



Confusion reigns supreme

No announcement yet on list of red zones or timing of lockdown; countrywide curbs on movement till June 30

WASIM BIN HABIB

There was confusion all around.

As the news of the government preparing a list of virus hotspots to be categorised as red zones spread, the city residents got puzzled and panicked.

"Will the entire area or a certain place be marked as red zone?", "Will it be put under lockdown?", "Will it happen today or tomorrow?", "Will there be curfew?" -- these were the questions that people kept asking throughout yesterday after they heard there would be zone-based lockdown to check further spread of Covid-19.

They called their relatives and even friends in the media to know when the announcement on finalisation of the red, yellow and green zones would come.

"I saw on television that Mirpur is in the red zone. But does it refer to the entire Mirpur or some parts of Mirpur since it is a big area," Sifat Alam, a resident of Mirpur-11, asked this correspondent over phone.

"The rate of infection varies from area to area. How can an entire area be marked as red zone? The government needs to clear the confusion right away," he said.

Till last night, there was no official announcement on the list of areas to be classified as red zones or any specific date for imposing lockdown in such areas.

Sources at the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) said the process of finalising the list of areas is going on, and it may take some more time.

Once the zoning is finalised, a circular will be issued with details of the areas in the red zone.

Yesterday afternoon, the government announced "general holiday" for those in the areas to be classified as red and yellow zones, but changed it hours later.

In a revised circular, the Cabinet Division kept the areas in the yellow zone out of shutdown, and said all the offices and businesses in the areas to be classified as red zones will remain shut for a certain period.

At a meeting on Saturday, the Central Technical Group under the DGHS prepared a primary list of areas all over the country through colour-coded zoning and identified 45 areas in Dhaka North and South City corporations as red zones.

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Without maintaining physical distancing, people line up outside the gate of Mugda General Hospital in the capital for Covid-19 tests. Many of them were not even wearing any gloves. The photo was taken around noon yesterday.

PHOTO:
SK ENAMUL HAQ

COVID-19 90,000 cases in 100 days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With over three thousand new infections in a single day, the total number of Covid-19 cases crossed the 90,000-mark yesterday -- the 100th day since the outbreak began in the country.

The first coronavirus case in the country was detected on March 8, and from late May onwards, the number of daily cases began to rise drastically.

Data shows that over the last 15 days, 45,741 people were infected following the lifting of the temporary shutdown by the authorities.

The government is now planning to introduce a "zoning system" across the country, in which areas will be marked red, yellow and green according to the rate of infections. The higher the infection rate, the warmer the colour.

At the daily briefing yesterday, Dr Nasima Sultana, additional director general (administration) of the Directorate General of Health Services, said 3,099 people tested positive for Covid-19 in 24 hours till yesterday afternoon, taking the total to 90,619.

During this period, 38 people died from the disease, and the death toll now stands at 1,209.

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Don't send away any patient: HC

It'd be considered a crime if anyone dies without treatment, court warns hospitals

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday observed that no patient, regardless of whether they are infected with coronavirus, can be deprived of treatment at any government or private hospital.

If a patient dies or is deprived of treatment at a hospital due to negligence, it would be considered a criminal and punishable offence, the HC said.

The HC directed the authorities concerned of the government to take appropriate legal actions against those who display negligence when providing treatment in hospitals.

In response to five separate writ petitions, the HC bench of Justice M Enayetur Rahim ordered authorities concerned to ensure that no government or private hospital in the country refuses treatment to any patient -- infected with Covid-19 or not.

It asked the government to strictly enforce the directives issued by the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) on May 11 and 24 for ensuring treatment of patients at all hospitals.

The HC directed the authorities concerned to inform people through media and regular bulletins the number of Intensive Care Unit (ICU) beds at government hospitals and their condition so that patients can easily and quickly avail ICU services.

The authorities concerned have been asked to make ICU beds management more accountable and to launch a hotline named ICU Hotline so that patients can communicate with authorities in this regard.

The court ordered the health ministry and DGHS to set up a monitoring cell to ensure that private hospitals provide proper treatment to patients

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We will not accept defeat fearing death

Says PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said she would not accept defeat against an invisible force like the novel coronavirus fearing death.

"We will not accept defeat. Death is inevitable and it can occur anytime. But it cannot happen that we will have to accept defeat to the invisible force out of fear," she said.

The PM was addressing a function marking the 34th founding anniversary of Special Security Force (SSF) through videoconferencing from the Gono Bhaban.

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Situation dire due to incoordination

Says a TIB study about the govt response to virus outbreak

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Absence of proper planning and coordination in the government's coronavirus response has resulted in a disastrous situation, said a study by the Transparency International Bangladesh.

The government had three months in the beginning of this year to make adequate preparations, but failed to do that, said the study based on data from 47 hospitals in 38 districts, interviews with officials, and newspaper reports.

TIB researchers collected data between April 15 and June 14.

About 44 percent of the hospitals only started making preparations when community transmission had already begun while the government claimed that all preparations were taken even in upazilas.

Besides, the patients' demands at 21 percent hospitals were not estimated in advance.

Only 22 percent of the healthcare staffers were trained on treating Covid-19 patients and 57 percent of hospitals were found capable of doing as many tests as needed. And people got test results between one and eight days.

The 60 Covid-19 testing labs have been testing 13,600 samples every day for 14 days even though the facilities are capable of testing 24,000 samples. The full potential of the labs were not being utilised due to shortage of skilled employees.

Improper sample collection and shortage of skilled

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2 more cops die from Covid-19

7,703 law enforcers infected

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two police personnel, who tested Covid-19 positive earlier, died in city hospitals yesterday.

With them, 27 police personnel have so far breathed their last after being infected with coronavirus, said a Police Headquarters (PHQ) statement yesterday.

The two victims are Sub-Inspector SM Mukul Mia, 55, and constable Abul Hossain Azad, 51.

SI Mukul was discharging his duties at Khilgaon Police Station under Dhaka Metropolitan Police. He tested positive on May 23 and was taking treatment at home.

But he was taken to Impulse Hospital on May 26 as his condition deteriorated. He breathed his last around 11:00am, said PHQ officials.

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Sylhet city ex-mayor Kamran dies from Covid-19

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Former Sylhet mayor Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran died of novel coronavirus at the Combined Military Hospital in Dhaka early yesterday.

The 69-year-old central executive committee member of Awami League left behind his wife, two sons, a daughter, and a host of relatives to mourn his death.

Family members said Kamran tested positive for Covid-19 on June 5. Two days later, he was flown to Dhaka from Sylhet as his health deteriorated.

His condition had improved after he was treated with plasma therapy on June 8. But his health worsened suddenly early yesterday. He breathed his last around 3:00am.

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A truck laden with bamboos lumbers near motorcyclists on the Dhaka-Aricha highway in Amin Bazar area on the outskirts of the capital yesterday. As the bamboos stick out of the moving vehicle and drag on the road surface, it poses the risks that they might get loose and fling towards other vehicles.

PHOTO:
PRABIR DAS

MP Shahid 'spills the beans'

Al-Rai reports he named some high officials during interrogation in Kuwait

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Laxmipur lawmaker Mohammad Shahid Islam has caused an uproar in Kuwait by revealing that high-placed officials of that country used to take bribes from him.

The MP who goes by the alias Kazi Papul made the striking admission after nine days of interrogation by Kuwaiti authorities, influential newspaper Al-Rai of the Gulf country reports.

Papul pleaded innocent after he was arrested by the Criminal Investigation Department in Kuwait on June 6.

"He admitted that he had handed one million Kuwaiti dinars [nearly 3 million USD] in cash to the manager of a company in exchange for bringing people from Bangladesh to Kuwait illegally. The company has government contracts," a senior reporter of the newspaper told The Daily Star, citing official sources.

According to the Al-Rai report, Papul also admitted to paying large sums of money to high officials including a security official. He also revealed to his interrogators that former and serving Kuwaiti lawmakers were involved in the racket.

Certain Kuwaiti quarters within the government were involved in residency trade which paved the entry of Bangladeshi workers to the Arab country in exchange for money, said the Al-Rai report published yesterday.

He told prosecutors of the Gulf state on Sunday that he had paid off Kuwaiti government officials through deposits to certain Kuwaiti quarters.

Papul named a senior security official as his close associate.

Lawmakers of the country demanded extensive investigation to identify everyone involved and to bring them to book.

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