



Dhaka: Bangladesh yesterday feared the novel coronavirus to expand its clutches with an extra wrath in the next one month as the virus overnight claimed three more lives and infected 35 others increasing the toll to 12 and number of infected people to 123.

“Three more COVID-19 patients died in the last 24 hours,” Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) director Professor Dr Meerjady Sabrina Flora told a virtual media briefing, also joined by directorate general of health services (DGHS) Professor Dr Abul Kalam Azad.

Flora added that detection of fresh 35 cases during the period now took the number of coronavirus cases to 123 in the country while 64 of them were found in Dhaka, 23 in Narayanganj, 11 in Madaripur and five in Gaibandha.

She said the rest of the cases were reported from elsewhere as COVID-19 appeared to have spread its clutches on at least 15 of the country’s 64 districts.

Flora said the fresh 35 cases were detected as “we have tested 468 samples though 14 labs across the country in the last 24 hours” while among the infected 30 were male and five female and 11 of them were in their 40s and six in their 20s.

Health minister Zahid Maleque earlier yesterday at a meeting warned the country was likely to be exposed to extra COVID-19 risks in the next 30 days as healthcare officials said “community transmission” of the virus began.

Maleque during the meeting, however, quoted the overnight COVID-19 death figure to be four, which Azad later called “a mistake” caused by erroneous double counting of one of the victims.

The minister appeared before the media virtually emerging from an emergency meeting with concerned officials under the purview of his ministry, representatives of doctors' forums including Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) and non-government organizations.

Maleque urged all to be more cautious against COVID-19 in the next one month saying "the next 30 days are very crucial".

A health ministry spokesman later told BSS that the meeting discussed ways to keep people indoors and ensure use of protective gears including masks and germicides alongside enhanced engagement of private hospitals during the pandemic.

Health officials said Dhaka's Tolarbagh and Bashabo, Madaripur, Narayanganj and Gaibandha appeared to be the worst coronavirus-prone areas while Flora yesterday called Dhaka and Narayanganj COVID-19 "hotspots" as maximum number of cases were detected in the two cities.

Azad told the briefing that so far 66,810 people were kept at both home and institutional quarantine and of them, 299 were under surveillance at institutional quarantine.

Current of quarantined people, he said, was 11,330 as 55,483 people were released after they showed no symptom of COVID-19 during the quarantine period.

Azad said 14,41,793 people so far received healthcare services from hotline mobile numbers and health web portals as the government formed a group of medical professionals comprising 13,262 doctors to provide emergency health services to the people.

"They're providing healthcare services through online," he earlier said.

The contact hotline and mobile numbers – 16263; 333; 10655 and 01944333222 – to receive information and treatment facilities on Covid-19.