flights. EXPORT-ORIENTED FACTORIES

them offset losses.

sources said.

can be ensured.

closed, he pointed out.

for workers, he added.

spread of Covid-19

the shutdown.

Textile and garment manufacturers

and exporters have urged the government to allow factories to

pperate during the restrictions to help

Garment Manufacturers and Exporters

Association (BGMEA), Bangladesh

Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA), Bangladesh Textile Mills Association (BTMA), and

some top garment manufacturers and exporters made the call at a joint press

The business leaders also held a

meeting with Commerce Minister Tipu

Munshi to place their arguments for

keeping the export-oriented factories

out of the purview of fresh restrictions,

Talking to this newspaper, infectious diseases specialist Prof Ridwanur Rahman said the government can

allow some economic activities if

Covid tests and treatment for workers

As there is a high risk of infection at the community level, the workers can get infected even if the factories are

given that the authorities ensure

enough Covid tests as well as treatment

Last year, the government had kept almost all public and private offices

shut and suspended public transport,

except for emergency services, from March 26 to May 30 to contain the

However, it had allowed garment factories to operate in the middle of

In that case, factories can stay open

conference at a city hotel yesterday.

leaders of Bangladesh

BSF shoots teen

in Kurigram

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

ESTABLISHING WORLD PEACE

Pandemic poses unprecedented challenges

Says Foreign Minister Momen at Army Chiefs' Conclave; urges mutual cooperation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen underscored the need for meaningful mutual cooperation, improvement in response to health-related emergency situations, and an increase in female participation to tackle the challenges posed by the unprecedented pandemic in establishing world peace.

Speaking at a seminar on "Army Chiefs' Conclave" yesterday, Momen said Bangladesh is committed to maintaining

stability and peace in the world.

Bangladesh Army organised the seminar with the participation of local and foreign military and civilian

The main discussion of the seminar was "Future Trend of Global Conflict: Role of UN Peacekeepers".

Keynote speakers at the event were Chief of Army Staff of Bangladesh General Aziz Ahmed, Chief of Army Staff of India General MM Naravane, Deputy Chief of Operations of Bhutan Army Brigadier General Darji Rinchen, Force Commander of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated

Stabilization Mission in Mali Lieutenant General Dennis Gyllensporre and Force Commander of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Region Lt Gen Sidki Daniel

anti-state elements, use of modern technology, political crises, changing geo-politics and geo-strategic locations, it has gradually become challenging and complicated to carry out UN

He emphasised upon strengthening capacity of peacekeepers by modern training, community-based information sharing, using modern technology, revising the UN charter and building

institutional infrastructure.

Indian Army Chief General MM Naravane pointed out the current challenges of peacekeepers.

placed emphasis on participatory peacekeeping activities, proper logistical support, increase of budget and flexibility in UN's stance.

Testing should be doubled

breaks record again

MOUDUD AHMMED SUJAN

Health officials reported 78 deaths from Covid-19 yesterday, the highest in a day since the first three cases of coronavirus were detected last year.

Despite this, Bangladesh has so far done 30 tests per 1,000 people, the

29,376 samples.

Experts say the number of daily tests should more than double, considering the positivity rate. be of much benefit.

So far, 68,4756 people tested

This high level of positive rate means that there are many more undetected individuals, who are

countries, Bhutan is in the second

Traore, says an ISPR media release. Bangladesh Army Chief General Aziz Ahmed said due to the rise of

Peacekeeping operations.

To overcome the challenges, he

Say experts as number of daily Covid deaths

lowest even among the South Asian countries. The Maldives has done 1,236 tests per 1,000, according to the

ourworldindata.org.
The Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) yesterday reported 5,819 confirmed cases, after testing

Otherwise, the "lockdown" will not

"The number of daily tests should be raised until the positivity rate falls below 7 or 6 percent. The number of tests should be more than doubled if we are to detect and isolate the hidden cases," Mushtuq Hussain, consultant of the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR), told The Daily Star.

positivity rate reported yesterday was 19.81 percent.

unknowingly spreading the infection, he added.

Among the other South Asian position with 835 tests per 1,000

people, India third with 184, Sri Lanka fourth with 113, Nepal fifth with 79, and Pakistan sixth with 48 tests.

United Arab Emirates is on top of the list with 4,022 tests followed by Denmark with 3,954 against per 1,000 people. The USA has done 1,163 tests and the UK 1,912 against per 1,000 people, according to the ourworldindata.org.

Bangladesh started witnessing the second spike in daily new cases in the second week of March. The positivity rate rose to 23 percent last week.

As of yesterday, the total reported death toll was 9,739, which is 1.42 percent of all confirmed cases in the

Of those reported dead yesterday, 53 were men and 25 women. One of them was dead by the time she was taken to a hospital. The rest died at different hospitals across the country. Forty-seven of them died in Dhaka and 20 in Chattogram divisions. HOSPITAL SITUATION

The demand for ICU beds in the hospitals treating Covid-19 patients was still on the rise yesterday, the DGHS said.

At noon yesterday, only three out of 132 ICU beds in the 10 public hospitals for Covid-19 in Dhaka city were available. Of the 2,786 general beds at these hospitals, 311 were

At the nine private Covid-dedicated hospitals in Dhaka, only seven out of 377 ICU beds were empty. In Chattogram, 25 out of 51 ICU beds were vacant at seven public and private hospitals, according to the DGHS.

3 AL men sued

on Saturday, accusing five men. But they recorded the case around 2:00pm the next day with three accused," said Saheda Akter Lipi, sister-in-law of Hasan Ali, whose body was found at AL leader Masud Rana's house on Saturday. "Police asked us repeatedly to drop

the name of ASI [assistant sub inspector] Mossarof Hossain and Inspector Mojibur Rahman of Gaibandha Police Station," she told The Daily Star.

Finally, Hasan's widow Beethi Begum filed the case accusing three men, said Hasan's brother-in-law AKM Mamunur

Masud Rana, who was the deputy office secretary of Gaibandha AL, is the prime accused while the others accused are Rumen Haque, 38, and Khalilur Rahman Babu, 48. The duo helped Rana abduct Hasan, he added.

The plaintiff mentioned in the statement that the two police officers held a meeting with the victim, his family members, and local AL leader Rana in mid-March.

Police asked the family members to pay the money Hasan owed to Rana. When the family members refused to do that, Rana, aided by police, insisted that Beethi sign a blank cheque and a blank piece of paper to have Hasan released. When Beethi refused to do that, police handed Hasan over to Rana, the statement said.

Hasan was held captive at Rana's home since then. Since Rana is a powerful man, he physically and mentally tortured Hasan at his house until Saturday, when Hasan's body was found hanging in a

bathroom of Rana's house. Contacted, Additional Superintendent of Police Elius Ziku said a probe body had been formed to look into the role of police.

He added that Rana was placed on a four-day remand by a court in the district. Police are looking for the two other accused. The three-member probe body is

headed by an additional superintendent of police. It has been asked to investigate whether there was any negligence in duty on the part of the police and to submit a report in seven work days, Superintendent of Police Touhidul Islam told a press conference yesterday. **DEMONSTRATIONS**

The victim's family members, local business owners, and the general public formed a human chain in front of Asaduzzaman Market in the town and demanded an impartial investigation into the death.

"We went to the police to rescue my husband. But the police did not help us. They supported Masud Rana, who killed my husband. I demand punishment for the killer as well as the policemen who helped him," Beethi said at the human

Sirajul Islam Babu, general secretary of Gaibandha Bar Association, said, "Ít has been proven that a few police men showed sheer negligence in their duties. They must be tried.

Leaders of Gaibandha Chambers of Commerce announced that they would hold another human chain today and submit a memorandum to the deputy commissioner and the SP demanding

In another development, Gaibandha AL at a press conference announced that Rana was suspended from his post in

the party.
"We came up with the decision following directives from our party high-ups," Abu Bakkar Siddik, general secretary of the district AL, told reporters at the AL office in the town.



Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen, centre, poses for a photograph with participants of the "Army Chief's Conclave" held at the Army Multipurpose Complex in Dhaka Cantonment yesterday.

Govt outlines fresh curbs

in this regard today, they said. Chaired by Cabinet Secretary

Khandker Anwarul Islam, yesterday's meeting was attended by secretaries of the ministries concerned.

Though the fresh restrictions will be imposed for a week, the authorities are thinking of keeping those in force till April 30, the sources said.

The country is going to be put under strict restrictions amid a worsening Covid situation as the ongoing restrictionshave apparently proved less effective in containing the spread of the

Meanwhile, the government has extended the ongoing restrictions on long-route transport services -- bus, train, launch and regular flights -- till

6:00am on April 14.

The Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) has suspended around 500 international flights to and from Dhaka for a week from April 14.
Yesterday, people were seen leaving the capital in rickshaw vans, autorickshaws and pick-ups, assuming that the government would extend the

ongoing restrictions. Shopping malls and stores selling essential goods saw a huge rush of

All these developments came at a time when the country witnessed the highest number of Covid deaths in a

Seventy-eight people died from the virus in 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, taking the total number to 9,739. Besides, 5,819 new infections were recorded during the period, according to the Directorate General of Health

Earlier on April 4, the Cabinet

Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday at an

emergency press conference at the BNP

chief's Gulshan office, said Khaleda Zia's

condition is completely stable with no

symptoms of Covid-19, even though

coronavirus test. Her samples were

taken to icddr,b yesterday [Saturday].

We came to know she tested positive for

the virus," he said, adding the BNP chief

is now being treated under her personal physicians, led by respiratory medicine

expert Prof Dr FM Siddiqui, who will

take further steps for her treatment if

fever or other visible Covid symptoms,"

stable and her treatment is already

ongoing. We would like to assure people

daughter-in-law of the BNP chief, who

that she is fine...," Fakhrul added.

the party secretary general said.

"She's stable and fine. She has no high

"Her health condition is completely

Khaleda's relatives told The Daily

that Dr Zubaida Rahman,

"Our leader has undergone the

she has tested positive.

Khaleda tests Covid positive

with a set of restrictions effective from 6:00am on April 5 to 12:00am on April 11 to contain the spread of Covid. It said violators of the directives would face punishment.

Division issued an 11-point directive

Various offices, mills and factories were exempt from the restrictions and the government allowed resumption of bus services in all 11 cities from April 7.

On April 8, the government announced that shops and malls could be kept open for eight hours from April 9 to April 13 despite concerns from health experts.

People in large numbers were seen coming out on the streets to buy commodities from shops or go to offices and businesses. People began hanging out at tea-stalls in their

naigng out at tea-stalls in their neighbourhoods. Very few steps were noticed in enforcing the restrictions.

Experts doubted whether the half-hearted enforcement of restrictions would be effective at all.

On Friday, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader and State Minister for Public

and State Minister for Public Administration Farhad Hossain said the country would be put under strict restrictions for a week from April 14. SUSPENSION OF INT'L FLIGHTS

CAAB has suspended international flights for a week from April 14 as it will be very difficult for passengers to reach Dhaka Airport amid the strict

restrictions all over the country.

"It will not be possible for air passengers to reach the airport to catch CAAB Chairman Air Vice Marshal M Mafidur Rahman told The Daily Star yesterday.

He, however, said there would be no restrictions on chartered flights, cargo flights, air ambulance and special

urged the country's people to pray for

her speedy recovery. "I, especially urge

our party's leaders and activists at every

level to seek divine blessings for our

Asked whether Khaleda's domestic

help, Fatema, and others who stay in

her Gulshan residence, underwent the

Covid-19 test, he said he has no idea

"I only got information about our

Earlier in the day, the health

ministry's senior information officer

Maidul Islam Prodhan said the BNP

chief underwent the test on Saturday evening and the results came positive.

Khaleda's personal physician Mohammad Mamun told The Daily Star

that around five-six days ago, a staffer at

her house started feeling feverish. Three

days ago, he tested positive for Covid-19.

at that time also tested positive.

Later, all six staffers living with there

leader's quick recovery.

leader.'

has been staying in London with her BNP chief were also tested positive for

has been suffering from mild fever and husband Tarique Rahman since 2008, is Covid-19. little cough. At present, the symptoms are not too serious yet...," the relative, said wishing anonymity.

BNP Secretary General Mirza arranging all possible medical facilities required for Khaleda.

"If needed, she [Khaleda] would be shifted to hospital," said the relative. He said a cabin has already been booked for Khaleda at a private hospital. Moreover, all the arrangements, including oxygen, have been ensured at Fakhrul in the briefing said Khaleda her home.

Amid the coronavirus outbreak, the government freed Khaleda Zia from jail for six months through an executive order suspending her sentences on March 25 Îast year. She was released from the prison cell

at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) the same day and, since then, has been staying at her Gulshan residence.
On August 27 last year, the

government extended her release for six more months and it was extended again for the same amount of time on On February 8, 2018, Khaleda was

sent to the Old Dhaka Central Jail after a lower court sentenced her to five years' imprisonment in the Zia Orphanage Trust corruption case. The High Court later doubled her jail term.

Khaleda was found guilty in another corruption case the same year. Her party claims both the cases are politically Two persons who stay with the

focus on rural infrastructure and have

plans for more allocation for agriculture

in the health sector and to expand

resources, [but] we also need to ensure

quality service out of that resource for

coronavirus in March last year, poor

the 66-day countrywide shutdown.

people were the worst sufferers during

Strict Covid restrictions are expected

Last year, Tk 1,258 crore was allocated

Although the government had

under a stimulus package, which aimed

to provide the poor with Tk 2,500 each.

initially planned to provide the cash

incentives to 50 lakh families under this

package, only 35 lakh families received

the incentives. And the initiative had to

be stopped midway following allegations

of anomalies over the list of beneficiaries.

undertaken last year to allow the poor

in urban areas to buy rice at Tk 10

per kg, but that programme was also

abandoned because it was not viable

A survey carried out by South Asian

An OMS rice programme was also

During the initial outbreak of

the people," the minister said.

'On one side we have to spend more

and health.

from April 14.

Provide food, cash aid to ultra poor

(CPD) Chairman Prof Rehman Sobhan, CPD Distinguished Fellow Mustafizur Rahman, former Bangladesh Bank governor Dr Atiur Rahman and former finance minister M Syeduzzaman were among 30 economists who took part in the meeting. Discussants at the meeting informed

suggested that the government go for more allocation for health sector, specially in the tertiary and mid-level in the upcoming budget. Speaking to The Daily Star, Dr Atiur

The Daily Star that the economists

Rahman said he told the meeting that steps should be taken to provide money to the poor through mobile financial services with the help of local representatives. If not, the poor people would not

Those who are facing food crisis can call the hotline and the government will get the food to them," Atiur said at the

heed to the "lockdown", he said at the

Bangladesh Bank can take steps in this regard, like the way it earlier provided salaries to garment workers during the first phase of lockdown last year, he said.

"This year's budget should be aimed at saving people's lives. Let's save people first so that they do not die from hunger," he said.

Terming the average five percent annual increase in the budget for the health sector "business as usual", Atiur said such incremental increase in expenditure for health will not do; instead, the sector requires a major jump this time. Earlier, Prime Minister Sheikh

Hasina said intensive care units (ICUs) would be set up in every district but it could not be implemented, he said. Eminent economist Dr Binayak Sen, research director at the Bangladesh

Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), supported Atiur's proposal of sending money to the ultra-poor during "lockdown". He said it would be enough if there is

six percent GDP growth. Sen said instead of putting greater focus on growth, steps should be taken

so that more people can be reached

Finance Minister Kamal at a press briefing following the meeting said the upcoming budget would not be formulated as usual. It would be made considering the exceptional time of

keeping the current problem which is prevailing globally," said the minister. 'We usually do not face such adversity.' All sectors related to life and

livelihood would get priority in the

budget, he said, adding that they would

pandemic. "We need to formulate the budget

Network on Economic Modelling SANEM) in November and December last year found that 42 percent of 5,577 households went below the poverty line due to the pandemic.

without a list of beneficiaries.

injured a citizen of the country when he was entering Bangladesh through Kurigram's Fulbari border on Saturday

Indian Border Security Force shot and

Nageshwari police rescued and admitted the youth to Kurigram General Hospital with bullet wounds, said Lt Col Touhidul Alam, commanding officer of BGB-15 Battalion in Lalmonirhat. The victim, Milon Miah, 18, of Shahidaler Kuthi village in India's Cooch Behar, was illegally crossing

the border to visit his maternal grandfather's house in Nageshwari upazila, police said. Talking to reporters at the hospital, Milon said after being shot, he took

treatment at Nageshwari Upazila Health Complex and went to his grandfather's house. When police came to know that,

he was rushed to Kurigram General Hospital around 3:30am. His condition is now stable, said Pulol Kumar Sarkar, resident medical

officer of the hospital. Bangladesh Border Guard will take urther decision on whether any legal

action will be taken against the youth. "We are looking into it. We will convey our decision through a press release later," said Lt Col Touhidul

JMB men lead

FROM PAGE 12

details from Reza."

"We are now analysing the information to know the outfit's activities in India," he added.

Salehin went into hiding and took shelter in India after he was snatched from a prison van in February 2014, along with Boma Mizan. After the two fled to India, the

outfit's activities speeded up in the

country and a new chapter -- Jama'atul Mujahideen India (JMI) -- was declared in 2018, say investigators. But conflicts developed between Salehin and Mizan over procedure. Salehin was busy establishing the outfit's network between Bangladesh

and India but Mizan wanted immediate actions. For this reason, in 2017, Mizan formed a separate faction with Indian national Ezaj, said a high official of

CTTC unit, quoting Reza as saying. "Mizan and Ezaj, however, formed separate factions after Mizan started suspecting Ezaj to be an Indian intelligence agent," said the official, requesting anonymity.

On August 6, 2018, India's Intelligence Bureau and elite anti-terror probe body, National Investigation Agency, arrested Mizan from Bengaluru.

The CTTC official in Bangladesh

arrested by Indian law enforcers, but did not get any confirmation. 'We are now trying to find out who is leading the factions of Ezaj and Mizan in their absence," the official

said they believed Ezaj was also

told this newspaper. Of the three factions, Salehin's group is the strongest in India and it has supporters in most states of the country, the official said, quoting Reza

as saying. JMB leaders Soleman, Firoz, Tareq and Jamai were mainly working Salehin's faction in India and spreading the network, said investigators.

However, Soleman and Jamai are

believed to be in Indian jails, following

their arrest by Indian law enforcers. There has been no trace of Firoz and Tareq for a long time, they said, based on the outfit's international communication details. Reza told investigators that Salehin has been staying in isolation for this

reason for a long time and he has no

connection with other leaders of the outfit in India now. "We have learnt that Salehin did not take any financial support from Bangladesh to operate the outfit's activities in India. We are now trying to find out from where and how money is going to JMI," said another

CTTC official. Rahmatullah, also the additional deputy commissioner of CTTC unit, said they were trying to find out details of JMB's network between Bangladesh

Egypt train crash driver was 'not at the controls': prosecutor

AFP, Cairo

Neither the driver nor the assistant of an Egyptian train that crashed at speed into another last month were at the controls during the deadly accident, the prosecution service said yesterday.

The prosecutor also alleged that the assistant of the stationary train and a track signalman were under the influence of the powerful painkiller tramadol, while the former had also used cannabis.

At least 20 people died and 199 were injured in the March 26 crash near Sohag in southern Egypt, according to the authorities' latest count.