



## People's Awareness to Fight Covid in Bangladesh

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by a novel coronavirus called SARS-COV-2. COVID-19 was first identified in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China. It was first detected in late 2019. It was initially reported to the WHO on 31 December 2019. The WHO declared the COVID-19 outbreak a global health emergency on January 30, 2020. On March 11, 2020, the WHO declared COVID-19 a global pandemic. The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has now spread through the entire world and emerged as a major public health threat. Bangladesh reported the first three confirmed cases of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in the country on Sunday, March 8 2020. From then the number of corona affected patient is rising rapidly day by day, with a high mortality rate. The outbreak of COVID 19 has influenced on social, economic, educational and political sectors. The daily lives of people have greatly influenced by it.

From the beginning, the government of Bangladesh is trying to spread COVID 19 banning all political, social, cultural, and religious rallies and gatherings in the country. To maintain social distancing in public transport the government has given some instructions such as, the public transports have to carry passengers at half of the capacity. The passengers, drivers and their assistants must wear masks and follow health safety rules. But the real scenario of the public transport is fully opposite. Buses are full of passengers, with some people even standing. No one wears masks and transport workers do not maintain any hygiene rules. Bus stations, train stations and Launch Ghats are also overcrowded.

The situation on the water transports is proving to be the most chaotic and hazardous. The launches are also taking the same number of passengers as before, not half the number as per rules. The passengers gather in crowds, they sit together playing cards, and do everything else without wearing masks.

The government has instructed to purchase and sale of daily necessities in open spaces, maintaining hygiene rules. Both sellers and buyers at shopping malls have to ensure health guidelines while shopping. Optional gatherings must be prohibited. But the people are going to market and shopping without maintaining the instruction of health guide.

Besides at least 10 million people left Dhaka, half of the total inhabitants of the city, on the occasion of Eid amid nationwide lockdown, violating social distance and COVID-19 health guidelines.

The practice of social distancing means to stay home and to maintain 6 feet of distance from others and avoid crowded places to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

At the beginning of the COVID 19 outbreak in the country in late March, the government adopted restrictive measures including shutdown of all offices, suspension of vehicular movement and closure of all educational institutions and urged people to maintain social distance and avoid public gathering.

But the scenario is quite opposite especially in Dhaka, which is a megacity with 46 thousand people living in per square kilometer. It appears that social distancing is tough while taking public commutes and living in the slums.

A survey was conducted on people wearing masks, maintaining hygiene rules and social distancing practices by Brac and the Prothom Alo in association with Lifebuoy. According to the survey, 67.4% of the people said wearing masks causes discomfort and heat stress while 20.9% of the people mentioned stuffiness and difficulty in breathing while wearing masks. Over 60% of the people find it difficult to maintain safe physical distance in public spaces during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Millions of Bangladeshis usually leave big cities and return to their home towns during festivals especially in Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-ul-Adha with their families. The government imposed restrictions on public movement to control COVID pandemic. Defying a nationwide lockdown in Bangladesh, millions of people

have headed home to rural areas from cities to celebrate the Eid-ul-Fitr festival in packed ferries and boats, sparking fears of a deadly upsurge in Covid-19 cases. Moreover, millions took private vehicles and walked on foot to head home defying social distances. Millions are moving from one place to another with their whole family without maintaining social distance during festivals. During lockdown shops and malls are allowed to remain open till 5 p.m. in a limited scale, strictly maintaining social distance and COVID-19 health guidelines. But thousands of people rush to market without following the guideline of COVID-19. The failure to control such a mad rush and effective planning to tackle the situation will be fatal and the country will suffer for badly for this.

Prevention is better than cure. As there is no medicine of COVID-19, it is better to prevent it. To protect themselves, people have to:

- wash hands often for at least 20 seconds with soap and water
- Use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if washing hands is not possible
- avoid touching the eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
- keep away from the coronavirus infected people
- **Practice social distancing.** Keep a distance of at least 6 feet from other people
- cover mouth and nose with a mask when go out of the door
- cover nose and mouth with a tissue or a handkerchief when coughing or sneezing
- clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces

A comprehensive awareness-raising program through mass media as well as the Internet and social media is urgently required to fully engage the general people to learn and understand the seriousness of the outbreak and their role and responsibility in alleviating the severity of COVID-19. At the same time, however, government measures aimed at ensuring the adequacy of the food supply chain, making sure that the poor and disadvantaged are brought under adequate and effective relief programs, and that community leaders are identified and empowered to lead and preserve the social isolation measures while effectively constituting surveillance mechanisms that are all needed. In a time of crisis such as the one generated by the rapid transmission of COVID-19, Bangladesh stands, similar to many other emerging economies, in an extremely vulnerable position, whereby the absence of adequate testing and hospital resources along with public unawareness and lack of coordination among the various government or private agencies is likely to result in catastrophic loss of lives.

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE ZONE**  
*Committed to better teaching*