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Bangladesh and Wuhan Virus: Major Hit to Economy and a Time bomb waiting in Rohingya Camps:

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As of today, there have been only 56 confirmed Wuhan Virus cases and 6 deaths. The figures appear to be too modest for a crowded country like Bangladesh, but there are dangers ahead.

The first is that the country's economy that is overwhelmingly dependent on the garment country is having a serious hit with over 2 Billion dollars worth of orders already cancelled. Major Buyers from West and well known brands like, Gap, Zara etc have not placed fresh orders either.

The second and more serious issue is the likelihood of the Virus spreading in the Rohingya Refugee camps in Cox Bazaar. The April 2nd Issue of Atlantic says that the Refugee camps in Bangladesh are a "tinder box" for the spread of the Corona Virus. Dr. Paul Spiegel an Analyst who is following the occurrence says that it is "extremely likely that something will happen in this area". The Camps are already in a lockdown from 26th March 2020.

The First case of Virus Infection was reported on 7th March and the confirmed cases so far have been only 56 which speaks not about the spread of the virus but about the lack of sufficient testing facilities for a large population like that of Bangladesh with over 160 million people.

A lock down was declared from 26th March initially for ten days and significantly the Army was called out from the beginning to enforce "Social Distancing". Initially, Public Transport Services were restricted during holidays only and all establishments save those involved in emergency services including law enforcement and health facilities were shut.

It is said that between the announcement and the declaration of lockdown on 26th March an estimated 9 million people moved out of Dhaka thus frustrating the very intention of the Government of implementing the lockdown not to let the people move out of Dhaka and thus spread it all over the country.

It is also to be noted that despite the lockdown, the following Friday, People assembled for the Jumah prayers. Worse still, earlier over 30,000 assembled at Raipur to pray healing verses from the Koran.

Of interest to some is that the largest brothel in Asia at Dauldia stood closed from 20th March.

The borders with India remained closed.

The Garment Industry:

It is the Garment Industry that drives the country's economy that is said to have been affected most by the Shut down and Global spread of the Wuhan Virus. Garment exports account for 34.12 Billion US \$ of the 40.53 Billion US \$ Bangladesh exports.(Fiscal year 2019)

There are about 4000 factories employing 4 million workers mostly women. It has empowered the women to a large extent with a second income to the family and now their jobs are threatened.

The Garments export loss according to Rubana Huq President of Bangladesh Garment Exporters & Manufacturers Association is 1.5 Billion US \$ so far and factories are losing 100 million US\$ a day. At this rate, the garment companies cannot survive too long and the poor women will be out of jobs. Only the Companies from West Germany appear to be sympathetic and are discussing ways to work out a compromise.

The Refugee Camps:

The biggest concern for Bangladesh should be the over crowded Rohingya Refugee camps in the South at Cox's Bazaar. There are 855000 Refugees camped in 34 sites with the biggest Kutupalong camp holding 630,000 Refugees in an area of 13 Sq. Kms.

A Norwegian Humanitarian Analysis Group says that the population density in the camps is 40,000 persons per sq, km but increases to 70,000 in most cramped areas.

The internet and communication facilities have been shut down for security reasons and the Refugee Inmates therefore may not even be aware of the impending danger. Social distancing or isolation is not an option in the camps. There are only communal latrines and not kept

under good hygenic conditions either, Already those arriving in the camps are in poor health and thus become more vulnerable.

Many NGOs are working in the camps and their movement cannot be monitored or regulated.

So far no incidence of the Virus has been detected in the Camps , probably because no tests have been carried out. If the pandemic gains a footing in the Camps the results could spell a disaster.

It is our hope and prayer that Bangladesh comes out unscathed in a global crisis created by China and affecting the Whole World.

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