its exports of medical supplies prior to its January WHO (World Health Organization) notification that COVID-19 is a contagion," the report reads, according to the source.

The report, which assessed export and import data earlier this year, was circulated within the federal government on Friday, the source said. ABC first reported its existence.

Earlier Sunday, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo stepped up administration claims that China mounted efforts to hide the extent of the coronavirus spread, including concealing the severity while stockpiling medical supplies.

"You've got the facts just about right," Pompeo told ABC's "This Week" when asked if China intentionally stockpiled medical supplies in early January while it concealed the severity of Covid-19. "We can confirm that the Chinese Communist Party did all that it could to make sure that the world didn't learn in a timely fashion about what was taking place."

Pompeo's comments come as the Trump administration is formulating a long-term



Pompeo says 'significant' evidence that virus emerged from Chinese lab

UK says China has questions to answer over outbreak

plan to punish China on multiple fronts for the pandemic, injecting a rancorous new element into a critical relationship already on a steep downward slide.

Multiple sources inside the administration say that there is an appetite to use various tools, including sanctions, canceling US debt obligations and drawing up new trade policies, to make clear to China, and to everyone else, where they feel the responsibility lies.

The US-China clash is brewing amid growing suspicion inside the administration over China's rising strategic challenge and fury that the virus destroyed an economy seen as Trump's passport to a second term.

The president on Thursday contradicted the intelligence community and claimed he has seen evidence that gives him a "high degree of confidence" Covid-19 originated in a laboratory in Wuhan, China, but declined to provide details to back up his assertion.

Asked about the belief expressed by Trump and if he had seen evidence backing that claim, Pompeo said, "There's enormous evidence that that's where this began."

China's Global Times, run by the ruling Communist Party's official People's Daily, said in an editorial responding to Pompeo's Sunday interview that he did not have any evidence the virus came from the lab in Wuhan and that he was "bluffing," calling on the United States to present the evidence.

Migrant workers in Malaysia to undergo tests

REUTERS, KUALA LUMPUR

Migrant workers in Malaysia are now required to be tested for the new coronavirus, a senior minister said, as the government eased six-week long curbs on movement and businesses.

Thousands of Malaysians joined Monday's morning rush hour as businesses resumed for the first time since the imposition on March 18 of restrictions to contain the spread of the virus.

Senior security minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob told reporters foreign workers in all sectors must now undergo mandatory screening for COVID-19, the respiratory illness caused by the virus, after an outbreak was reported among migrants working at a Kuala Lumpur construction site last week.

The announcement comes after Malaysia detained hundreds of undocumented migrants over the weekend, sparking criticism from the UN and rights groups. Ismail Sabri had earlier defended the arrests, saying that all of those detained had tested negative for the virus.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
উপজেলা স্বাস্থ্য ও পঃ পঃ কর্মকর্তার কার্যালয়
উখিয়া, কক্সবাজার
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খোলা দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি
পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট আইন ২০০৬ ও পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট বিধিমালা ২০০৮ এবং সংশোধিত ২০১০ এর আলোকে উপজেলা স্বাস্থ্য ও পঃ পঃ কর্মকর্তার কার্যালয়, উখিয়া, কক্সবাজার এর আওতাধীন বিভিন্ন স্বাস্থ্য প্রতিষ্ঠানের ২০১৯-২০২০ অর্থ বৎসরের জন্য এম এস আর সামগ্রী (মেডিক্যাল এন্ড সার্জিক্যাল রিকুইজিটস) ক্রয়/সমগ্র্যের নিমিত্তে এম এস আর সামগ্রী সরবরাহের অভিভুক্তসম্পন্ন বাংলাদেশের প্রকৃত ব্যবসায়ী/সরবরাহকারী/প্রস্তুতকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিকট হইতে নিম্নস্বাক্ষরকারী কর্তৃক সীলপালাকৃত নামে দরপত্র আহ্বান করা যাইতেছে।

STOCKS		COMMODITIES		ASIAN MARKETS				CURRENCIES				
DSEX	CSCX	Gold	Oil	MUMBAI	TOKYO	SINGAPORE	SHANGHAI	USD	EUR	GBP	CNY	
Closed	Closed	\$1,699.60 (per ounce)	\$26.75 (per barrel)	5.94%	Closed	2.31%	Closed	83.95	90.86	103.74	11.63	
				31,715.35		2,563.69		BUY TK	84.95	94.66	107.54	12.22
								SELL TK				



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TAMING CORONAVIRUS RAMPAGE

State banks to shoulder the burden of delivering stimulus packages

REJAUUL KARIM BYRON and AKM ZAMIR UDDIN

The government is mulling over leveraging the state-run lenders' vast branch network to implement a major portion of the stimulus packages.

The number of branches and banking operation of the state-run banks and financial institutions is higher than the private ones, which will help materialise the packages smoothly in both the rural and urban areas, said officials of the finance ministry.

As of November last year, the country's 59 banks have 10,467 branches across the country, according to data from the central bank.

Of the sum, the four state-owned banks -- Sonali, Janata, Agrani and Rupali -- together account for 34 per cent of the branches, and 56 per cent of the branches are located in the rural areas.

The underprivileged people have little access to private banks, which is another reason behind the government's move to use the state lenders.

Besides, private banks are now facing a liquidity crunch in the wake of deposit withdrawal by clients after starting the countrywide shutdown since March 26.

Against the backdrop, the finance ministry will arrange a discussion with the managing directors of all state lenders on

BANK	RURAL BRANCHES	TOTAL BRANCHES
	755	1,224
	462	911
	496	958
	287	572

May 7 to explore ways to implement the packages by using their banking network, said an official of the ministry working on the matter.

Both the government and the central bank have so far declared 18 stimulus packages worth Tk 95,619 crore to tackle the ongoing economic fallout from the global coronavirus pandemic.

The packages, which are equivalent to 3.5 per cent of the country's GDP, will be implemented under the supervision of the Bangladesh Bank and the finance ministry.

The latest move by the finance ministry is in line with a World Bank recommendation.

rural economy.

Although the public banks suffer from inefficiency and are likely to reduce competition and thus slow innovation, their lending can be countercyclical, and they are more likely than private banks to provide services to people in remote areas and poor people during a recession, it said.

In the current economic situation, public banks are needed to provide countercyclical lending -- as they did during the last global financial crisis between 2008 and 2010, the WB added.

In Bangladesh, the state-run banks have long been the Achilles heel of the banking sector thanks to their escalating default loans.

As of last year, more than 50 per cent of the defaulted loans are with the eight state-run banks.

But there is little scope for the state-run banks to misuse funds from the stimulus package, which will be provided from the refinance schemes.

The central bank will provide more than Tk 50,000 crore in the form of six refinance schemes to keep the wheels of the economy moving.

The BB will provide fund from the

refinance schemes by ensuring the credit history of the borrowers; no habitual borrower will be allowed to take any benefit from the stimulus packages, said a BB official.

The state-run banks though are raring to act as the delivery personnel for the stimulus package.

"We are well-prepared," said Md Obayed Ullah Al Masud, managing director of Rupali Bank, adding that the lender normally gives financial services to the rural poor.

Janata Bank has disbursed more than Tk 9,000 crore to the country's small and medium enterprises sector and it will extend further credit support to the zone to tackle the crisis, said Md Abdus Salam Azad, its managing director.

Agrani Bank has adequate liquidity, which will enable it to implement the stimulus packages, said its Chairman Zaid Bakht.

"But a good amount of loans under the stimulus package will have to be provided to borrowers without collateral securities, which is a matter of concern," he said, while advising the government to use the microfinance institutions to implement the packages as well.

In another notice, the finance ministry asked the state lenders to adopt austerity measures given the ongoing recession.

The ministry asked banks to halt to purchase of immovable assets, stop renting new office space and cut back on expenditure for the board and annual general meetings.

The chairmen and managing directors of the banks have been instructed not to go abroad unnecessarily.

The fund allocation for printing promotional materials for the banks' financial products will have to be reduced as well.

British upscale brand Debenhams leaves its Bangladesh apparel suppliers high and dry

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Garment exporters who supplied to the struggling British department store Debenhams have run into a brick wall.

The brand, which used to purchase more than \$120 million worth of mainly high-end garment items from 40 manufacturers in Bangladesh in a year, has now demanded a mindboggling discount from its suppliers here.

It has sought a 90 per cent discount, meaning it will pay only \$1 if the price of a woven shirt was fixed at \$10 when the goods were shipped.

"This is absurd," Zahangir Alam, the coordinator of Debenhams Vendors Community in Bangladesh, told The Daily Star over the phone yesterday.

Currently, Debenhams, which has appointed an administrator last month, its second in the past year, owes a staggering \$66 million to its vendors in Bangladesh.

Of the amount, garment items worth \$26 million is lying in the UK ports and another \$40 million is in the factory floors ready to be shipped.

"We are uncertain about receiving payment from Debenhams as the company has appointed administrators," said Alam, also the managing director of Design Source.

The indebted retailer had problems before the health crisis and on April 9 confirmed the appointment of restructuring firm FRP Advisory to handle a "light touch" administration of the 142-store chain.

The administrators would work alongside existing management to "get the business into a position to re-open and trade as many stores as possible again when restrictions are lifted".

However, it also warned that FRP Advisory would be putting its Irish chain into liquidation, which would mean the permanent closure of 11 stores that employ around



REUTERS

A pedestrian walks past a boarded-up store of Debenhams in the UK.

1,260 people.

Initially, Debenhams sought 60 days moratorium from Bangladeshi suppliers to pay \$70 million up to March, but later it sought another 30 days.

"We will hold a virtual meeting tomorrow with the administrators and the sourcing head of Debenhams to demand our payment," Alam said.

Demanding a 90 per cent discount from the suppliers is abnormal. Many small and medium scale factories will not be able to sustain such a big blow to their business.

Alam is ready to help Debenhams so that the company can make a turnaround.

"But we can at most handle 15 per cent discount," he said. Moreover, if the UK court declares Debenhams as bankrupt, it will take at least five years to get any money, by which the local suppliers will crash and burn.

Alam went on to urge the governments of the two countries to work together to find an amicable solution to this problem.

"Otherwise we will be in more trouble during this critical time," he added.

Meanwhile, Debenhams has already laid off all 69 employees in its Dhaka office on April 15, said one of the terminated employees requesting anonymity.

The British chain had opened the liaison office in Dhaka in 2013.

The termination of the employees is illegal because the move does not follow the agreements that were signed with the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority.

"We are communicating with the Debenhams headquarters to obtain our dues."

Asked about the pending payments, he said: "Since we are no longer official employees of Debenhams, we cannot say anything about the payments to the manufacturers and vendors."

The Daily Star contacted the British company but got no response at the time of filing the report.

At last the Ctg port is looking less jam-packed

DWAIPAYAN BARUA, Ctg

The Chattogram port is finally drifting away from a standstill as the seemingly never-ending congestion both at the terminals and the outer anchorage is clearing up following a string of measures taken by the port authority and the government.

Steps that yielded results include the National Board of Revenue's temporary permission for shifting imported goods to inland container depots (ICDs) and a complete waiver of container store rent for a week.

As the waiver of container storage fees expired yesterday, the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association appealed to the Chittagong Port Authority to extend the time, but the CPA was yet to make a decision.

Though delivery of containers gained momentum to some extent and some import containers could be shifted to private ICDs, port officials think the rate of container delivery from the port yards could have been faster.

A total of 15,038 TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent units) of import containers were transferred from the port to the off-docks in the last 10 days, according to data from the port authority and 19 private ICDs.

The number of total containers lying at the port yards was 47,441 TEUs until yesterday against the port's capacity of

49,018 TEUs.

Because of the freed up space in the port yards, the number of containers loaded and unloaded each day has doubled to 8,420 TEUs on Saturday, the highest since the government-announced holidays started on March 26.

Currently, more than 4,000 TEUs of import containers can be unloaded every day allowing vessels to complete loading and unloading goods at a faster rate, which helps reduce the vessels' stay time at jetties.

Vessels' berth occupancy time that had reached 6-7 days last month came down



RAJIB RATHAN

Trucks and covered vans waiting in queues to take delivery of imported goods from Chattogram port. The photo was taken at New Mooring Container Terminal on April 30.

Delinquent borrowers rush to take advantage of no interest on loans for Apr, May

AKM ZAMIR UDDIN

The country's banking sector has seen a declining trend of lending in recent days as the majority of businesses have put on hold their expansion plans or trading due to the ongoing economic fallout from the global coronavirus pandemic.

But the situation changed suddenly yesterday soon after the central bank had eased the interest payment for borrowers from April to June.

The businesses requested lenders either to increase their credit ceiling or give out the undisbursed portion under their demand or continuous loans.

Clients are allowed to take loans in line with their loan requirement in phases as per the credit ceiling set by banks for demand or continuous loans. "The sudden credit demand is completely absurd. And the majority of the loan seekers is delinquent. So, we have been compelled to request the central bank to stop the rush," said a managing director of a bank wishing not to be named.

The central bank directed banks on May 2 to

transfer all interest accrued or to be accrued between April 1 and May 31 this year from all of their loans to an interest-free blocked account.

This has helped the borrowers during the ongoing fallout as banks are not permitted to impose compound interest on the total outstanding loans of the businesses.

But, a portion of borrowers tried to misuse the facility, which forced the central bank to issue a fresh notice yesterday asking lenders to provide the credit support on the borrowers given their outstanding loans until March 31.

"Banks now face huge losses due to the recession as a portion of the delinquent borrowers is still trying to misuse the banks' fund," the MD said.

This is a good measure beyond doubt as it has stopped the vested quarter from embezzling the public money from banks, he said. A blocked account refers to an account that does not allow for the indiscriminate withdrawal but instead has certain restrictions or limitations on when, how much, and by who, capital can be withdrawn. Besides, banks are not allowed to transfer the

interest or profits deposited in the blocked account of the borrowers to lenders' income book until further notice, according to a Bangladesh Bank notice. If any borrower does not give any interest under the block account facility, banks are not allowed to ask clients to pay back the amount until further instruction.

The creation of the block account means borrowers might get further facilities in the days ahead, a BB official said.

"The central bank may either ask banks to waive the whole amount of interest in the block accounts or adjust the amount with their principal amount of loans," he said.

The central bank is yet to take any decision to this end. The government earlier assured businesses of taking an initiative to reduce their burden of high-interest bill.

If the interests or profits have already been shown as incomes, it has to be adjusted through a reverse entry. A decision on adjusting the interest or profits transferred to the blocked account will be issued later, the notice said.

BB measures to support small businesses: FBCCI

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The country's apex trade body has welcomed the central bank measures that aimed at channelling funds to small businesses hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic.

Banks and institutions have also been urged to disburse loans in the shortest possible time by adopting the simplest procedure possible in all steps from receiving application to loan disbursement, said the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) in a statement yesterday.

It also lauded the Bangladesh Bank instruction to transfer all interest and profit on all types of loans and investments imposed between April 1 and May 31 to interest-free blocked accounts.

"The FBCCI believes the business community will particularly benefit from the facility," it said.

On April 5, Prime Minister Sheikh

Hasina declared a financial assistance package of Tk 20,000 crore to introduce low-interest working capital loan through the banking system with a view to retaining the capacity of cottage, micro, and small and medium enterprises (CMSMEs) and jobs.

Following the prime minister's announcement, FBCCI President Sheikh Fazle Fahim submitted a proposal to the BB.

"Most of the CMSMEs entitled to the working capital loan and investment facility have minimal infrastructure and relationship with bankers compared to others," he said in the statement.

So, if these entrepreneurs were selected upon reviewing basic standards, financial statements and internal credit risk rating system, many would fail to meet qualifications, he said.

He also called for an easy access to credit for all newspapers and television stations.

TAMING CORONAVIRUS RAMPAGE

Paramount Textile: a textile firm with a conscience

MUHAMMAD ZAHIDUL ISLAM

When workers enter Paramount Textile's plant in Sreepur, Gazipur, they would need to go through a temperature testing procedure using a thermal scanner, wash hands properly and disinfect their shoes.

Wearing hand gloves has also been ensured as part of strengthening safety measures and all the facilities that have been put in place by the owners of the company are not quite normal in the garment and textile industry in Bangladesh.

Weaving operator like Sazzad Hossain, who left Gazipur on March 26 after the government declared a countrywide general holiday, had to stay in 14 days quarantine after he returned to the factory. The facilities were too provided by the factory owners.

"After the mandatory quarantine, I joined the work on Sunday and we need to follow doctors' advice as well," said Hossain, who has been working at Paramount Textile for five years and seven months now.

His colleague Nazmul Haque, who lives adjacent to the plant, has got masks and three pieces of soaps and hand sanitisers from the factory to keep himself clean.

The same was provided for each of the company's 2,000 employees.

What is more, they have received much-needed advice from the doctors about hygiene, how to ensure safe distancing and improve immunity to keep the coronavirus at bay.

"The factory provides free medical check-up to my family members and some free medicines during usual times and now the facilities have been enhanced," Haque said.

The company's efforts are aimed at fighting the spread of the highly contagious COVID-19 as the government allowed reopening of some factories and industries subject to maintaining strict hygiene measures.

"We are looking at the spending needed for the facilities as capital expenditure," said

Shakhawat Hossain Kollool, chairman of Paramount Textile.

Paramount has put in place a complete arrangement of coronavirus testing kits, medical facilities and equipment and clinical support containing oxygen.

Six doctors used to attend the employees even before the novel coronavirus hit the shores of Bangladesh and the medical facilities have been enhanced now to ensure additional care.

"Washing hands while entering the factory is a must. We have directed the workers to do it during the intervals and if they leave the machines even for a brief period during the shift," said factory in-charge AHM Abdur Rahman Hasnat.

The factory has set up 40 makeshift basins and put in place large water containers after the coronavirus situation worsened across the country.

Paramount Textile did not stop there. It brings in vegetables from Kurigram, which is at least 300km away from the plant and sells them among the workers at a price much lower than the rates in the kitchen markets in the locality.

"We are getting vegetables only at half prices than the local market," said Haque, who hails from Rajshahi. Rice is sold at Tk 30 to Tk 40 a kilogram depending on the variety.

Other essentials are also available inside the plant and workers can buy them cheaply.

The essentials are being sold at subsidised rates since the first coronavirus cases were reported in Bangladesh on March 8.

One particular incident prompted the recent change in Kollool. Recently, the entrepreneur came across a video clip of a weeping farmer as he could not find buyers for his produce.

The scene shocked him and the farmer seems to be known to him. At once, he decided to send a truck to the farmer and buy all of the vegetables in his disposal and sell them among the employees.



PARAMOUNT TEXTILE

Workers of Paramount Textile in Gazipur go through stringent safety procedures before they enter the factory and they have to maintain it when inside. Thanks to the improved safety measures, the company set an example for others amid allegations that factories are being reopened flouting government-fixed hygiene requirements.

"I knew it will be win-win for both the farmer and my workers."

Later, Kollool recalled that the farmer had won a national award along with him in 2016. The entrepreneur has a farming venture that produces chemical-free vegetables, fish and

livestock.

Bringing vegetables from the northern districts has become regular in the last one month.

"I love to see the smiling faces of my employees. I am quite sure we are getting

return as our employee retention rate is higher than any other plants nearby," Kollool said.

Some of the workers live in the dormitories and most live in the adjacent areas and Paramount Textile's supervisors regularly make a visit to see where their workers live and in what condition so that they can extend as much assistance as possible.

Workers get wages and salaries even before the end of a month -- a rare case in Bangladesh's garments and textiles industry.

Because of the regular wage payment, Paramount Textile had faced the wrath of unidentified people in the past. These people might be from other factories that can't pay workers regularly, said an official of the company.

Paramount Textile was set up in 2006 and commenced commercial production in 2008 and most of the workers have been working since the very beginning.

Set up on five acres of land, it manufactures a diversified range of yarn and solid dyed woven fabrics.

"The plant has to run round the clock and there is no chance to switch off the plant. So, we ran it during the holidays on a limited scale," Kollool said.

The company also faces pressure from the international buyers, who have warned that if the company can't meet their demand, they would move orders to other factories.

"So, we have had to run our plants on a very limited scale," he said, adding that when the government declared the general holidays, about half of the workers had wanted to continue to work, while the other half went home.

The company's net profit after tax was Tk 41 crore in fiscal 2018-19, up from Tk 27 crore a year earlier, according to the company's financial statement.

A listed company, Paramount Textile gave 7 per cent cash and 9 per cent stock dividend to its shareholders last year.

Relief for dressmakers as shops set to open before Eid

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

Much has been written about the garment sector's export orders hitting a brick wall for the global coronavirus pandemic.

But there is another set of garment manufacturers catering to the country's 16 crore-strong population, and they are in exigency too for the arrival of the novel coronavirus on these shores, which has necessitated a general shutdown since March 26.

Now, they are seeing a glimmer of hope after the prime minister

which represents about 20,000 small garment factories.

The garment makers start manufacturing six months before Ramadan while sales begin 10 days before the beginning of the holy month and ends within the first 10 days of the month, he said.

Take the case of Fazlul Hoque, owner of Riya Garment at East Bengal Shopping Complex in the capital. Like every year, he made about one lakh piece of dresses for children to be sold in wholesale shops this year, too.

After the 20th Ramadan, the wholesalers start paying back Hoque,

70,000 pieces of dresses for Eid. He sold the dresses at Tk 110 to Tk 300 each based on their quality.

But if the dresses are returned, he will have to sell those at an auction for Tk 50 to Tk 80.

"I really don't know how I would cover up the loss," said a despondent Aziz.

Md Faruk, the owner of Satata Collection, whose dresses are sold in different showrooms in Brahmanbaria, Sylhet, Cox's Bazar and Chattogram, says he waits all year round for the month of Ramadan.

"I am now waiting for some miracle



PRABIR DAS

Popular shopping complexes among Dhaka's middle-class demographic like the New Market have been shut since March 26 for the countrywide shutdown, a move that has left the country's 20,000 small garment factories in dire straits.

yesterday announced that shops would be allowed to open on a limited scale for the Eid-ul-Fitr, the country's biggest shopping festival.

"This will be the last possible way for us to recover some of our losses," said Alauddin Malik, president of Bangladesh Avhantarin Poshak Prostutkarak Malik Samity, which represents about 20,000 small garment factories.

Were the Eid sales missed completely, the garment makers for the domestic market would be staring at losses of about Tk 20,000 crore. And this year, they were hoping to turn in profits of Tk 15,000 crore.

"Forget about profit. This year, many of us may have to sell our factories to repay the loans we have taken to make the clothes," said Alauddin Malik, president of Bangladesh Avhantarin Poshak Prostutkarak Malik Samity,

with which he clears his dues and pays his staff salaries.

"I have invested around Tk 1.2 crore to manufacture dresses by taking a loan of Tk 70 lakh. Things were almost the same since the beginning of my business in the market 10 years back. But this year, all calculations went wrong."

Before the shutdown took effect, he had delivered about 70,000 pieces. But the wholesalers' shops have been shut firmly more than a month now.

"I don't have a single penny in my pocket now. I can't pay my staff unless the wholesalers sell the clothes and clear my bills," he added.

Abdul Aziz, the owner of Asha-Moni garment factory in the capital's Sadarghat area, is in the same boat as Hoque.

He shelled out Tk 60 lakh to make

to happen to save me," said Faruk, who has clothes worth about Tk 30 lakh stockpiled at the warehouse.

The members of Bangladesh Avhantarin Poshak Prostutkarak Malik Samity have invested about Tk 15,000 crore to establish their factories, said MH Mustafa, acting secretary of the Samity.

"There are instances of tailors becoming factory owners thanks to their hard work and enterprise. All these will be destroyed if the government does not pay attention to them," said Mustafa, who is also the secretary of Urdu Road Avhantarin Garments Baboshayee Association.

The association urged the government to give them loans under simple terms and conditions so that they can pay the workers' salaries and clear the bills.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Director
Chattogram Medical College Hospital.
www.cmch.gov.bd

Memo No: CMCH/Tender/2020-21/Non-MSR (Diet / Non-Diet)/3720 Date: 04-05-2020.

: INVITATION FOR TENDER :

Sealed Tenders are hereby invited from experienced Importers/Contractors/Suppliers/Distributors to supply Non-MSR (Diet / Non-Diet) Goods for CMCH in the fiscal year 2020-21. As per PPA-2006 & PPR-2008; Terms and conditions are as follows:

KEY INFORMATION	
1 Ministry/Division	Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
2 Agency	Chattogram Medical College Hospital, Chattogram.
3 Procuring Entity Name, Designation & Contact details	Brigadier General S M Humayun Kabir, Director, Chattogram Medical College Hospital. Telephone: +88031630179, Fax No.: 88-031-610022, e-mail address: cmch@hospi.dghs.gov.bd
4 Procuring Entity Code & District	GOB, Chattogram.
5 Invitation for	Procurement of Non-MSR (Diet / Non-Diet) Goods for CMCH in the fiscal year 2020-21.
6 Tender Ref. No & Date	CMCH/Tender/2020-21/Non-MSR (Diet / Non-Diet)/3720 Dated: 04-05-2020.
7 Procurement Method	Open Tender Method (National). Item-by-item.
8 Budget and Source of Funds	GOB.
9 Tender Notice Publication Date	04-05-2020.
10 Tender Schedule Selling Starting Date and Time	07-05-2020. During office hours.
11 Pre-Tender Meeting	20-05-2020, 11:00 A.M.
12 Tender Last Selling Date and Time	02-06-2020, 12:00 P.M.
13 Tender Dropping & Closing Date and Time	Dropping date: 03-06-2020, Dropping time: from 09:00 AM to 12:00 PM, Closing time: 12:01 P.M.
14 Tender Opening Date and Time	03-06-2020 at 01:00 P.M.
Name and address of the Office's	
(a) Selling Tender Documents	1. Cashier, Office of the Director, Chattogram Medical College Hospital. 2. Cashier, Office of the Civil Surgeon, Chattogram District.
(b) Receiving Tender Documents	1. Office of the Director, Chattogram Medical College Hospital. 2. Officer in charge, Panchlala Model Thana, Chattogram Metropolitan Police.
(c) Tender Documents Opening Place	Office of the Director, Chattogram Medical College Hospital.
INFORMATION FOR TENDERER	
All Bidders must submit Tender through "Tender Booklet" prepared by procuring entity and abide by the terms and conditions stated in the "Tender Booklet".	
The Bidders shall submit with its Tender the following additional documents :	
A	The tenderer must be a Bangladeshi Citizen and should submit copy of National Identity Card.
B	Electronic TIN (e-TIN) registration certificate.
E	Valid BIN Registration Certificate.
C	Up-to-date Trade License valid for the fiscal year 2019-20.
D	Income Tax Clearance Certificate for the Fiscal Year 2019-20.
F	Bank Statement (Original copy) from 21-05-2019 to 20-05-2020. Bidders bidding for different groups should attach the original copy of the bank statement with one group and attested photocopy of the same with other groups.
16 Bidders Eligibility	Bidders of Group: 01 to Group: 06 should be experienced in supplying diet goods (Experience range stated in tender terms and conditions) and bidders of Group: 07 to Group: 12 should be experienced in supplying similar goods (Experience range stated in tender terms and conditions) to any 800 to 1000 bedded hospital within any of the last 03 (Three) fiscal years. Bidders of Group: 13 & 14 should be experienced in supplying similar goods / performing similar work to any Tertiary level Hospital / Specialized Govt. Hospital / Civil Surgeon Office / Any Government Hospital within any of the last 03 (Three) fiscal years. Bidders of Group: 15 should be experienced in supplying at least 100 persons as Outsourcing manpower to any reputed 800 to 1000 bedded hospital within any of the last 03 (Three) fiscal years. Respective experience certificate and copy of work order must be submitted.
H	02 (Two) Passport size photo of the bidder / representative.
I	Other conditions are stated in Tender Booklet.
17 Description of Groups	Group: 01 (Dried Goods: Rice, Sugar, Flour etc.); Group: 02 (Vegetables: Potato, Papaya, Banana etc.); Group: 03 (Milk & Dairy Products); Group: 04 (Fish & Flesh Products); Group: 05 (Egg: Hen egg); Group: 06 (Bakery Products: Bread, Biscuit etc.); Group: 07 (Cleaning Materials: Soap, Soda etc.); Group: 08 (Miscellaneous goods); Group: 09 (Office Stationary: Paper, Ball pen, Pin, Khata etc.); Group: 10 (Electrical Goods: Bulb, Switch, Tube Light, Electric Fan, Electric Cable etc.); Group: 11 (Dirty Linen goods washing); Group: 12 (Hospital Waste Management); Group: 13 (Computer and Computer accessories); Group: 14 (Internet & Website Related Services); Group: 15 (Procurement of supplying outsourcing manpower).
18 Description of Price of Tender Documents, Tender Security, Related Services etc.	Detailed description in Tender Booklet.
Note:	
(a)	Corrigendum if necessary in future will be a part of this notice. The competent authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tender without assigning any reason whatsoever.
(b)	If the date of selling, receiving & opening of tender is disturbed under any unavoidable circumstances, the next working day will be applicable for the same respectively.

(Brigadier General S M Humayun Kabir)
Director
Chattogram Medical College Hospital.
Telephone: 880-31-630179, Email: cmch@hospi.dghs.gov.bd

GD-790

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR
LATE S. M. ALI

DHAKA TUESDAY MAY 5, 2020, BAISSHAKH 22, 1427 BS

Is it safe to reopen RMG factories?

Health protocols must be strictly enforced

THE picture in yesterday's front page says it all. Hundreds of garment workers leaving their factory in Ashulia in crowds, totally disregarding the government's social distancing directives. This happened after the government decided to allow some garment factories to open while maintaining safety and health standards as stipulated during the Covid-19 crisis. Thus, around 1,000 factories across Savar-Ashulia, Gazipur, Narayanganj and Chattogram industrial belts resumed production at a time. The result is not really surprising—already, 11 garment workers in Savar and Ashulia have tested positive for Covid-19.

It seems that the decision was taken before thinking things through, a regular phenomenon in most of the decisions taken regarding the RMG sector. When the decision to reopen the factories in phases was taken, the government also asked the factories to allow only workers in the locality of the factories to work. But in reality, garment workers who had gone to their villages when factories were closed, came back in droves in fear of losing their jobs, for a second time, thus nullifying the whole purpose of the lockdown—to prevent the spread of the virus. And now workers are again in very close proximity to each other and therefore, at high risk of getting infected.

We understand the pressing economic realities behind reopening the factories. But was this the right decision at this time? It seems not, as now the government is thinking of shutting them again in view of the number of positive cases among the workers.

At a recent interministerial meeting, it was decided that a joint-monitoring committee will be formed to monitor the health measures taken by the factories. We are at a loss as to why such a crucial committee was not formed before the decision to reopen was made. Now the authorities are talking about keeping Dhaka, Narayanganj and Gazipur isolated from the rest of the country, limiting the movement of RMG workers, increasing Covid-19 testing and quarantine facilities for workers and building coronavirus centres in specific zones. These are all very useful measures, but they should have been taken before opening the factories.

According to BGMEA, it has multiple audit teams who are checking whether factories are following the health protocols prepared by the BGMEA, according to WHO and ILO guidelines.

If the government decides to keep these factories open, then it must ensure that all the decisions taken so far to keep the workers safe are implemented immediately. But keeping workers safe inside factories is not enough. They must also maintain social distancing outside the factories too. Without such a holistic approach, the reopening process may have disastrous consequences.

Bidyanondo, SAAF and others, standing by the vulnerable

Generosity can save lives

AT a time when most of humanity is subdued because of the ongoing pandemic, Bidyanondo Foundation has been one of the first responders to the crisis, providing food and medical safety gear to people who needed them the most. Apart from distributing food for the needy, Bidyanondo gave 5,000 personal protective equipment (PPE) and 20,000 masks. They also collaborated with the armed forces in order to cover the remote regions of our country. Now we learn that Suhana & Anis Ahmed Foundation (SAAF) has provided Tk 1.05 crore as a special Covid-19 financial backing to Bidyanondo Foundation, enabling immediate support to 22,000 families in the remote corners of Bangladesh. There are also other organisations and groups in the private sector that have mobilised resources to provide immediate food relief and financial assistance to the hundreds of people who have lost their only source of income during the pandemic and cannot feed themselves or their families.

Private initiatives like this reflect the spirit of generosity and compassion towards fellow humans inherent in many people, which has been activated by this crisis. It is an opportunity for us to demonstrate the best in us. It is also an essential component in our overall crisis response, as it supplements the efforts of the state. Without these altruistic endeavours, many people would be going hungry and be subjected to greater suffering. There are countless families spread across the nation, and the world at large, who are desperately in need of the most basic of necessities. Many are facing unprecedented hardships, trying to cope with the difficulties that the pandemic has thrown at us. And it is during such times that we must demonstrate inclusiveness through our support for each other. As individuals, we should all support these efforts in whatever way we can, according to our own capacities. We must take heed from the above example and try our best to assist such causes as it is the true essence of humanity—to survive all odds and manifest itself in the most difficult of times. More importantly, it is only if society as a whole reaches out to the most vulnerable in this crisis that we will be able to survive.

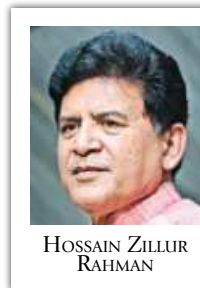
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

The magic of media

A few days ago, I came across a report in this daily titled "Toxic ship heading for Bangladesh" and was greatly worried about the threat it posed to workers' health and our environment. Thankfully, that report had an immense impact, and the government decided to restrict the vessel's entry. I want to congratulate *The Daily Star* on this achievement. I have been an avid reader of this newspaper for many years, and this is not the first time that I've witnessed the positive outcomes of its reporting. The fact that the report had the ability to prevent a disaster from happening makes me proud to have a credible source of information in this age of fake news.

Nahian Zaman, Dhaka



HOSSAIN ZILLUR RAHMAN

Now, nothing appears certain. The daily drip of official statistics on the infection adds to the uncertainty. Not the figures in themselves, but what they may not be telling. Where is Bangladesh on the infection curve? Where may it go? Are we even serious in trying to find an answer? Is low rate of testing a conscious policy decision or simply lack of one?

Compounding the uncertainties is the tendency towards "rosy" reporting by courtiers and armchair bureaucrats that belie ground realities. A spiralling chaos is nearer to the truth if you care to listen to the testimonies seeping out from the frontline, such as the Muga General Hospital on quality of PPE or the long queue for testing and the longer wait for test results. And what of patient experiences? Desperately seeking and failing to find a health facility that will take them, or once admitted, an equally desperate quest for "treatment" within the facility. And now the chaos is about to get murkier.

Policy-makers, seemingly overwhelmed by a dilemma of life-or-livelihood, appear to be giving way to the "livelihood" agenda without the benefit of any clarity on where we stand on the "life" agenda. And this too not in any coordinated way, but in fits and starts, driven by economic lobbies with "voice muscle". First, a hide-and-seek policy game on RMG factory reopening. Then a police authorisation of Iftar restaurants—both with toothless pronouncements of "shasthayabidhi". This week may see the end of the "chuti" altogether. How and when to ease and exit from the "lockdown" is certainly a critical issue, but the disjointed policy pronouncements on the matter gives the impression more of a gamble rather than a well-considered policy decision.

It is very true that no one has been sitting idle—neither the government nor society at large—in the face of the twin crisis of pandemic and economic standstill. Known and unknown actors have swung into action to the best of their abilities. The boro crop has largely been harvested. After initial hibernation, there has been a flurry of policy pronouncements, at least on paper. However, notwithstanding the many initiatives, the sense of uncertainty and escalating crisis appears to be deepening, if not worsening. Why is the sum failing to become greater than the parts?

Looking back, an uneasy conclusion is unavoidable. There has been a critical communication failure in Bangladesh.

A time for truths

Official and social messaging on Covid-19 narrowly focused on hygiene and social distancing protocols only, but failed to prevent an overall panic syndrome taking hold that has led to an entrenched social perception of the corona patient as a "villain". And not just in perception but in practice, being treated so whether in the neighbourhood or in the hospital, or even in the graveyard. This is forcing patients to hide symptoms, on one hand further exacerbating infection spread, and proliferating inhumane treatment of patients and their families on the other.

From the start, the authorities opted to delegate the Covid-19 messaging to departmental mandarins. The urgency really was of creating an informed national mood and an overall atmosphere of trust. The outcome has been anything but. The health mandarins signally failed to rise above their narrow bureaucratic

challenge is as much of establishing the credibility of the messenger as the efficacy of the message. Ultimately, the issue really is about the policy mindset, which to a large extent continues to read the unprecedented nature of the crisis as another "disaster" to be narrowly dealt with by departmental bureaucrats, rather than given purpose and drive through an empowered strategic centre. Not surprisingly, weak implementation has again emerged as a key concern, to a large extent due to the preponderance of "ex-officio" committees plugged into the implementation process. These tend to be over-attentive to status and hierarchy concerns, and usually lack strategic cohesion and the capacity to drive coordination and synergies. Unfortunately, the Covid-19 policy response so far appear to be underpinned

poverty line in February but fell into poverty due to the economic standstill. These vulnerable non-poor, subsisting on average about 40 percent above the poverty line income, suffered a 66 percent drop in income between February and early April and are suddenly a new group of what we have characterised as the "new poor", with particular concentration in urban centres. They will add an additional layer of as much as 22 to 25 percent to the 20.5 percent of poor. But the challenge is not merely quantitative. Existing social protection schemes have not covered these groups. There are no prior lists of such groups. How can one target them effectively and with what support? The government appears to have taken cognisance of the "new poor" but fallen back on the usual bureaucratic channels for targeting. This is a major innovation area, not just in



Women sit on the ground maintaining social distance while waiting to receive relief supplies provided by local police authorities in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on April 2, 2020.

PHOTO: REUTERS

world-views, obsessing with control and red-tapes and brushing ground realities under the carpet. Little wonder that distrust and panic syndrome has become the norm. An unfortunate side-effect has been to put non-corona healthcare virtually out of focus. A combination of the panic syndrome and collapse in frontline health workforce morale—both public and private sectors—has dramatically shrunk easy access to non-corona healthcare needs. This is particularly impacting chronic patients, children and vulnerable segments of the population.

Can we get a grip on the chaos staring at us, without fundamentally taking out the panic syndrome that is clouding the efforts to stem the infection spread and return safely to economic resumption? A rebooting of the communication strategy

by this familiar and ineffective mode of policy implementation.

April has passed. What does May have in store? Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC) and Brac Institute for Governance and Development (BIGD), through a joint nationwide survey in April, brought home some new realities that demand policy rethinking. Our entire development discourse has been predicated on a certain understanding of poverty dynamics, with the focus only on those below the poverty line. Thus the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, projecting from 2016 Household Income and Expenditure Survey data, puts the poverty rate at 20.5 percent in 2019. However, the PPRC-BIGD survey has brought to attention the plight of a segment of those who were above the

targeting but also with regard to the types of programmatic support—now and in the future—that make most sense for the vulnerable non-poor. The government will do well to partner on these strategic tasks with research organisations, NGOs and social platforms with credible track records on the ground.

May should also lead to an expansion of the Covid-19 discussion beyond health and economics, to the social too. Lockdown has not only brought an economic standstill. It has also put youth and students in limbo. Notwithstanding sporadic initiatives here and there, their plight is yet to engage the concerted attention of policymakers and social actors.

Hossain Zillur Rahman is Executive Chairman of Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC) and a former Advisor of Caretaker Government.

Withdrawal of lockdown: how we should plan

BE-NAZIR AHMED

LOCKDOWN, first instituted by the Chinese government, has become an unprecedented yet effective intervention for prevention of the transmission of Covid-19 throughout the world. At present, about 3 billion of the 7.8 billion world population are experiencing different forms of lockdown. In public health, the preventive non-pharmaceutical measure of physical distancing for transmission interruption are "quarantine" and "isolation". The lockdown is neither quarantine nor isolation; it is an emergency protocol initiated by an authority that usually prevents people from leaving an area. During the last four months, different countries have applied lockdown in different ways and means, and also in different names—starting from a "single house lockdown" to a few houses, a community, town, city, region or even an entire country. The duration has varied from parts of days, whole days, weeks and even months.

Bangladesh has been maintaining a form of lockdown for over a month, since March 26, 18 days after the first coronavirus case was reported on March 8. According to recent reports, this will continue up to May 16, after which there will be a gradual withdrawal. The late closure of international flights, noncompliance with institutional or even home quarantine, uncertainty regarding the magnitude of infections carried in by migrant workers, grossly inadequate testing, insufficient preparations to handle a potential surge in number of patients and the growing insecurity among citizens probably influenced the Bangladeshi authorities in instituting the lockdown in March.

This lockdown was the most effective decision taken so far and possibly contributed to curbing widespread transmission of infections in the absence of proper "trace, test and treat" measures. There were some hiccups in planning and implementation—terming it a "holiday" led to a mass exodus from cities to villages in the midst of a festive mood, and confusion amongst RMG factories led to great grievances

for workers, who have travelled back and forth despite the shutting down of public transport in fear of losing their jobs. While the lockdown has in general been quite rigorous, people roaming around in *paras* and *mohollas* have created concerns and become attractive news items and topics for talk shows. In contrast to the popular consensus on the ineffectiveness of the lockdown due to these breaches, as a public health specialist, I am happy with the lockdown in preventing inter-geographic transmission, although it was ineffective in intra-transmission within communities and was not really meant to prevent that.

Since Bangladesh has been debating

Are populations fully engaged and empowered to live under a new state of "normality"? This will be put to the test in the days following the easing of lockdown conditions. We are yet to make people understand the pandemic through a scientific approach.

on withdrawing the lockdown, how should we plan going forward? The World Health Organisation (WHO) released new guidance for governments looking for exit strategies beyond existing lockdown measures. Six criteria were identified by the WHO to ensure that governments would be able to manage a controlled and deliberate transition from community transmission to a steady state of low level or no transmission. If the Bangladesh government wants to start lifting restrictions, they must first meet the following six conditions.

Firstly, is transmission of Covid-19 under control? If we consider the curve representing reported cases, it becomes evident that the country is in an exponential phase. The increasing number of infections among healthcare providers and other service personnel

makes them at risk of being super spreaders and contributing to sustained transmission. Secondly, do we have the public health capacity to detect, test, isolate and quarantine every case and trace every contact? With certainty, it may be stated that the health system is not in a position to do so.

Are hotspot risks minimised in highly vulnerable places, such as nursing homes? Bangladesh does not have many nursing homes, so this condition may not be applicable, but we could demonstrate our success in managing the few hotspots and clusters that have arisen through implementing effective lockdown. The fourth criteria that has to be met is—have preventive measures

not consistent with public health norms and local contextualisation created confusion and noncompliance of preventive and protective measures like quarantine, social distancing and the use of personal protective equipment (PPE). Regardless of easing the lockdown, there should be strict disease surveillance until we are certain of being in control of transmission, and those at risk should be assessed through epidemiology and laboratory testing. Public health capacity should be significantly increased, and a huge number of public health specialists should be involved in leading preventive interventions. The tracing capacity has to be scaled up to catch every exposed personnel on the frontlines. Laboratory testing capacities also have to be increased so that every public health demand may be fulfilled, which would require improvements in laboratories, diagnostic workforce, diversity of tests, standards, quality and uniformity.

Efforts have to be taken to ensure adequate physical distancing in workplaces, transports and homes, and face masks should be made mandatory when outside. Every workplace should have an infection control plan, a guideline, standard operating procedures and a team to implement infection control measures. There should be adequate standard PPE where required, along with adequate washing facilities. Public health teams should ensure national infection control guidelines are followed in workplaces, with the power to apply the Communicable Diseases Act 2018 with fines. Institutional quarantine has to be made mandatory for travellers coming from affected areas, within or outside the country. Risk communications also have to be standardised in order to develop public opinion based on scientific attitudes rather than misconceptions in order to have informed decisions and practices. It is only when these conditions are in place can we think of doing away with lockdowns.

Professor Be-Nazir Ahmed is a former Director of Disease Control, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Bangladesh. His email address is benazir1959@gmail.com.

If Bangladesh turns away, so will the world

We are the last hope of the Rohingya refugees at sea



At any other time, if hundreds of refugees fleeing genocide were starving at sea with nowhere to go, there would be widespread

condemnation. Unfortunately, the pandemic that has swept across the world has relegated this issue into being a mere footnote in our news.

In the early hours of April 16, Bangladesh rescued 396 Rohingya refugees who were adrift at sea for around two months after being turned away by Malaysia, according to an Al Jazeera report. The videos that emerged were harrowing—a terrified crowd of mostly women and children huddling together, their emaciated bodies reminiscent of refugees in 1971, or the famine of 1943. Survivors told the BBC that they drank sea water to survive, and the bodies of the dead were pushed into the sea. Médecins Sans Frontières, which treated about 400 survivors, said the passengers were mostly aged between 12 and 20, and more than 70 people died on the boat.

Now, there are confirmed reports of at least two more fishing trawlers with more than 500 Rohingya refugees adrift for more than ten weeks, trapped somewhere in between the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea. While there have been reports of 43 of these refugees landing on Bangladesh's coast on May 2—the Arakan Project monitoring group suggests they escaped from one of the trawlers on a smaller boat—there are still hundreds remaining on the vessels that have been called “modern day slave ships”, completely at the mercy of their human traffickers. Both Malaysia and Bangladesh, who have in the past shown exemplary moral authority in taking in the Rohingya, have turned away from these refugees.

This was not always the case. In August 2017, when the Myanmar military crackdown—which was subsequently described as “textbook ethnic cleansing” in a UN report—forced over 700,000 Rohingya men, women and children to flee to Bangladesh, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina famously said “if my government can arrange food for over

160 million people of Bangladesh, we can also feed one million people more.” Bangladesh's decision to open the borders showed thousands of desperate people from falling victim to genocide—and as the stories of the Myanmar army and their local collaborators hunting down Rohingya men, raping women, burning mosques and razing whole villages to the ground were reported in local media, the people of Bangladesh also showed great sympathy for the world's most persecuted minority.

However, as time went on, we saw a perceptible “refugee fatigue” set in, especially in the host community in Cox's Bazaar. Bangladesh's policy went from solidarity and an “open arms” approach to insisting on repatriation, building a wall around the refugee camps, restricting education opportunities for Rohingya children, limiting internet and mobile services in the camps and generally doing everything possible to make life unpleasant for refugees and “encourage” them to go home. The fact that “home” no longer existed for most of these refugees, and return would mean almost certain death, was erased from the narrative. Local media outlets played a shameful role in changing the perception of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, taking every opportunity to label them as drug dealers and “disturbers of the peace”. That a population of 1.1 million could be anything beyond the desperate/dangerous binary, and that the Rohingya could contribute to society and if given the opportunity, use their voices to rise up and fight injustice—was quickly forgotten.

Ironically, the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, while leading to many sweeping statements about the importance of solidarity and building a new world based on community feeling—has also led to populations that are usually “othered” into becoming even more susceptible to victimisation. This is most obvious in Malaysia, where Covid-19 fears have created xenophobic campaigns against refugees and undocumented migrants, and have led to the Malaysian authorities rounding up and detaining hundreds, including children. Let us not forget that this population may also include our own workers—an estimated two lakh Bangladeshi workers in Malaysia are undocumented—who are facing an

imminent food crisis, according to a report in this daily. However, in Malaysia, human rights activists and community leaders have spoken out against this targeting of vulnerable populations, with the phrase “Migran juga manusia” (migrants are humans too) trending on social media. President of the People's Justice Party Anwar Ibrahim asked the Malaysian government to “safeguard our humanity”, saying there is no excuse to condemn to death the hundreds

other countries sharing the seas that the Rohingya are now trapped on—India, Myanmar, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia. Myanmar has used the pandemic as an opportunity to strengthen its aggressive nationalism, all but leaving ethnic minorities out of the scant government efforts to deal with the virus. If persecuted populations feel even greater pressure and choose this time to try and reach better shores, then their policy has worked.

largest trading partner in the region, and despite being the world's most populous Muslim nation, Indonesia last year called for the world to “stop pointing fingers” after the Gambia took Myanmar to the International Court of Justice (although the local population of Aceh have been known to shelter Rohingya refugees despite government policy to refuse asylum seekers), according to the Jakarta Post. In this situation, Malaysia and Bangladesh are the Rohingyas only

children who are victims of trafficking? If we have the capacity to send rice and vegetables to the UAE—a country that is notorious for its treatment of our own migrant workers—can we not, with the help of international agencies, provide for a starving population? As a nation where ten million of its people once became refugees, can we not understand the desperation that drove these people to sea, and reach out a hand of kindness during Ramadan?

We can make many rational arguments against the disproportionate responsibility shouldered by Bangladesh, and we can demand for the UNHCR and other international agencies to provide us with greater support. We can engage in diplomatic talks with our allies in the region who have consistently turned away from the Rohingya, and we can hold talks with ASEAN and OECD countries about the fate of these refugees. We can appeal to international courts to hold Myanmar to account, and we can call out the hypocrisy of nations and blocs (such as the EU) that “request” Bangladesh to take in refugees but continue to trade with the oppressive regime in Myanmar. But we can only do this if we continue to exercise our moral conscience as a nation and share with the most desperate refugees, whatever little we have.

According to the UNHCR, the economic effects of hosting refugees are mostly felt in poorer countries. The GDP per capita in Uganda and Ethiopia are less than half of Bangladesh's—yet they host more refugees than us. It is the way of the world that those who have the least to give, are the ones who give more. During the pandemic, there has been a lot of talk of building a kinder world—the optimist in me believes we have already started this project, if the extent of appreciation shown for essential workers is anything to go by. But we cannot build this world if we are going to leave refugees behind, abandoning them to starve at sea for fears of spreading Covid-19. Maybe it is time to put rational arguments aside and focus on our capacity for kindness. The refugees trapped at sea are dying by the hour—by rescuing them, we will be rescuing our own humanity.

Shuprova Tasneem is a member of the editorial team at The Daily Star. Her Twitter handle is @ShuprovaTasneem.



Rohingya refugees, who were found floating on the Andaman sea in 2015, desperately reaching out for airdropped food.

PHOTO: AFP/CHRISTOPHE ARCHAMBAULT/GETTY IMAGES

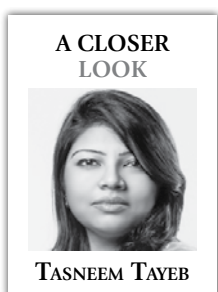
of Rohingya refugees at sea. It is appalling that in Bangladesh, no such kind words have been spoken, even by development professionals and activists who have been working with the refugee crisis in recent years.

Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen's comment—“It's not the responsibility of Bangladesh alone to take care of all the stateless people of the planet Earth; ask the global leaders”—is not an unjustified one, although one would hope for a more sensitive tone from a state representative when discussing starving refugees. There are seven

India is primarily concerned with geopolitics—Myanmar is their gateway to Southeast Asia and rival China already has a strong presence there, not to mention the current pro-Hindutva regime has little interest in speaking out for Muslim refugees. Myanmar's communal sentiments are mirrored in Sri Lanka—in 2017, the few Rohingya refugees who live in Sri Lankan shelters were attacked by Buddhist monks and hardline nationalists. Human Rights Watch has termed the Thai government's policy towards asylum seekers as “inhumane” and “racist”. Singapore is Myanmar's second

hope in the region. The Bangladesh government's stance—that the more refugees we take in, the more they will be pushed out of Myanmar—is flawed; there have already been decades-long efforts to displace the Rohingya, and whether they drown at sea or languish in camps is of no concern to Myanmar. Bangladesh had already made plans to relocate refugees to Bhashan Char, and those recently rescued on the coast are reported to have been taken there already for quarantine. If we have the space, why not rescue the rest, especially when we know most of them are likely to be women and

How will the new normal for our migrant workers look like?



A CLOSER LOOK
The world watched in paralysed horror as oil prices plummeted to below zero: the price of West Texas Intermediate oil grade went negative to -USD 37.63 per barrel (pb), for the first

time in history. The shock of the collapse was intense, leading to traders naming the day “Black Monday”.

Although this fall is related to US Texas crude oil for May contracts only, and prices of future contracts are still comparatively higher, this collapse was ominous for oil producing countries including the Gulf states and Russia, who have been scrambling for months in the wake of Covid-19 to find a way to keep oil prices stabilised. The reverberations of this fall are going to be felt intensely across the globe, including in Bangladesh.

For a net importer of oil such as Bangladesh, where the government has to pay large subsidies for this import, falling prices of oil might be, on occasions, seen as a respite. However, on the whole, any high or low in prices of oil worldwide—that can destabilise the commodity market—can have disastrous consequences, including for net importers.

Producer nations, especially the Gulf states, face major economic problems, including the risk of turning into debtors. For instance, even before the collapse of oil prices, Riyadh-based Jadwa Investment Company predicted that the Saudi budget will mark a deficit of 422 billion riyals—40 percent of the country's budget and 15.7 percent of its GDP. With price of oil crashing, one can only assume what implications the negative figures will have on the Saudi economy now.

For us, the challenge is on a different front: What will happen to our migrant workers? Since the outbreak of Covid-19, many migrant workers have had to return to Bangladesh. And we cannot say for certain when these migrant workers can go back to their destination countries to resume work, or if at all, in the foreseeable future. What is even more alarming is the possibility of more migrant workers returning home from the Middle East—especially those working in the construction sector—in the aftermath of the oil price collapse.

Bangladeshi workers in the Middle East are mostly engaged in construction, transportation services, hospitality, security services, household services and so on. The fear is—if oil prices remain unstable, in the face of mounting economic challenges, the oil producing countries will have to pull the plug on many of their projects, which includes construction. According to an article by David Hearst, the editor in chief of Middle East Eye, the “Saudi's economy was already struggling before coronavirus took hold with a growth rate of just 0.3 percent and a drop of 25 percent in construction since 2017.” With the Covid-19 situation wreaking havoc on the global economy, the situation might

With 1.38 crore people underemployed and potential new cases of unemployment, helping former migrant workers find sustainable earning solutions will be difficult.

deteriorate in the days and months to come.

So, if let's say major construction work is halted in the Gulf countries due to a tightening of their belts as a result of coronavirus and now the oil price collapse, what happens to our migrant workers working in these countries? Of course, the possibility of them being laid off and sent back to Bangladesh cannot be ruled out—already, the Bangladesh mission in Saudi Arabia has announced that the coronavirus fallout and slumping oil prices may lead to the deportation of up to 10 lakh Bangladeshi migrant workers in the next three to five years.

If this comes to pass, it will be a big blow for our economy, whose sustained growth in all these years has been heavily reliant on strong export earnings from the RMG sector and the heavy flow of remittances, thanks to our migrant

workers working in various countries abroad. At present, both are already under stress: RMG factories are losing orders, and according to data from Bangladesh Bank, earlier in March this year, Bangladesh's remittance inflow fell by around 12 percent year-on-year, the collateral damage of Covid-19. The employment of migrant workers who have returned home also remains a big worry. According to the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training, around 80 lakh Bangladeshis work in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman and other Middle Eastern countries.

If more migrant workers are sent back home due to job loss abroad, Bangladesh will be scrambling to find ways to support them at home. One major problem will be absorbing them into the economy or sending them to other destination countries, since it is the semi-skilled or unskilled workers who might be affected most. And without jobs or some form of government support, how are these former migrant workers going to support themselves and their families, especially those who haven't been able to work abroad for long enough to make some savings or even recover the fee they had to pay when going abroad?

Earlier, the Asian Development Bank suggested that the USD 300 billion-plus Bangladesh economy could lose USD 3.02 billion in a worst-case Covid-19 outbreak scenario. This would mean a loss of 894,930 jobs, according to their March estimates. With 1.38 crore people underemployed and potential new cases of unemployment, helping former migrant workers find sustainable earning solutions will be difficult.

The Ovbashi Karmi Unnayan Program has already requested the government to announce a social safety net programme for the families of migrant workers who have returned home, or are not being paid their wages in their destination countries due to the Covid-19 lockdown. But with the government already rolling out multiple stimulus packages to address the needs of the people who are engaged in the informal sector—around 87 percent of our workforce—which has been hit hard by the pandemic, it remains to be seen how much it can do to support migrant workers and their families.

According to Zahid Hussain, former Lead Economist at the World Bank, the government can, for now, tap into the Wage Earners' Welfare Fund (WEWF), which according to the International

Labour Organization is a “a single trust fund pooled from the mandatory membership contributions of migrant workers, investment and interest income on these funds, and income from other sources” to support the workers who are in need of immediate assistance. Most of the migrant workers and their families do not fall below the poverty line, and for now have they might have the means to tide themselves over. This is especially true for those migrant workers who have been working abroad for many years, but there are also others who have not been able to recover the money that they paid to get the jobs abroad.

Zahid Hussain suggests that the government identify these workers and their families and provide them with support through the WEWF, which otherwise is only used for taking “measures to bring back the dead bodies of the migrant workers and extend financial aid to the families of the deceased workers, take care of afflicted migrant workers, provide scholarships to the children of migrant workers through Wage Earners' Welfare Fund and to undertake other welfare activities for the migrant workers,” according to information on the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare & Overseas Employment on a government website. And only to supplement this measure, if deemed appropriate, the government can later draw from the budget under social safety net programmes.

The more than 10 million Bangladeshi migrant workers, who toil day and night, often living in sub-human conditions, far away from their loved ones, remitted USD 18.32 billion to Bangladesh last year. While we often refuse to sit next to them in airplanes or at least feel ashamed of their “uncouth” behaviour, and even questioned the government's wisdom in bringing them back to Bangladesh in the wake of the Covid-19 outbreak, it is these workers whose hard earned money boosts our foreign exchange reserve, enabling us to lead better, more comfortable lives. If there ever was a time to give back to these people, it is now.

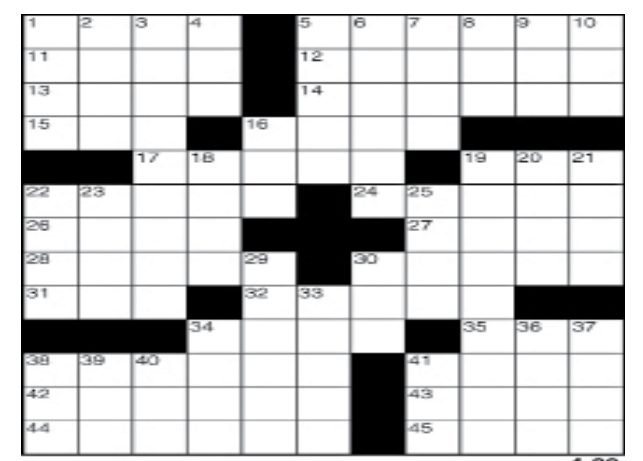
These migrant workers and their families right now need our help, and the government can come forward in this, as it has done for the other sectors, by utilising the WEWF. The question remains, is the government willing to come to the aid of migrant workers, especially those in need of immediate support?

Tasneem Tayeb is a columnist for The Daily Star. Her Twitter handle is: @TayebTasneem.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
 1 Gung-ho
 5 Knight's attendant
 11 TV's warrior princess
 12 Activate
 13 Highlands girl
 14 Put on the line
 15 Yale student
 16 Casserole staple
 17 Because of
 19 Little rascal
 22 Baseball's Pee Wee
 24 Dogpatch boy
 26 Lotion additive
 27 Land in the sea
 28 Compete with a lance
 30 Sudden all-out attack
 31 Little laborer
- DOWN**
 2 Schnitzel base
 3 Wrong way to wear a shirt
 4 German article
 5 Walk with pride
 6 High-protein grain
 7 -- Major
 8 Quill need
 9 Fish eggs
- 32 Brandish
 34 Musical number
 35 Here, to Henri
 38 Dangerous
 41 Varnish layer
 42 Paltry
 43 Runs smoothly
 44 Warhol's forte
 45 Secret agent TV show of the '60s
- 10 Stop
 16 Kicker's aid
 18 Calls on
 19 Sneakily dangerous
 20 Dissolve
 21 Veep's boss
 22 Indian prince
 23 Musk of Tesla
 25 Potential law offer
 30 Implore
 33 Unmoving
 34 Long account
 36 Scout's base
 37 Tiny
 38 Strike caller
 39 “The Matrix” hero
 40 Maple fluid
 41 Greek X

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 CATE HINDS
 OTIS ATTEND
 MEG DIE NAE
 BARBER CHAIR
 ASIAN HALLE
 TESTY DISK

LAW OPINION

Intellectual Property Rights: Next corporate political mechanism to rule the world

BARRISTER SHALEH AKRAM SOMRAT

As human being is ingenious in nature, the chain of introducing new ideas, inventing new things and presenting old inventions in a new fashion will continue till the last breath of the world. At the same time, globalisation is making the world smaller providing more opportunities to mix up cultures as well as adopting another's ideas. Ordinary people will find no wrong here but here is the inception of intellectual property rights (IPR) war. Such IPR controversy can be found in years back

Marconi's Wireless Detector!

Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) as corporate political instrument

The developed countries are more concerned about the implementation IPR related laws with the vision of establishing a proprietary market advantage and protecting core technologies. In contrast, the developing or the less developed countries hold totally opposite view.

The WTO TRIPS Agreement, being the most ambitious and influential instrument for IPR protection, obliges the developed countries to provide technical and financial cooperation

The TRIPS Agreement keeps an option of reviewing the impact of the Agreement open to the signing countries which can positively be used to save the collective interest of the developing and the less developed countries.

the company tried to stop harvesting and farming Basmati rice in India and Southeast Asia by claiming its Royalty. However, the Indian government tackled the issue strongly and rejected the USA's claim saying that it is registered as their regional food.

Controlling the commercial world through IPR

The IPR mechanism has already taken its stance as an influential commercial instrument. The IPR jurisprudence protects every commercially important registered works from being copied or used without permission. The mechanism is monitored and controlled by several international treaties and protocols, amongst those the Paris Convention, 1883 for patents, the Berne Convention 1886 for Copyrights, the Madrid Protocol, 1991 for marks, the Hague Agreement, 1925 for designs, and the WTO administered TRIPS Agreement, 1994 for overall IPR mechanism are mention worthy. Reality shows that the developed countries indirectly compel the less developed countries to enter into bilateral and multilateral treaties, the pressure of which cause the developing and the less developed countries to enact non-practical and frustrating laws that hinder its intellectual potentials. Normally, liberal international rules do not apply in between countries in presence of bilateral treaties. For example: the TIFFA treaty between Bangladesh and America is, in my opinion, a commercial burden for Bangladesh. In near future, we may have to pay handsome amount of money for using some facilities what we are now using free, i.e. software. Imposing trade restrictions and refusing to provide tariffs (as USA is denying providing us GSP tariff) are some examples of pressure mechanism.

What should Bangladesh do?
Bangladesh may find some international IP mechanisms burdensome, while being a less developed country, it enjoys some incentives as well. Recently, the WTO extended the exemption period from paying patent royalty on drugs till 2032. That means we can copy and develop pharmaceutical products without paying any patent royalty to any country till 2032. We should take the

100% advantage of this prospect. There is no better option than creating mass awareness. Bangladesh needs three-tier strategy: national, regional and international. As bilateral treaties can debar us from getting the benefits of international treaties, the policy makers should acquire clear understanding regarding the IPR matters and be more operational to protect the national interest. In addition, the general people should be well informed and aware of their rights regarding their works and inventions. Besides, the TRIPS Agreement keeps an option of reviewing the impact of the Agreement open to the signing countries which can positively be used to save the collective interest of the developing and the less developed countries.

Post-Coronavirus era

The post-Coronavirus world will be a changed world in terms of commercial and political polarisation. The IPR mechanism has both the aspects: we can rule or be ruled! In other words, it has the power to make us corporate slave, if we keep sleeping over our rights. Alternatively, it can be administered as the easiest way of getting benefited by our inventions, works, identity and heritages. As being a less developed country, we have points of arguments as well as scope of negotiation with the modern giant corporate leaders who will, by hook or crook, make their way out to make money by selling their ideas to us, and if possible, even by selling our own ideas to us! It is the high time to be aware, to be proactive on our own rights.

You might not be an entrepreneur, but you have an idea that you would like to see exploited, it might have the potential to gift you a better future, to give us a better world. A huge battle in the courts around the world is currently taking place over these rights that may bring positive changes in the governing laws. Before it is too late and before the flexible laws change and before the corporate giants become harsh on us, we should start working on this issue to protect individual interest as well as collective interest of our country.

THE WRITER IS AN ADVOCATE, SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH.



in the "Calculus Controversy" between the famous scientists Isaac Newton and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. Both claimed as to be the father of the study of Calculus. However, historians accept both as co-inventor, having come to the idea independently of each other. In addition, let's not forget our own scientist Jagadish Chandra Bose whom we claim as the real inventor of

in favour of the developing and the less developed countries to facilitate the implementation of their IPR mechanism as per the covenants of TRIPS. This has been a winning contribution for the developed countries as strict implementation of IP laws will ultimately benefit the developed countries to increase its industrial capacity and market demand

safely in the developing as well as in the less developed countries.

With the benefit of higher level of IPR protection, the already advanced and well-equipped, the developed countries will easily control the market of other countries. Even if, technologies and knowledge were transferred for free, it will be of no use to the developing and/or the less developed countries, firstly because, IPR mechanism will control the unauthorised reproduction or reuse of those transferred technologies; and secondly, authorisation will cost royalties by which major portion of income will go into the pocket of the developed countries.

If we think that it is better not to implement IP laws in Bangladesh and not to get involved in international mechanism as well as keep copying the new ideas, technologies and works from other countries; I must say: we are still living in the world of fools! First and foremost, we have no way open to escape our liability to the international community as the international rules are devised by influential quarters. Secondly, though it sounds strange, the truth is that the developed countries are also stealing the ideas, works and heritages from the less developed countries more frequently than anyone can imagine. For example, we all know about "BASMATI RICE" which is a type of native rice of our country, also harvested in some parts of India. A few years ago, a USA company filed for a patent on Basmati Rice in USA office and got registration. Then

LAW VISION

COVID-19 and Default of Commercial Loans: Looking Ahead

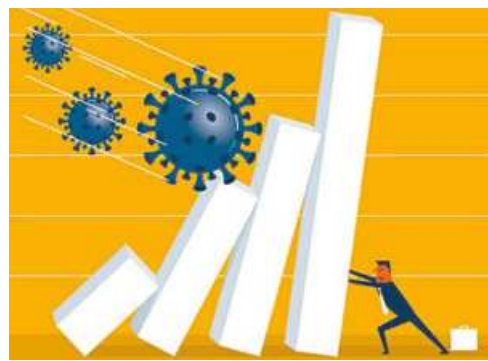
MD. SAMEER SATTAR

THE time we are living in is unprecedented, to say the least. While claims relating to health, social and political unrest are undeniable, the economic disaster that we are facing now or will be facing in the future due to the pandemic is worrying. The experts are unanimously predicting that the affected countries will face a sharp decline in economic prosperity. It is predicted that Bangladesh will not be immune from this catastrophe either. The World Bank's report suggests that Bangladesh's gross domestic product growth will fall from last year's 8.15 percent to 2 percent by the end of this financial year (June 30), with the highest growth range peaking at a mild 3 percent. At this rate, many companies will face extensive losses and will be forced to wind up their businesses. The inevitable result will be a rise in default of loan repayments. The Government of Bangladesh is very much aware of this economic challenge and, through its actions, has taken an aggressive approach in its fight to keep our economy afloat. The Hon'ble Prime Minister has already declared generous stimulus packages to be distributed through the Bangladesh Bank and several initiatives have also been taken by the Bangladesh Bank to support businesses to navigate through these troubling times.

However, a more aggressive approach may be taken by the Bangladesh Bank to address the problems which will be faced by the borrowers in repaying their loans. As part of its crisis management strategy, the Bangladesh Bank has already directed all scheduled banks and financial institutions not to downgrade the credit classification of any borrowers for defaulted loans between the period of 1 January 2020 and 30 June 2020. This is undoubtedly a helpful step taken which will aid the defaulting borrower's situation given the current circumstances and the looming crisis. However, it is suggested that, in order to effectively mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on the borrowers and, resultantly, the economy, the Bangladesh Bank may consider announcing a more robust regulatory package.

Apart from a stay on credit classification, the Bangladesh Bank may also consider offering a moratorium to the ailing borrowers on their loan repayments. A moratorium can be termed as a payment holiday, which allows the borrowers to defer due payments for a specified period. In simple terms, the effect of a moratorium is that if any bank in Bangladesh grants a moratorium to the borrower, then the borrower will not be required to repay

the loan amount due to such a lender during the moratorium period – thereby giving the borrowers the much needed "breathing space". The moratorium shall defer all instalments, including the interest payable during the moratorium period, and all of the interest accumulated during the moratorium period can be paid at the end of the repayment schedule. For working capital facilities, the moratorium will only suspend the interest payment during the moratorium period, and the interest accrued during this period shall be payable after the end of the moratorium. In this way, the borrowers can concentrate on focussing to keep their businesses afloat and retain their employees rather than going on a spree of employment cuts and lay-offs. It is believed that this may not have a massive adverse effect on the bank's profits as well because, consequently, the repayment schedule for such a loan account will be extended and the amounts payable



during the moratorium will, in any event, be repaid during the said extended period. This proposal has also been suggested by the World Bank and has already been introduced by our neighbouring country India, where the Reserve Bank of India has permitted all commercial banks and financial institutions to grant a moratorium to their borrowers for up to 3 months on the payment of all principal, interest and repayment instalments between 01 March 2020 and 31 May 2020.

Apart from a moratorium, the Bangladesh Bank can also direct the scheduled banks not to trigger the default clauses under the loan agreements. Typically, a financing facility provides for a material adverse effect, popularly known as 'MAE', as a trigger for an event of default. The banks generally negotiate an expansive definition of MAE which includes any event that has a material adverse effect on the business of the borrower. Undoubtedly, due to COVID-19, the future cash flows of many businesses will get negatively impacted. This

may trigger MAE in a financing facility, subject to its terms and conditions. Moreover, the banks do not favour a 'force majeure' clause in their financing documents, since it may allow a borrower to avoid its payment obligations. In the absence of an explicit 'force majeure' clause, the borrowers will be left to argue an implicit 'force majeure' clause – thus increasing disputes and litigation between the parties. A clear guidance from the Bangladesh Bank may certainly avoid such a situation.

Another important area where the Bangladesh Bank can provide some valuable assistance to the ailing borrowers is the valuation of assets kept as security. The COVID-19 pandemic has already upset the stock market, with recession looming large. All these factors have a cascading impact on the valuation of assets. In a secured financing transaction, the security package may have a variety of assets such as shares, immovable properties and moveable assets. If the security depletes, a bank can typically ask a borrower to replenish the security. If the borrower fails to replenish the security, it will constitute an event of default, which entitles the bank to accelerate repayments under the facility and enforce any security. Since most of the assets kept by the borrower as security will devalue, unless the Bangladesh Bank intervenes or gives proper guidance, the banks will be at liberty to sell these assets at the reduced value and then claim additional security from the borrower for their remaining loan amounts – thereby creating more pressure on the ailing businesses. Lastly, the Government of Bangladesh may also consider a temporary suspension of the insolvency provisions contained in our laws. For the time being, this step may shield businesses against insolvency proceedings from their creditors. Recently, the Government of India has also suggested that if the COVID-19 crisis continues beyond 30 April 2020, it may suspend certain provisions of their insolvency laws for a period of 6 months to shield businesses against insolvency proceedings from their creditors.

In this time of crisis, the steps that have already been taken by the Government of Bangladesh under the able leadership of the Hon'ble Prime Minister is certainly praiseworthy. It is believed that if the above steps are also taken by the Government of Bangladesh (if not done already), then such actions will be timely and will go a long way to help keep businesses afloat in this pandemic and its aftermath.

THE WRITER IS THE HEAD OF FIRM OF SATTAR&CO. ASSISTED BY HIS RESEARCH ASSOCIATE, NAFIZ AHMED.

RIGHTS ADVOCACY

COVID-19 and Human Rights



WHILE countries around the world work to contain and limit the spread of COVID-19, certain human rights and allowable derogations become relevant. While freedom of movement is of foremost importance in discussions about the lockdowns and quarantine measures, other human-rights concerns also arise.

For example, freedom of expression and right to critical information is a pertinent right. The government is responsible for providing necessary information for the protection and promotion of rights including right to health. It must ensure the publication of up-to-date and accurate information on the disease. Regular press briefings, publication of health guidelines etc. must be ensured to ensure right to health.

In case of infectious diseases, people who live in closer proximity to others in confined spaces are more vulnerable than the rest. Groups such as prisoners, residential facilities for people with disabilities, nursing institutions for the elderly, refugees living in camps, slum-dwellers, homeless people etc. are all more likely to both contract and spread the disease. Government and other concerned authorities must take appropriate action to reduce the risk in these places.

Access to potable water is also an essential corollary to preventive

measures and infection containment. Sanitation is crucial in avoiding the spread of the virus: this is made difficult when people do not have access to safe water. Lack of potable water and sanitation at home, school, or in healthcare settings not only make preventative measures difficult, rather, places that do not have adequate sanitation and water may be a locus for the spread of the disease. The International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) to which Bangladesh is a signatory states that governments should create conditions that "would assure all medical service and medical attention in the event of sickness."

The COVID-19 outbreak can possibly have a greater adverse impact on women and girls. The current crisis is resulting in an overloaded health system and shortage of medical supplies. This could obstruct women's access to contraception and pre- and post-natal and birth care. Furthermore, a significant portion of working women are employed in informal labour without job security. The lockdown deprives a huge portion of these women from their source of income. Protection must also be extended to other vulnerable and marginalised groups and discrimination in healthcare access must be prevented.

COMPILED BY LAW DESK. (SOURCE: HRW.ORG)



SOCIAL DISTANCING OUT IN NATURE

The coronavirus pandemic has caused all major sporting events to be halted for a while now and athletes, like their fans, were confined indoors. However, in order to get relief from cabin fever, star Australian cricketer Steven Smith and Czech tennis player Petra Kvitova recently embraced the outdoors. Smith took in the sights after running a half-marathon, while two-time Grand Slam winner Kvitova was just grateful to have spent her Sunday close to nature.

PHOTO: INSTAGRAM

'I hope cricket begins with DPL'

SPORTS REPORTER

Although the coronavirus pandemic has brought daily life to a virtual standstill, the Bangladesh cricket team's stars are keen to see the return of the Dhaka Premier League (DPL) and identified it as the foremost priority when cricket returns to the country. Mahmudullah Riyad and Tamim Iqbal delved into what the DPL means to them during an Instagram chat on Sunday night.

"I think the DPL taking place is very, very important, not just for the cricketers but everyone involved. From the boys to physios, trainers and coaches and officials, it's for everyone," Mahmudullah told Tamim.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) had postponed the second round of the DPL on March 16 in order to stop the spread of the coronavirus before all cricket in the country was postponed indefinitely. That left Tamim worrying about the players who earn their bread and butter in the domestic circuit.

"We have been playing for the last 10-12 years and if the DPL is not held, we have been blessed and can weather this out. However, so many boys will be in huge trouble if the DPL isn't held... [that] is what needs to be realised," Tamim said. "All I hope is that no matter when cricket begins, it begins with the DPL."

Mahmudullah spoke about what separates the DPL from other competitions.

"The thing is that the Premier League has an essence of its own. There is a different fighting spirit and eagerness. It has a different flavour and I don't think anything else matches it in that regard."

Tamim added that national team players felt a different kind of motivation when facing each other in the DPL.

"The way we compete with each other, that is not seen in any other league. The BPL is a different story but the DPL's intensity is very high."

Mahmudullah echoed those sentiments, saying: "Everyone is so hungry for runs and wickets and so the approach is totally different. It's a totally smash and grab approach."

BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury told The Daily Star yesterday: "We will follow government directives since health and safety is most important. We are also in talks with other ICC member countries regarding the measures they will employ."

"Once we return to cricket, the DPL will be our highest priority. We want to do this since the DPL is the bread and butter for many cricketers. Our highest priority is to finish the Premier League. Regarding Premier League, we talk regularly with clubs and other stakeholders."



How 1905's 'Originals' forged All Blacks legend

AFP, Wellington

An unheralded group of New Zealand rugby players set sail for Europe 115 years ago on a tour that would revolutionise the way the game was played and forge the All Blacks' formidable legacy.

Known in their homeland simply as "The Originals", the team was the first to use the All Blacks name and set the standards for those who followed in the famous black jersey.

In a gruelling tour that kept them away from home for eight months, the team won 34 of their 35 matches in Britain, Ireland, France and the USA.

Along the way, they amassed 243 tries, scoring 976 points and conceding just 59, attracting huge crowds with the novelty of their pre-match haka and free-flowing play.

The team's success was a source of immense pride for Kiwis and has been credited with helping develop a distinct national identity, at a time when New Zealand was still a far-flung British colony.

"The 1905 tour stands as one of the nation's defining moments, as the country isolated in the South Pacific asserted itself on the world stage, proving they were about more than simply frozen lamb," British sports historian Tom Weir wrote.

There was little hype when the steamship Rimutaka departed Wellington in July 1905 carrying a cargo of frozen mutton and about 100 passengers, including 27 rugby players.

The New Zealanders were tipped to struggle against their more fancied opponents but vice-captain Billy Stead detailed in his diary how they spent the six-week voyage undergoing rigorous training and discussing tactics.

The preparation paid dividends immediately when they thrashed Devon 55-4 in their opening fixture, generating ever-increasing interest as

the lopsided scorelines continued.

"With their new formations and a refreshingly open, running style in which forwards handled as skilfully as backs, they captured the imaginations of those who saw them play," the late historian Adrienne Simpson wrote.

Legend has it that the moniker All Blacks was coined when an admiring journalist wrote the ball-handling team played like they were "all blacks" and a typographical error saw an extra "L" added into his copy.

But the New Zealand Rugby Museum

Rugby World Cup tournaments.

The Test against Wales played in front of 47,000 in Cardiff is still considered one of the great matches.

The 3-0 defeat was the All Blacks' only loss on tour, although New Zealanders still argue Bob Deans scored a legitimate try that was incorrectly disallowed.

The match is so revered by rugby aficionados that the jersey worn by All Blacks captain Dave Gallaher sold for a then-world record 180,000 pounds in 2015.



An unheralded group of New Zealand rugby players set sail led by Dave Gallaher on a legacy-defining world tour in 1905, which saw them win 34 of 35 games across Europe and the United States. The jersey that the captain wore during the only loss against Wales 115 years ago sold at auction for 180,000 pounds while the whistle from a game against England has been used in the opening match of every Rugby World Cup.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

rejects the explanation pointing to a contemporary newspaper report that said All Blacks was a reference to "their sable and unrelieved costume".

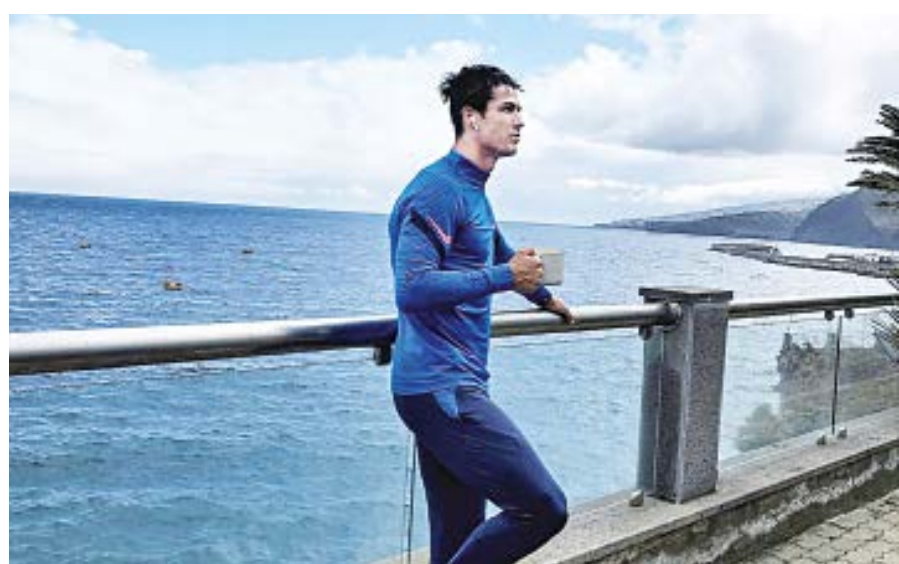
After the tourists accounted for Scotland and Ireland, a crowd of up to 70,000 watched them defeat England 15-0 at Crystal Palace.

The referee's whistle from that match, known as the Gil Evans whistle after the Welsh official, has since been used in the opening game of all nine

After a Test win over France, the tour wrapped up with two matches in USA before the team was given a hero's welcome in Auckland in March 1906.

The All Blacks remain pacesetters in the modern era, winning three World Cups and enjoying a Test win rate approaching 80 percent.

Simpson said the appeal of the 1905 "Originals" was that they were "a group of ordinary blokes -- miners, farmers, bootmakers and bank clerks".



Although Juventus recalled their players for training, Cristiano Ronaldo was delayed by restrictions on his private jet taking flight, giving him time to get one last drink.

PHOTO: INSTAGRAM

'Crowds a hurdle for T20 WC'

AGENCIES

Hope continues to build regarding the possibility of staging this year's T20 World Cup in Australia, with administrators to decide whether a crowd-less tournament is worthwhile.

"I'd love to see an Australia-India Test series this summer and I'd really like to be able to see the World Cup go ahead. The issue is not so much the teams, it's going to be the crowds," federal sports minister Richard Colbeck told SEN on Monday.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার		উপজেলা স্বাস্থ্য ও পঃ পঃ কর্মকর্তার কার্যালয়	
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"দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি"		"দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি"	
স্মারক নং: ১-উঃপঃ/পঃ/পঃ/এম এস আর-১৯-২০ টেকসং২০২০/ ১৯১৬	তারিখ: ০৫/০৪/২০২০ ইং		
পটিয়া উপজেলা স্বাস্থ্য কমপ্লেক্স ও এর আওতাধীন ইউনিয়ন স্বাস্থ্য কেন্দ্র, চট্টগ্রাম সন্মুখে ২০১৯-২০২০ খ্রিঃ আর্থিক সনের এম এস আর সামগ্রী ক্রয়ের নিমিত্তে গণনায়েক সত্ত্বার আইন/বিধিমালা ২০০৬, ২০০৮ ও ২০০৯ অংশবহী সংশোধিত বিধিবিধান মতে নিম্নোক্ত ছক মোতাবেক এম এস আর সামগ্রী ক্রয়কৃত জাবে বাংলাদেশের প্রকৃত ব্যবসায়ী/ত্বিকার কার্যক্রম/সরকারী কর্মসূচীর নিমিত্ত হইতে নিখরাত সিডিউলের মাধ্যমে সীলনাদায়িত্ব দরপত্র আহ্বান করা যাইবে।			
১ মন্ত্রণালয়/বিভাগ	১ স্বাস্থ্য ও পরিবার কল্যাণ মন্ত্রণালয়	১১ দরপত্র জামানত/ব্যবহার টাকার পরিমাণ	১ ১০,০০০/- টাকা
২ ব্যক্তি বা সংস্থার উপস্থিতি	১ স্বাস্থ্য অধিদপ্তরের বরাদ্দকৃত রাসদ/স্বাস্থ্য/উন্নয়ন খাতের বরাদ্দকৃত অর্থ	১২ দরপত্র জামানত/ব্যবহার টাকার পরিমাণ	১ ১০,০০০/- টাকা
৩ সত্ত্বার সংস্থা	১ উপজেলা স্বাস্থ্য ও প.প. কর্মকর্তা, পটিয়া, চট্টগ্রাম।	১৩ দরপত্র জামানত/ব্যবহার টাকার পরিমাণ	১ ১০,০০০/- টাকা
৪ দরপত্র ক্রয়/সত্ত্বারের পদ্ধতি	১ উন্মুক্ত দরপত্রের মাধ্যমে দরপত্রের দলিলের সহিত সংযুক্ত আরোপিত শর্তাবলী অনুসরণ মতে	১৪ দরপত্র জামানত/ব্যবহার টাকার পরিমাণ	১ ১০,০০০/- টাকা
৫ দরপত্রের প্যাকেজের নাম/দরপত্রের ধরণ	১ এম এস আর সামগ্রী (এম এস আর)	১৫ দরপত্র জামানত/ব্যবহার টাকার পরিমাণ	১ ১০,০০০/- টাকা
৬ দরপত্র দায়ের বোধ্যতা	১ দরপত্র দলিলে সংযুক্ত শর্তাবলী মতে।	১৬ দরপত্র জামানত/ব্যবহার টাকার পরিমাণ	১ ১০,০০০/- টাকা
৭ ক্রয়/সত্ত্বারের আকার	১ কার্যালয়ে প্রাপ্তির মেটা টাকার অঙ্কের উপর ১০% হিসাবে (এম এস আর) কেবলমাত্র বাংলাদেশের স্থানীয় ব্যক্তি যারা কোন ব্যাংকের শাখা হতে ব্যাংক ড্রাক/পে-অর্ডারের মাধ্যমে জমা দিতে হবে।	১৭ দরপত্র জামানত/ব্যবহার টাকার পরিমাণ	১ ১০,০০০/- টাকা
৮ দরপত্র বিক্রয়ের স্থান	১ উপজেলা স্বাস্থ্য ও প.প. কর্মকর্তার কার্যালয়, পটিয়া, চট্টগ্রাম। (সকাল ৯টা-দুপুর ২.৩০ মিনিট পর্যন্ত)	১৮ দরপত্র জামানত/ব্যবহার টাকার পরিমাণ	১ ১০,০০০/- টাকা
৯ দরপত্রের সিডিউল বিক্রয়ের তারিখ ও সময়	১ দরপত্রের বিজ্ঞপ্তি প্রকাশের পর হইতে ১৫/০৪/২০২০ ইং পর্যন্ত (অফিস সন্ধ্যাকালীন সময় ছুটির দিন ব্যতীত প্রতিদিন দুপুর ২.৩০ মিনিট পর্যন্ত)	১৯ দরপত্র জামানত/ব্যবহার টাকার পরিমাণ	১ ১০,০০০/- টাকা
১০ দরপত্র সিডিউল জমা/সিডিউলের স্থান	১ উপজেলা স্বাস্থ্য ও প.প. কর্মকর্তার কার্যালয়, পটিয়া, চট্টগ্রাম।	২০ দরপত্র জামানত/ব্যবহার টাকার পরিমাণ	১ ১০,০০০/- টাকা
১১ দরপত্র জামানত/ব্যবহার টাকার পরিমাণ	১ ১০,০০০/- টাকা	২১ দরপত্র জামানত/ব্যবহার টাকার পরিমাণ	১ ১০,০০০/- টাকা
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১৩ দরপত্র জামানত/ব্যবহার টাকার পরিমাণ	১ ১০,০০০/- টাকা	২৩ দরপত্র জামানত/ব্যবহার টাকার পরিমাণ	১ ১০,০০০/- টাকা
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১৬ দরপত্র জামানত/ব্যবহার টাকার পরিমাণ	১ ১০,০০০/- টাকা	২৬ দরপত্র জামানত/ব্যবহার টাকার পরিমাণ	১ ১০,০০০/- টাকা
১৭ দরপত্র জামানত/ব্যবহার টাকার পরিমাণ	১ ১০,০০০/- টাকা	২৭ দরপত্র জামানত/ব্যবহার টাকার পরিমাণ	১ ১০,০০০/- টাকা
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২৩ দরপত্র জামানত/ব্যবহার টাকার পরিমাণ	১ ১০,০০০/- টাকা	৩৩ দরপত্র জামানত/ব্যবহার টাকার পরিমাণ	১ ১০,০০০/- টাকা
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(ডাঃ মোহাম্মদ জাবেদ)
উপজেলা স্বাস্থ্য ও প.প. কর্মকর্তা
পটিয়া, চট্টগ্রাম।

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SHAH CEMENT

Ensure six months' salary

Dhaka urges OIC body to ensure jobless migrants get paid; asks workers to stay put

PORIMOL PALMA

Bangladesh wants labour-receiving countries to ensure that Bangladeshi migrants who lose their jobs amid the coronavirus pandemic get at least six months' salary.

Authorities also want the migrants not to return home during this pandemic unless they are in dire straits because, as Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen said, "Good days will surely come back soon."

"We have instructed all our missions concerned to look after the safety of our people. First priority is to make sure they have food and healthcare," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

"We have also instructed them to make diplomatic efforts to ensure that our people are not unduly terminated. If there is no alternative, we need to make sure that they get at least six months' salary."

Momen said Bangladesh, in a virtual meeting of the Organization of Islamic Conference Executive Committee on April 22, proposed creation of a Covid-19 pandemic recovery and response fund at OIC level to help the migrants.

"Migrants are part of development of us all -- both sending and receiving countries. If their jobs are suddenly terminated and they are sent home, they will be in trouble."

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Holding onto her crutch so that it does not get stolen, Nazma Begum, an elderly woman who lives on the street, falls asleep on a pavement in CRB area of Chattogram city around noon yesterday. She was waiting for relief materials in the area. Thousands like her in the port city have been facing an acute crisis of food amid the coronavirus outbreak.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

CLOSED FACTORIES RMG owners refuse to pay over 60pc salary

REEFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Despite repeated calls from the union leaders for paying the workers of closed factories at least 65 percent of their gross salaries for April, the owners at a meeting yesterday refused to offer any more than 60 percent.

The factory owners said they would have another meeting in the middle of this month and might consider increasing the amount next month.

The workers will receive 60 percent of their gross salaries for April as per last week's decision, said Mohammad Hatem, vice president of Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA).

Hatem told this to The Daily Star after the meeting attended by union leaders, factory owners and government high ups with Monnojan Sufian, state minister for labour and employment, in the chair at Sramabhaban in the capital.

The association leaders asked the member factories not to terminate or layoff any workers during this crisis moment.

"We do not agree with the owners' decision to pay cut during the crisis. The decision is unlawful," said Amirul

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Up to 100,000 may die in US

Says Trump as more states ease restrictions, predicts vaccine will be ready by end of the year

REUTERS, Washington

US President Donald Trump said on Sunday he now believes as many as 100,000 Americans could die in the coronavirus pandemic, after the death toll passed his earlier estimates, but said he was confident a vaccine would be developed by the year's end.

Trump alternated during a two-hour virtual town hall broadcast by FOX News between forecasting a rapid recovery for the US economy and casting blame for the pandemic's spread on China, where the disease is believed to have originated.

The Covid-19 illness, caused by the new coronavirus, has sickened more than 1.1 million in the United States and killed more than 67,000 Americans, shut wide swaths of society, including most schools and many businesses.

"We're going to lose anywhere from 75, 80 to 100,000 people. That's a horrible thing," said Trump, who as recently on Friday had said he hoped fewer than 100,000 Americans would die and earlier in the week had talked about 60,000 to

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FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

Ensure uninterrupted production in industries



Students of Khilgaon Girls' High School handing over Tk 201 collected by saving up their tiffin money to Bangabandhu for the Prime Minister's Relief Fund on May 5, 1972.

May 5, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

BANGABANDHU REOPENS DHAKA COTTON MILL

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman today reopens Dhaka Cotton Mill at Postogola. Addressing a meeting at the mill premise, the prime minister calls upon workers to devote themselves to increasing production in industries. He says, "We have to put our best effort to reconstruct the war-torn economy and thus realise the goal of building a Shonar Bangla."

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'There is hope'

Says WHO's top emergencies expert as world fights virus

REUTERS, Geneva

Parts of the world are starting to emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic and to cautiously resume some sort of normal life, but the new coronavirus will pose significant risks until vaccines are developed, the WHO's top emergencies expert said on Sunday.

Mike Ryan, executive director of the World Health Organization's (WHO) emergencies programme, said while many countries are still in the eye of the storm, others were beginning to show it is possible to contain the disease to some extent.

"In that sense, there's hope," Ryan told Reuters in an online interview from Geneva.

"At a global level the situation is still very, very serious but the pattern of the disease and the

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Mummies found in burial shaft in Egypt



CNN ONLINE

Right now, most of us can only explore the pyramids and archaeological wonders of Egypt online, but excavations and explorations into the country's ancient past remain ongoing.

Egypt's Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities has announced the unearthing of five limestone sarcophagi and four wooden coffins containing human mummies. These incredible archaeological finds were inside a burial shaft stretching nine meters below ground.

This shaft is located in Sacred Animal Necropolis in Saqqara, an ancient burial ground that's about 20 miles south of Cairo and is also home to landmarks including the Step Pyramid, considered to be the world's oldest.

Details of the discovery were shared via a video

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'Child killer' killed in 'gunfight'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

A fugitive in a child murder case was killed in a "gunfight" with Rab in Gazipur's Konabari area early yesterday.

The dead Jewel Ahmed alias Sabuj, 22, was the prime accused in five-year-old Alif murder case, said Abdullah Al Mamun, company commander of RAB-1 Gazipur Porabari camp.

Before this incident, Rab arrested another youth Sagar, a friend of Jewel and also an accused in the murder, on Saturday night from Pubail area of Gazipur city, he said.

Following his confessional statement, Rab recovered the decomposed body of Alif wrapped in a plastic bag from a warehouse in Konabari, the Rab official said.

Sagar told Rab that Jewel was the mastermind behind abducting and killing the child.

Based on his information, Rab men conducted a drive in

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Two men riding cycles near the capital's Dhanmondi Road-32 yesterday on their way to deliver products to customers. They said the demand of their service has increased since shopping malls remained closed amid the shutdown.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Bananas rotting in orchards

Unable to sell produce, growers in Madhupur incurring losses

MIRZA SHAKIL, Tangail

Until the coronavirus crisis hit the country, banana grower Shamsul Alam was confident about making a profit of Tk 20 lakh to Tk 70 lakh from his banana plantation in Tangail's Madhupur upazila.

But now he is anticipating a loss of about Tk 30 lakh to Tk 35 lakh and is worried about repaying the Tk 20 lakh loan he took from banks and moneylenders.

A resident of Pargachha village in Madhupur, Shamsul had invested a total of Tk 80 lakh and leased 170 bighas of land for the plantation. He started cultivation last year in April.

Now in harvest time, the banana grower is struggling to market his produce. "Because of the lack of buyers, bananas are rotting in my orchard," he wailed.

"Due to the shutdown, wholesalers from cities, including Dhaka and Chattogram, are not coming to buy bananas. So, I have to sell my bananas locally at low prices," Shamsul told this correspondent on Sunday over phone.

"I normally sell a kadi [bunch] with 100 to 150 bananas for Tk 300 to Tk 350. Now, I am not getting more than Tk 100," he added.

Shamsul explained that bananas have to be harvested when the fruit's colour is still green, otherwise they ripen and develop cracks on the skin.

Around 60 percent of all commercial banana growers in Madhupur are facing the same problem as Shamsul, said Abdur Rahim, president of the Banana Growers' Association in Madhupur.

The plantation owners, who started cultivation in

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