

Editorial

COVID-19 Pandemic: Our Preparedness, Response and Way Forward

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In the face of a fast-changing pandemic, country leadership will make or break our response. Now could be the time for leaders to succeed in across political divisions and geographic borders to rally the support for a response commensurate to the present unprecedented crisis.

Cases of COVID-19 within the Bangladesh have crossed 1.3 lakh, with 1661 deaths as of June 26. Since last month, cases have tripled in Bangladesh with a median detection of around 3000 cases per day.¹ There's now widespread community transmission within the country mostly in urban and semi urban areas.²⁻⁹ Our healthcare service is overwhelmed with the response and hampered normal delivery of day to day routine care required for chronic diseases, vaccination and other demand of healthcare. Country leadership realized that seeking to balance the triple threat this pandemic represents to the health of our people, our financial aid and to our national economies. Government must make decisions, considering simultaneously health, economic, and social indicators. This can allow health officials to know where transmission is accelerating, and which groups are at greater risk so on better target their efforts. Flexible responses are key to beat slowly down the transmission of COVID-19. Public health measures, still as social protection efforts, will have to be reviewed regularly to reduce the impact of the virus in our societies. The availability of social, financial, and financial protection, especially in communities heavily addicted to informal economies is critical. This pandemic crisis cannot be overcome without addressing the requirements of the foremost vulnerable: those

presumably to fall sick and also the least likely to receive care, like elderly peoples, the urban and rural poor and migrant populations. If they're neglected, we run the danger of the following few years looking just like the number of cases are growing with more mortality and further demand of health care. Prioritize early detection of suspect cases, laboratory testing, contact tracing and quarantine because the foundation of a targeted and sustainable strategy to regulate COVID-19, noting that more investments in human resources, supplies, improved surveillance, and development and adoption of recent tools are needed.¹⁰⁻¹² Our national budget had allocated additional fund for fighting the pandemic in an exceedingly holistic approach. Healthcare, social protection are included as a package to combat things but lot more is required as we are far behind coming to normal way of life. Furthermore, we must be realistic about the future: all people must comply with a replacement way of life and redefine our sense of normal.

We must also still strengthen our health systems, which are our strongest defence against COVID-19 – today and within the future. Experts' recommendation of public health expenditure benchmark of a minimum of 6% of GDP has relevancy now, quite ever. And from all public health investments, a minimum of 30% should be allocated to the first level of care. If we allocate resources to primary health clinics, hospitals and laboratories, grow our health workforce, invest in essential public health and expand our stockpiles and supplies, we will stay prior the pandemic and save lives.¹³⁻¹⁴

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To control and contain COVID-19 in Bangladesh, we'd like concerted regional cooperation in South Asia. Though we rejoice when one country successfully flattens its COVID-19 epidemic curve like South Korea, Japan, New Zealand but the danger of re-emergence will always remain unless we flatten the curve regionally and globally.

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