

BANGLADESH  
UPDATE

7,075

New cases in 24hrs



6,44,439

Total cases



9,318

Deaths



5,55,414

Recoveries

GLOBAL  
UPDATE

2,868,592

Deaths



132,086,427

Total cases

## Peace pre-requisite for development

PM tells outgoing Afghanistan ambassador

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said establishment of peace is a pre-requisite for ensuring development.

"Peace is a must for development. We involve people so that their support can help establish peace," she said.

The PM was talking to outgoing Afghanistan Ambassador to Bangladesh Abdul Qayoom Malikzad yesterday when he paid a farewell call on her at the Gono Bhaban.

PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim briefed reporters after the meeting.

During the meeting, the Afghanistan envoy informed the Bangladesh premier that the historic March 7 speech of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was translated into Afghan language.



Talking about Covid-19 situation, Hasina said, "Coronavirus is a problem for all as it is a global pandemic. We have been fighting this deadly disease collectively."

Describing Bangladesh-Afghanistan relations as wonderful, the PM said the two countries have worked together in the international arena.

The premier also expressed her desire to help Afghanistan in its development. She said Bangladeshi NGO Brac has been working in Afghanistan for its socio-economic advancement.

Hasina said her government has been working to make Bangladesh a poverty- and hunger-free country as envisioned by the Father of the Nation.

The PM also conveyed her regards to Afghan president.

## India's daily Covid cases top 100,000

Maharashtra announces night curfew

AGENCIES

India has reported a record rise in coronavirus infections, becoming only the second country after the United States to register more than 100,000 new cases in a day, as hospitals in its worst affected state are overrun by patients.

Maharashtra, home to India's financial and entertainment capital Mumbai, recorded nearly 60,000 cases in the last 24 hours.

The struggling state authorities tightened the evening curfew to allow only people involved in essential services out of their homes from 8:00 pm to 7:00 am.

The region of 110 million people will also see weekend lockdowns, with gatherings of over four people banned and places of worship and restaurants shut.

In Mumbai over the weekend, one of Bollywood's biggest stars, Akshay Kumar, became the latest celebrity to test positive.

The shooting of the religious epic "Ram Setu" that Kumar was making was halted after 45 crew members also tested positive.

"How long shooting remains halted depends on Akshay Kumar's recovery. We can replace all our crew members, but we cannot replace the star of the film," Ashok Dubey from the Federation of Western India Cine Employees told AFP.

Kumar, 53, tweeted meanwhile that he had been hospitalised "as a precautionary measure under medical advice".

"The new variant, or variants of concern, probably explains a lot of it, rather than simplistic explanation of behaviour," said Rajib Dasgupta, head of the Centre of Social Medicine & Community Health in New Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University.

India has found hundreds of cases of the virus variants first detected in the United Kingdom, South Africa and Brazil.

Subhash Salunke, a former WHO official who advises Maharashtra on its Covid-19 strategy, said cases in the state would continue to rise for another couple of weeks. He said a way out was vaccinating all adults in its hardest-hit cities such as Mumbai, Pune and Nashik.

"If we start doing this, by the end of April we will see a downward trend," he said.

**AWARENESS**  
Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government is anxious to avoid imposing

## Challenging for BJP

This worry is quite logical as Abbas Siddiqui, custodian of the famous Furfura Sharif shrine in Hooghly, has a huge number of young Muslim followers mostly in Howrah, Hooghly, and North and South 24 Parganas.

On the other hand, BJP's main challenge is to maintain the momentum of their growth, which has risen from 6.91 percent to 37.45 percent within three years, while the Left Front, which had its dominance in these areas before, will try its best to regain its field.

South 24 Parganas is a TMC dominated area with a Muslim population of nearly 36 percent. In Howrah, the Muslim population stands at 26 percent and 35 percent in Hooghly. BJP's target is to capture Hindu dominated seats in South 24 Parganas like Gosaba, Sagar, Patharpratima, Kakdwip, Sonarpur and Jaynagar.

The party was in a comfortable position in the last two phases of polling for 60 seats where the share of Muslim voters was low. But the third phase would be really challenging for them.

However, to woo voters in its third phase campaign, it targeted the TMC over corruption issues in the Amphan relief fund as the three districts were worst affected during last year's cyclone.

The TMC on the other hand banked on its welfare schemes like "Duare Sarkar", "Swastho Sathi" and

a new national lockdown after a shutdown in March 2020 caused widespread human and economic misery.

Modi on Sunday chaired a high-level meeting and a statement afterwards announced an awareness campaign from April 6-14 "with emphasis on 100-percent mask usage, personal hygiene and sanitation at public places/workplaces and health facilities."

In the capital New Delhi, the chief minister has ruled out a new lockdown despite the surge in cases. Police say they are issuing more fines to people not wearing masks.

"The fear of Covid-19 has gone away. Most people don't wear masks properly, including many of my passengers," auto-rickshaw driver Surjit Singh, 68, told AFP.

India has so far administered almost 80 million vaccine shots. Last week, it opened up vaccinations to all those over 45 years old to speed up its flagging national inoculation drive.

**MASS TESTING**  
British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said yesterday everyone in England will be able to take a Covid-19 test twice a week in a new drive to track the pandemic as society reopens and the vaccine rollout continues at its rapid rate.

Johnson, who is expected to confirm plans to relaunch international travel and open sections of the economy, said the new mass testing programme would break the chain of transmissions and spot cases without symptoms.

As much of Europe enters new lockdowns to tackle surging cases, Johnson has set out a staggered plan to ease restrictions in the coming months, a huge boost for one of the worst-hit countries during the pandemic, reports Reuters.

"As we continue to make good progress on our vaccine programme and with our roadmap to cautiously easing restrictions underway, regular rapid testing is even more important to make sure those efforts are not wasted," Johnson said in a statement.

Junior health minister Edward Argar said the tests would be sent to homes or businesses, or picked up from pharmacies or test centres. He said he was confident people would isolate.

"People are doing the right thing," he told Sky News.

Portugal yesterday reopened museums, cafe terraces and secondary schools nearly two months after tightening Covid-19 curbs following a wave of cases early this year.



Retiree Mozammel Haque, a Covid-19 patient, being taken out of an ambulance by his son, left, and another youth in front of the Mughla General Hospital around 10:30am yesterday. Mozammel had been having breathing problem and his condition worsened earlier in the day.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Over 7,000 daily Covid cases again

FROM PAGE 1

During the period, all public transport, excluding international flights, will remain suspended and all shopping malls will remain closed. However, shop owners will be allowed to sell their products online via home delivery service.

Only open-air kitchen markets and shops selling essential items can remain operational from 8:00am to 4:00pm.

In an event in Manikganj yesterday, Director General of Directorate General of Health Services Prof ABM Khurshid Alam made a similar statement about the restriction.

Whether the ongoing restriction would be prolonged or not will depend on the Covid-19 infection rate in the country, he said while replying to a journalist's query during his visit to Manikganj 250-bed District Hospital.

The DGHS chief also said, "The

health ministry will campaign across the country with the help of information ministry to raise awareness."

In 24 hours ending at 8:00am yesterday, 7,075 people tested positive, while the number was 7,087 the previous day.

With yesterday's new cases, the total number of people infected reached 6,44,439, said a DGHS press release.

The positivity rate, however, increased a bit yesterday -- to 23.40 from the previous day's 23.07.

Some 30,239 samples were tested across the country in the 24 hours.

During the time, 52 people died from Covid-19, raising the death toll to 9,318.

The death rate was 1.45 percent. Meanwhile, 2,932 Covid-19 patients recovered in the 24 hours, taking the total number of recoveries to 5,55,414. This is more than 86 percent of all

confirmed cases in the country.

Among the 52 deceased, 34 were men and 18 women.

One was aged under 10 and another between 11 and 20. Three were aged between 31 and 40, six 41 and 50, nine 51 and 60, and 32 were above 60 years, according to the DGHS press release.

After the second spike in November and December last year, the positivity rate started going down from January. Throughout February, this rate was below three percent but started rising early last month.

For nearly a month now, hospitals, especially in Dhaka city, have been struggling with the rising number of critical patients.

As of yesterday noon, only 11 ICU beds out of 118 in Dhaka's Covid-19 dedicated public hospitals were vacant. Of the 2,555 general beds in those hospitals, only 201 remained vacant.

## 'Lockdown' goes lightly on first day

FROM PAGE 1

Shop owners and employees in New Market and nearby areas demonstrated for the second straight day yesterday, protesting the government decision to put restrictions "on their businesses".

The situations outside Dhaka were almost similar, reported our correspondents.

Traders and businessmen in Rajshahi, Chattogram, Kushtia, Jhenaidah and Panchagarh staged demonstrations, demanding shops be allowed to remain open.

On Sunday, the Cabinet Division issued an 11-point directive to be followed from 6:00am yesterday to 12:00am on April 11 to contain the spread of the virus in the country. Punitive actions were supposed to be taken against violators of the directives.

The government's restrictions come at a time when the country reported 7,075 new infections yesterday with a positivity rate of 13.39 percent. Another 52 people died from the virus in 24 hours ending 8:00am yesterday, taking the death toll to 9,318.

Two correspondents of this newspaper visited the capital's Mirpur, Ibrahimpur, Bhashantek, Shyamoli, Tejgaon, Farmgate, Karwan Bazar, New Market areas and found most of the shops in the alleys open.

The circular said while shops and malls would stay closed, they would be allowed to sell products online. Besides, sellers would have to follow the health safety guidelines and no buyers would be allowed in person, the circular read.

In the morning, many had to come out of home as the restrictions were not applicable to office-goers and transports involved in maintaining law and order, emergency services, relief distribution, health services, and electricity, water and gas supply, fire, telephone and internet services.

Besides, banks remained open from 10:00am to 12:30pm. Industrial units and factories were allowed to stay open. Amar Ekushey Bô

Mela remained open from noon to 5:00pm.

Despite being a mode of public transport, CNG-run auto-rickshaws operated and carried passengers, often over capacity. Many passengers were seen sharing rides.

Many people took bike rides, even though it was prohibited as per the restrictions.

Many passengers in Rayerbag area of the city's Jatrabari staged demonstrations, demanding shops be allowed to go to work.

A good number of garment factories are situated in the city's Mirpur area. As these factories were out of the purview of the restriction, many workers were seen walking in groups to reach their factories.

**SHOPPERS STAGE DEMONSTRATIONS**  
Shop owners and employees of different markets in New Market and nearby areas in Dhaka demonstrated for the second consecutive day yesterday.

They demanded that the government allow them to keep their shops open ahead of Pahela Baishakh and Eid by maintaining health safety rules.

Witnesses said several hundred shop owners arrived in the market area around 10:00am and started demonstration.

Additional police members were deployed to keep the situation under control, said SM Kaiyum, officer-in-charge of New Market Police Station.

"We managed to convince them to leave the spot," he said.

Traders and shop employees in the city's Islampur area also demonstrated over the same demand.

In Rajshahi, traders demanded exclusion of small businesses from the "lockdown", reports our staff correspondent.

They blocked the Shaheb Bazar Road, right in the middle of the city, in the morning and staged demonstrations. Several shops in RDA

## Death toll 29, 7 still missing

FROM PAGE 1

Contacted, Babu Lal Baidya, assistant director of BIWTA at Narayanganj Launch Terminal, said, "In primary investigation, we have come to know that the passenger launched was rammed by cargo tanker SKL-3. We will take further legal action after talking to the higher authorities concerned."

Speaking to The Daily Star, Shaheedul Islam, officer-in-charge (OC) of Narayanganj River Police, said, "We will start a drive to seize the tanker after a case is filed against it."

Contacted, Narayanganj launch owners' association's President Badiuzzaman Badal said, "We will surely file a case against the vessel."

**'THEY DIED ON THEIR WAY HOME'**  
Sorrow and grief engulfed the area since dead bodies of victims were being kept on the bank of the Shitalakkhya since Sunday night.

Family members and relatives of the victims broke down with grief upon

seeing bodies of their loved ones.

Most of the deceased were residents of Munshiganj.

Twelve-year-old Mahin was rendered speechless when he saw the bodies of his father and mother last evening. The body of his eight-year-old sister was recovered later in the night.

"We live in Sonir Akhra in the capital. My father, mother and sister were going to our village home in Munshiganj," said Mahin.

"Now, I have become alone. How will I spend the rest of my life without them?" he wept.

Three members of a family of Munshiganj Sadar upazila's Ramjanbeg village also died in the accident.

"My wife, daughter and mother-in-law have died in the accident," said Mohammad Arif, a resident of the village.

"My wife Briithi Begum was 25 years old, daughter Arifa was one and mother-in-law Pokhina Begum was 45. They had gone to a diagnostic centre in Narayanganj.

They died on their way home."

Two sisters -- Lata Begum, 22, and Sadia Akhter, 10 -- who were residents of Nayaganj area of Munshiganj town, went to visit a doctor in Narayanganj. They died on their way home, said their elder sister Tuni Begum.

Protima Ghoshal, 45, a resident of Malpara area of Munshiganj town, used to work in a government office in Narayanganj. She was returning home on the launch and lost her life on the journey, said her husband Pritimoy Ghoshal.

He also said his wife usually travelled between Munshiganj and Narayanganj by road. But she along with some other people opted to travel by launch that day to avoid the rush on the highway following the announcement of the seven-day restrictions to curb the spread of coronavirus.

[Our Correspondents from Narayanganj and Munshiganj contributed to the report]

## Tales of woes

FROM PAGE 1

though yesterday was the date for their inoculation.

"They told us that the vaccine shots have yet to arrive here today. Since they do not know when the vaccine will arrive, we have not been told when to come back," Sobhan said.

At the queue of people coming to get tested for coronavirus, a man named Munir said at 8:30am that he arrived there for the test before daybreak and was still waiting for his turn.

"There are still 70 people ahead of me," he said.

## Four Niger soldiers killed in double 'terror' attack

AFP, Niamey

Niger's defence ministry said Sunday that four of its soldiers had been killed the day before in twin "terrorist" attacks in the country's southeast, the day after President Mohamed Bazoum was sworn in.

"Several terrorists" had been killed in the simultaneous Saturday morning attacks against military positions, the ministry said using a term usually used to describe jihadists.

It added that the "heavily armed" attackers "came from a neighbouring country" in a reference to Nigeria, where groups linked to Boko Haram are active.

The first president installed in a democratic transition of power in Niger's six decades of independence from France, Bazoum on Friday lashed out at jihadist "war crimes" in his country as he took office.

Niger is being hit by insurgents linked to Al-Qaeda or the so-called Islamic State (IS) crossing from Mali and Burkina Faso in the west, and by Boko Haram crossing from Nigeria in the southeast.

## Despite death

FROM PAGE 1

As of yesterday, the government has inoculated 55,39,494 people, while 69,45,678 people have registered with the Surokkha app for vaccination.

The mass inoculation campaign started on February 7 with 70 lakh vaccine doses in hand.

The country got 50 lakh doses of the Oxford vaccine from the Serum Institute of India (SII) on January 25. The country also received 20 lakh doses of Oxford vaccine as gift from the Indian government.

The 50 lakh doses were the first instalment of the three crore vaccines the country purchased from the SII. As per the agreement, the government was supposed to get 50 lakh doses of vaccines each month for six months.

But the government received only 20 lakh doses of vaccines in the second instalment on February 22. The country received another 12 lakh doses of Oxford vaccine as gift from India last month, taking the combined tally to 1.2 crore so far.

However, the government was yet hear anything concrete from the SII or its local agent Beximco Pharmaceuticals Limited regarding the third consignment, which was due late last month.

Besides, the Covax programme, led by the World Health Organisation and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, has committed to give Bangladesh a total of 6.8 crore vaccine shots. As part of the commitment, the country is expected to receive 10,908,000 shots of the Oxford vaccine by May.

Global media reports said that the Indian government has reportedly imposed a temporary restriction on all major exports of the AstraZeneca vaccine made by the SII to meet domestic demands.

India's decision on restriction has also impacted the global supply chain of the vaccine, global media also reported.

Nazmul Hassan Papon, managing director of Beximco Pharmaceuticals Ltd, on Sunday told The Daily Star that they were yet to get any specific date from the SII about the next consignment.

## No sehri, iftar

FROM PAGE 1

The notification, signed by Deputy Secretary Sakhawat Hossain, also said carpets should not be laid in mosques and each worshipper has to bring their own prayer mat. The entire mosque should be cleaned with disinfectants before each prayer.

Social distancing must be ensured during prayers. Children, the elderly, and those engaged in taking care of the sick should refrain from praying in congregation, the directive further mentioned.

Soaps and hand sanitisers should be kept where worshippers perform ablutions in the mosques. Prayer mats and caps kept in the mosque should be avoided.

Khatibs, imams and mosque management committee members have been asked to implement these directives, said the notification.

If these are not complied with, the administration and law enforcement agencies will take action against those concerned.