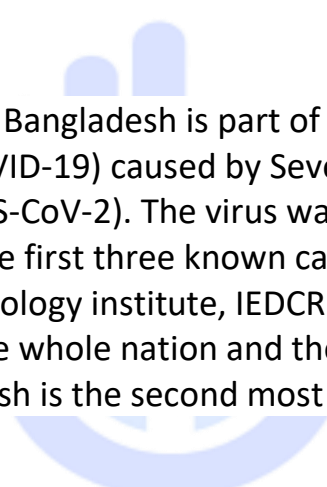


# LearnEng with Shahan

## BCS Written

### Essay

## Corona Pandemic and Bangladesh



The COVID-19 pandemic in Bangladesh is part of the worldwide pandemic of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) caused by Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). The virus was confirmed to have spread to Bangladesh in March 2020. The first three known cases were reported on 8 March 2020 by the country's epidemiology institute, IEDCR. Since then, the pandemic has spread day by day over the whole nation and the number of affected people has been increasing. Bangladesh is the second most affected country in South Asia, after India.

On 31 December 2019, China reported to the WHO cases of pneumonia with unknown causes. On 12 January 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) confirmed that a novel coronavirus was the cause of a respiratory illness in a cluster of people in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China. The case fatality ratio for COVID-19 has been much lower than SARS of 2003, but the transmission has been significantly greater, with a significant total death toll. Bangladesh faces significant challenges in combating COVID-19 as it is a densely populated country and also houses a million stateless Rohingya refugees in sprawling refugee camps that are conducive to the spread of epidemics. It also has significant migrant populations living in Italy, a COVID-affected country.

# As Corona Progresses in Bangladesh

## January 2020 to March 2020: Arrival into Bangladesh

On 22 January 2020, the authorities at the Dhaka airport put the airports on alert by screening travelers from China. On 8 March, the first three coronavirus cases were confirmed. They included two men that recently returned from Italy and a female relative. On the same day, the government decided to scale down the grand ceremony planned for Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's birth centenary on 17 March. On 15 March 142 passengers returned from Italy, complaining about the unsanitary conditions there, many of them were allowed to go home with advice to self-isolate. Health experts expressed serious reservations about the action. On 18 March, Bangladesh reported its first coronavirus death. The patient was aged over 70 and had other morbidities. By the end of March Bangladesh had reported 51 confirmed cases and five deaths.

## March 2020 to May 2020: The first wave and "General Holiday"

The government imposed "general holiday" (i.e. general lock-down) came into effect on 26 March, it was announced on 23 March and initially stated to be in place until 4 April.

The "general holiday" (lockdown) due to end on 4 April was extended to April 11, then to April 14, then to April 25 and consequently with subsequent 7 time's extension- May 30. Bangladesh crossed the figure of 100 confirmed cases on 6 April and 1,000 confirmed cases on 14 April. On 20 April, the number of confirmed deaths crossed 100.

On the topic of easing the lockdown measures, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said

**"Economic activities have to be resumed for the sake of the lives and livelihoods of people. Most countries of the world have already been compelled to relax shutdown because it is not possible to restrict people's source of income for an indefinite period. And it is not at all possible for a developing country like Bangladesh too."**

## June 2020 to December 2020

On July 18, the number of confirmed cases crossed 200,000 (two lakh) people.

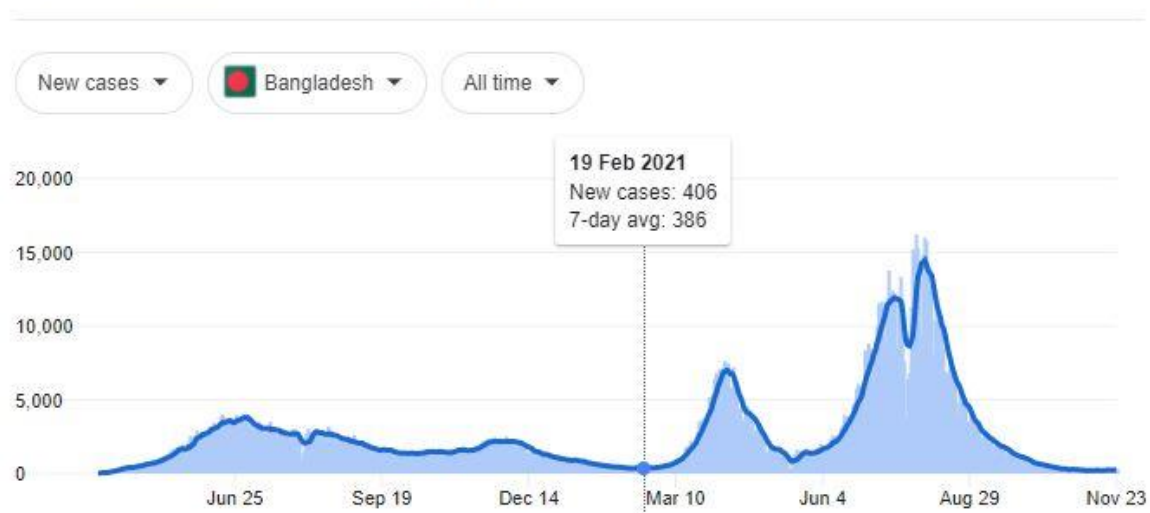
- ***The Daily Star. 18 July 2020.***

The final set of restrictions on public movement were officially lifted on 1 September. These restrictions had included prohibiting movement outdoors from 10 PM to 5 AM for general people. The Road Transport and Bridges Ministry had also announced on 29 August that the restrictions on buses, which had hitherto directed buses to run below seat capacity and charge higher fares to passengers, would end. A number of health experts expressed their concern at the news. Though Virologist Dr. Nazrul Islam, member of the National Technical Advisory Committee for COVID-19 and former VC of BSMMU along with other doctors around then opposed the decision.

## December 2020 to March 2021

The period from December 2020 to the end of February 2021 saw the lowest rate of infections since the outbreak of the pandemic. The positivity rates remained below five percent for the first time from mid-January to early March.

From [JHU CSSE COVID-19 Data](#) · Last updated: 2 days ago



The vaccination program also began in this period. The first vaccinations were given on 27 January 2021 and the mass vaccination roll-out started on 7 February

2021 using the [Oxford–AstraZeneca vaccine](#) produced by [Serum Institute of India](#), halted ,however, leading to a shortfall in stocks in Bangladesh.

## March 2021 to May 2021: The second wave

From a relatively low number of infections throughout January and February, March saw a rapid increase in infections - with positivity rates increasing to over 23 percent in early April (whereas they had been below 5 percent throughout February).

In an attempt to curb the rise in infections, on 5 April 2021 a seven-day lockdown was announced by the Bangladeshi government, which was protested against lockdown occurred in Dhaka by traders, including all domestic travel suspended and shopping malls shut alongside a curfew between 6pm and 6am. This followed a record new 7,087 new COVID-19 cases on 4 April, coinciding with a near-doubling of their testing rate from mid-March into the start of April.

On 28 April, the lockdown period ends, prioritizing livelihoods over what has been a mild illness in Bangladesh, with some of the lowest death rates in the world. The country will reopen in accordance with hygiene.

## May 2021 to August 2021: The third wave

Throughout June a steep rise in transmission was reported in the border districts, particularly in Khulna and Rajshahi divisions, with steep increases in positivity rates, regularly reaching as high as 50 or 60 percent in some districts. The nationwide positivity rate once again crossed 20 percent on 23 June 2021. Towards the end of June, several districts surrounding Dhaka went into lockdown to try and reduce transmission into the capital.

Throughout the first half of July, Bangladesh regularly recorded its highest daily deaths since the pandemic began - [**Source: Dhaka Tribune. 1 July 2021**]

On 1 July 2021 Bangladesh went into another national lockdown, planned to last seven days, amidst a surge of the [Delta variant](#). The Government issued a notice saying all offices and transportation would be shut and “No one will be allowed to leave home except for an emergency during this seven-day period”.

On 5 July 2021, it was announced the lockdown measures would be extended by an additional seven days, now due to continue to midnight on 14 July. Despite

continuing high numbers of daily cases and deaths, the Government confirmed that restrictions would be eased from 15 July to 23 July to accommodate the celebration of Eid-ul-Azha

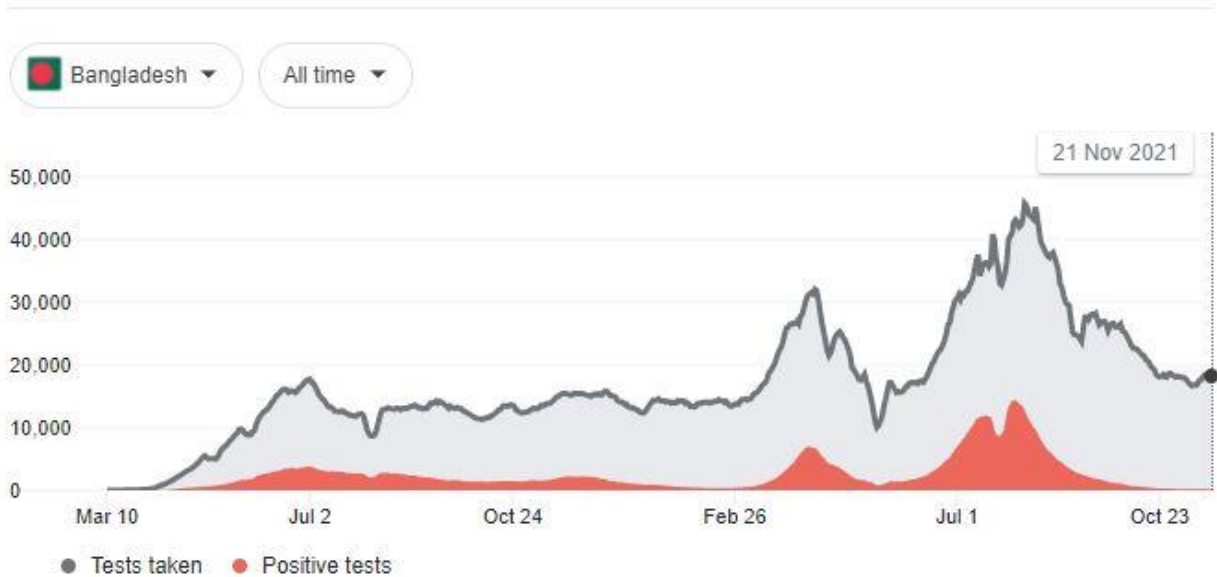
In mid-July, the government announced that factories would remain closed during the post-Eid lockdown. However, days later it was announced that export orientated factories would be permitted to reopen from 1 August, causing a rush of workers back to the industrial heartlands on 31 July, increasing fears of transmission.

In June, the vaccination programme was resumed (having been halted in April due to supply shortages) using supplies of the [Sinopharm BIBP vaccine](#) from China and, in July, using the [Pfizer–BioNTech vaccine](#) and [Moderna vaccine](#) from [COVAX](#). Later that month, resumption of the administration of the [Astrazeneca](#) vaccine also occurred with doses procured from Japan.

## Transmission Rate:

In March and April 2020, the COVID-19 transmission rate in Bangladesh was around 2, which meant that two people could be infected with the virus from one person. However, the transmission rate of COVID-19 in the country fell as time passed. As of 26 June, the transmission rate of the coronavirus disease in the country is 1.05, which is a very good sign. Model-based simulations suggest that the 95% [confidence interval](#) for the [time-varying reproduction number](#) was below 1.0 and falling from December 2020 to February 2021. On 3 July, the maximum growth rate of infections in the country fell to 2.5% the day after the number of COVID-19 cases exceeded 150,000. As of 3 July, Bangladesh sees a growth rate of infections less than 2.5%. The Health Minister said that, until 10 July, the minimum doubling period of infections in the country was improved to 25 days. As of 10 July, the number of coronavirus cases in Bangladesh takes more than 25 days to double.

From [Our World in Data](#) · Last updated: 2 days ago · Based on 7-day average



## Covid Impact on Bangladesh

Amartya Sen's concept of 'entitlement' refers to a person's ability to acquire goods. Achieving this capability usually depends on the production potential of the person and the opportunity to sell or exchange his/her labour. Contrary to the conventional economic concept of food supply, Amartya Sen's entitlement theory argues that food security could be in jeopardy if capacity building is hampered. Those most affected by the Corona epidemic are those whose entitlement or ability of exchange depends on their own or others' movements. For example, the Corona epidemic has reduced the source of income for urban migrant workers in the urban informal sector or made it impossible for them to exchange the kind of labour they sell (FAO, 2020). According to the Google COVID-19 Community Mobility Report (of 25 May 2020), in the Corona situation due to various health restrictions, the movement of people in Bangladesh's public transport has decreased by 56%, in the raw market by 41% and in shopping malls by 72%.

### Impact on MSME:

The corona virus disaster has caused two types of employment loss such as temporary lockdown-induced job loss and permanent impact job loss. Temporary job loss due to lockdown in the country for two months was estimated to be in

between 12 and 17 million. Shutdown of the major four sectors in the economy has created this job loss. Seven million jobs in the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) sector, five million jobs in the transport sector, three million jobs in the construction sector and more three million jobs in the manufacturing sector were disappeared temporarily ([The Financial Express, 2020](#)). An additional 10 million people have become jobless in the agriculture sector. If that figure were added, the number of temporary job loss would end up somewhere around 25 million.

Source	Unemployed (in million)	Individuals Impacted Financially (in million)
World Bank	7	28
Asian Development Bank (ADB)	4	16
Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh (PRI)	12	58
Centre for Research and Information Dhaka (CRI)	6	24
Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD)	–	56
Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC)/ BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD)	–	70
News interviews	–	50

Source: Ahmed and Kamal (2020b).

Estimates from Various Sources of Permanent Impactful Job Loss.

The Table summarizes estimates by different development agencies and think tanks about permanent impactful job loss due to COVID-19 in Bangladesh.

## Impact on Poor People:

During the Corona epidemic, 87% of the country's poor were in food and nutrition crisis. The livelihood of 98% of the country's poor has been severely affected due to income loss. Most of them do not have minimum savings, which has had an additional negative impact on their food intake and nutritional status during this income crisis (bdnews24.com, 2020). A survey by Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC) and BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD) found that 5% of poor families that were surveyed during the lockdown period could eat only once a day. However, before the onset of the epidemic, 91.7% of respondents could eat three meals a day and the rest two meals a day. Poor people in all over the country were suffering from acute

shortage of adequate and nutritious food, which put them at a risk of long-term health problems ([The Daily Star, 2020](#)).

### **Affected RMG Sector:**

Another seriously affected group is the low-income RMG workers. The RMG sector of Bangladesh which accounts for employment of around 4.1 million workers have already fired or furloughed more than a million due to declining demand from global fashion companies. At present and during the crisis, the number of cancelled orders only look to set rise. According to Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), global buyers cancelled and held up a worth of US\$2.95 billion export orders from approximately 933 factories throughout the country. Citing BGMEA data, [Fair Wear \(2020\)](#) reported that cancellations of planned orders, for April–December 2020, amounts to nearly US\$1.7 billion. Around 2.3 million RMG workers (which is 47% of the total sector employment) might be fired as both cancellation of current export orders and uncertainty about future exports are rising.

### **Non-Governmental Education Sector:**

Another harshly affected group is the people working in the private non-government education institutes. Many low-income schoolteachers in both rural and urban areas throughout the country have lost their jobs because the students of those private institutions cannot pay the fees. Students at these schools are mainly from poor families many of whom left the school forever due to the crisis. At this time of the Corona epidemic, not only students but also teachers are in a threat of dropout. Especially, extreme economic uncertainty has arisen among teachers working in private kindergartens and non-government schools all over the country. Many of them are being forced to move to low-level occupations and a new poor class is being created.

History says that crisis creates an opportunity to think new. One of the positive aspects of this ongoing crisis is that it gives an opportunity to rethink the development philosophy, economic philosophy and action plan of the days ahead. The focus of that new thinking should be to move away from growth-centric narrow thinking and move towards a multi-dimensional development plan. If this discussion with partners, policymakers and those involved in development planning and implementation can begin now, and if the right policies and action

plans can be set, undoubtedly the country will be in a much better position in economic and social construction in the post-COVID situation.

Finishing part can be turned on through the statement Melinda Gates in an interview in September -

**“This pandemic has magnified every existing inequality in our society – like systemic racism, gender inequality, and poverty,”.**

It’s the existing social and global inequality on which we should much focus on as the post-realization of Covid.



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